

#1615 Envisioning a Leftist Economic Future of Postcapitalism

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [00:00:00] Welcome to this episode of the award winning *Best of the Left Podcast*, in which we think beyond the fears of a world in which work, and the ability for millions to support themselves financially through work, is lost to automation and artificial intelligence. Because that is only a capitalist future in which the benefits of technological advancement are hoarded by the already wealthy. Today, we imagine a different path.

Sources today include the book *Inventing the Future*, *Novara Media*, *Second Thought*, *1Dime*, and *Futurology*, with additional members only clips from *Novara Media*.

Introduction to Inventing the Future Postcapitalism and a World Without Work by Srnicek & Williams - Dank Audio Stash - Air Date 4-8-21

AI NARRATOR: Where did the future go? For much of the 20th century, the future held sway over our dreams. On the horizons of the political left, a vast assortment of emancipatory visions gathered, often springing from the conjunction of popular political power and the liberating potential of technology. From predictions of new worlds of leisure, to Soviet era cosmic [00:01:00] communism, to Afro futurist celebrations of the synthetic and diasporic nature of black culture, to post gender dreams of radical feminism, the popular imagination of the left envisaged societies vastly superior to anything we dream of today.

Through popular political control of new technologies, we would collectively transform our world for the better. Today, on one level, these dreams appear closer than ever. The technological infrastructure of the 21st century is producing the resources by which a very different political and economic system could be achieved.

Machines are accomplishing tasks that were unimaginable a decade ago. The internet and social media are giving a voice to billions who previously went

unheard, bringing global participative democracy closer than ever to existence. Open source designs, copyleft creativity, and 3D printing all portend a world where the scarcity of many products might be overcome. New forms of computer [00:02:00] simulation could rejuvenate economic planning and give us the ability to direct economies rationally in unprecedented ways.

The newest wave of automation is creating the possibility for huge swathes of boring and demeaning work to be permanently eliminated. Clean energy technologies make possible virtually limitless and environmentally sustainable forms of power production. And new medical technologies not only enable a longer, healthier life, but also make possible new experiments with gender and sexual identity. Many of the classic demands of the left, for less work, for an end to scarcity, for economic democracy, for the production of socially useful goods, and for the liberation of humanity, are materially more achievable than at any other point in history.

Yet, for all the glossy sheen of our technological era, we remain bound by an old and obsolete set of social relations. We continue to work long hours, [00:03:00] commuting further, to perform tasks that feel increasingly meaningless. Our jobs have become more insecure, our pay has stagnated, and our debt has become overwhelming. We struggle to make ends meet, to put food on the table, to pay the rent or mortgage, and as we shuffle from job to job, we reminisce about pensions and struggle to find affordable childcare.

Automation renders us unemployed and stagnant wages devastate the middle class, while corporate profits surge to new heights. The glimmers of a better future are trampled and forgotten under the pressures of an increasingly precarious and demanding world. And each day, we return to work as normal, exhausted, anxious, stressed and frustrated.

At a planetary level, things appear even more ominous. The breakdown of the global climate continues unabated, and the ongoing fallout from the economic crisis has led governments to embrace the paralyzing death spiral of austerity. [00:04:00] Buffeted by imperceptible and abstract powers, we feel incapable of evading or controlling the tidal pulsions of economic, social and environmental forces. But how are we to change this?

All around us, it seems that the political systems, movements and processes that dominated the last hundred years are no longer able to bring about genuinely transformative change. Instead, they have forced us onto an endless treadmill of misery. Electoral democracy lies in remarkable disrepair. Center left political parties have been hollowed out and sapped of any popular mandate. Their corpses stumble on as vehicles for careerist ambitions. Radical political

movements bloom promisingly but are quickly snuffed out by exhaustion and repression. Organized labor has seen its power systematically taken apart, leaving it sclerotic and incapable of anything more than feeble resistance.

Yet, in the face of these calamities, today's politics remains [00:05:00] stubbornly beset by a lack of new ideas. Neoliberalism has held sway for decades, and social democracy exists largely as an object of nostalgia. As crises gather force and speed, politics withers and retreats. In this paralysis of the political imaginary, the future has been cancelled.

Under the sway of folk political thinking, the most recent cycle of struggles, from anti globalization to anti war to Occupy Wall Street, has involved the fetishization of local spaces, immediate actions, transient gestures, and particularisms of all kinds. Rather than undertake the difficult labor of expanding and consolidating gains, this form of politics has focused on building bunkers to resist the encroachments of global neoliberalism. In so doing, it has become a politics of defense, incapable of articulating or building a new world.

For any movement that struggles to escape neoliberalism and build [00:06:00] something better, these folk political approaches are insufficient. In their place, this book sets out an alternative politics, one that seeks to take back control over our future and to foster the ambition for a world more modern than capitalism will allow. The utopian potentials inherent in 21st century technology cannot remain bound to a parochial capitalist imagination, they must be liberated by an ambitious left alternative. Neoliberalism has failed, social democracy is impossible, and only an alternative vision can bring about universal prosperity and emancipation. Articulating and achieving this better world is the fundamental task of the left today.

The People's Republic of Walmart

Interview with Leigh Phillips and Michal Rozworski - Novara Media - Air Date 6-13-19

AARON BASTANI - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: To what extent are modern day free market economies actually free?

MICHAL ROZWORSKI: That's a good question. They're free for some, I think is the answer to that, when most of us go into, and unfree for a lot of others, I should add. That's the other side of that. I think when most of us going

to work, [00:07:00] we experience that as a huge realm of unfreedom for the vast majority of us who who do work for a living once we enter, the shop, the factory, the whatever, the hospital, school, it's what the boss says goes. The boss on the other hand has a lot of freedom.

The argument we're we're making in the book is that a lot of the world's biggest, or not a lot, most of the world's biggest corporations are huge spheres of economic planning. That sort of old bogeyman of the right that the right has used as a cudgel against the left. If you try to consciously control the economy, it'll never work, and we'll probably get into that later. Well, it turns out that once you enter the four walls of the firm of the corporation it's a giant plan system where the managers... and that's where I think that division in freedom exists. That there's a lot of freedom for managers and bosses to set plans, obviously the market imposes some limits on that, but there's a lot of rational planning, but for the vast majority of people, for workers, it's a realm of unfreedom where our shared human capacity for decision making is [00:08:00] completely not even underutilized, but largely unutilized.

And I think that's something that we set out to challenge in the book.

AARON BASTANI - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: Leigh to what extent do we live in a planned economy? To what extent is the idea of the free market just a mystification then, building on that?

LEIGH PHILLIPS: The economy as a whole is not a planned economy, but within these very, very large entities, as Michal was saying, they are entirely planned. This is fascinating for us because the argument that we have from the right is the market is always consistently the optimum way of allocating goods and services, but internally, as Michal said, they're entirely planned.

What's fascinating with Walmart is it's the largest corporation in the world. It has the largest number of employees. It's the third largest enterprise after the People's Liberation Army and the Pentagon. If it were an economy it would be not in the G20, but on the size of a Sweden or a Switzerland. It's slightly smaller but on the scale of the Soviet Union at the height of the 1970s before stagnation sets in.

So that's really interesting because one of the [00:09:00] best arguments that the right ever mounted against the left, against socialism was that the price signal in the market basically captures an infinitude of information within supply chains. Not just that, but also discovers as a mechanism of discovery of information. And that if we want to avoid all of the problems with market exchange in terms

of the growth of inequality, irrational production, and so on and so forth, and replace it with planning, you would have to have this army of bureaucrats that would not be anywhere near as good as capturing all that information, and that would lead to a mismatch between supply and demand on a gross scale that would produce significant shortages, in turn chaos. The only way that you could, grapple with that chaos would be some sort of authoritarianism, and then, bada bing, bada boom, you have the Soviet Union.

That was the historical argument. It's a really bloody good argument. The trick is, that if that were true, then Walmart shouldn't work, Walmart shouldn't [00:10:00] exist. Because if it is an entirely planned economy, I guess it exists with a sea of prices, but internally it's entirely planned, what makes it work compared to the Soviet Union? We should take some lessons from this in that basically it shows that planning works. However, It's authoritarian planning rather than democratic planning. Maybe we can get into that in a little bit.

AARON BASTANI - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: So we're obviously talking about the firm to an extent. We're talking about Coase's theorem.

LEIGH PHILLIPS: Ronald Coase

AARON BASTANI - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: And he stumbles upon this really in the '20s the '30s I was talking about this a few weeks ago, to a gentleman who writes *The Economist*. He came on, and he was talking about, just intervention in free markets, and obviously it's the paradigmatic example. And it's really striking how few people actually, on the left, engage with this issue, where, we have this mystification that any intervention in free markets will create a mismatch of resources, create disequilibriums, etc. And like you say, the absolute heartbeat of modern economies are firms which don't operate like that.

Now, is there any countervailing account [00:11:00] that could come from somebody who's defending the status quo, who might say, well, so what? That's irrelevant. We already know about Coase.

MICHAL ROZWORSKI: Yeah. I think the traditional argument has always been, but ultimately they still rely on prices. So it doesn't matter how big they get, they're still existing, like we said, in this sort of sea of prices, and that's the bit that delivers crucially useful information to them.

And I think the counter argument there is that we see increasingly, and this is where I think, today differs from the 1930s, which was the last time when the

left and the right were hashing this out, is that we do have an increase in information technology that basically produces this total surfeit of information of various kinds of useful information. I just think it's a poverty of imagination to think that this is the one method of finding a way to basically align social goals [00:12:00] with individual or lower level goals.

That's ultimately the rights argument, that you need some sort of mechanism that'll align, what do we want to do as a society with what do individuals or individuals through the units like firms do. And I think throughout history you've seen that there's different ways of doing that, and especially now when we have information. One very small thing, Hayek had this semi mystical quote where at one point he calls price's action at a distance. And I'll find it funny reading that today, in 2019, when each of us has a, or most of us have a smartphone in our pockets. And this idea that this gee whiz, action at a distance, it happens through the price system, which just seems quaint.

AARON BASTANI - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: Is it fair to say actually that the idea of markets functioning through prices like that is in itself a form of machine control? Because you've got Paul Mason recently in his book, *Clear Bright Future*, and he says we have all these existential quandaries about, oh, would we ever allow an AI to run society?

Well, we already delegate. A vast amount of, ethical decision making to, well actually, this computer says no, except it's not the [00:13:00] computer, it's the market. Is that a fair, is that a fair, assessment? And then I want to ask you about the socialist calculation debate.

MICHAL ROZWORSKI: I'll be quick. I think that's overall generally fair. I think there's maybe a bit more to it, but generally yes, this is a mechanism. And a lot of the Austrians did in a way refer to it as a computer but one that's able to deal with indeterminacy. So that's the one thing that I would add that the right really sees this as a specific kind of computer that doesn't take a set program, but is one that's able to deal very well in a dynamic environment. But overall, I think that's a very good way of looking at it. And again, demystifying some of this ideology around the free market and around freedom.

The Two Futures Of Automation Capitalism VS Socialism - Second Thought - Air Date 12-15-21

JT - HOST, SECONDTHOUGHT: But first, let's start with a history of automation in general. If you're willing to go back far enough, humanity's evolution has always been directly related to our ability to mechanize and improve upon our physical abilities with tools. Our bodies and societies have progressed [00:14:00] alongside, and as a direct result of, our ability to create objects that make our lives easier, that allow us to produce and consume more efficiently and in greater quantities.

At first it was simple handheld tools made of stone, then crude metals, until eventually we started truly automating basic tasks by powering the first primitive machines with flowing water, steam, and finally, fossil fuels. We continued innovating, creating ever more complex instruments, until they moved beyond completing simple tasks and started dealing with abstract concepts, the same way our brains can. Very quickly, we get to something like proper automation—machines doing things on their own. Specifically, we get to automation under our current economic model, capitalism.

Since the origins of modern capitalism coincide roughly with the beginning of industrialization in Britain, that's where we'll start. At its birth, industrialization radically changed many things. The new machines of the industrial era were nothing like the tools that had dominated the [00:15:00] history of humanity. They were bigger, more complex, and they needed several people with very particular roles just to function properly. They could produce like no human ever could, and with ever decreasing levels of human involvement.

Right away, this made a massive difference in the working arrangements of most people. From individual shops and farms, industrial machines and factories brought hundreds away from their personal businesses under a single factory roof in increasingly densely populated cities. Supervised by a growing, but tightly guarded, class of wealthy individuals, workers from neighboring regions were brought into factories, where they no longer had control over the process of production. Their roles became specialized, repetitive, and dull. Work for a wage became compulsory for more and more of the population, as the concept of poverty became, legally tangible. Capitalism had begun and at its core were the new machines.

With this new social model came new relationships and interest groups—the owner class and the working class. [00:16:00] Those who owned the factories and the machinery, and those who sold their time and energy to them. While this is going on, machines are growing in their power. They do more, produce more, and take up an ever greater chunk of the responsibilities of workers. And this starts creating problems.

Some of the first observers of this era, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, were quick to realize the impact that the ever more capable steam powered machines would have on this new labor force. They saw, of course, the slums and depths of poverty that these industrial towns had created, but more than that, they saw a new form of power emerge. Automation subjected workers to invisible pressures within the workplace, when, as production processes became more automated, human workers had to adapt to the pace set by machines. A pace determined by the capitalist who manufactured and implemented them.

Unsurprisingly, this feature of automation hasn't disappeared under more advanced stages of capitalism. Take Amazon warehouses, where workers who are entirely reliant on now fully [00:17:00] automated systems have to adapt their working speed to the inhumane rate of maximally optimized robots. Workers lose their independence and their very humanity when they have to complete tasks in 11 seconds or less and take no breaks, otherwise, they threaten to disrupt a long production chain, of which they are only a minor part.

Automation breeds its own forms of surveillance, and by that token, its own discipline. The consequences are not just a loss of independence, but also a profound feeling of alienation, personal anguish, and the all too common injuries At a full 10 per 100 workers in Amazon factories specifically. And that's not all.

For Marx, this power was only one side of technological growth. Machines gave the capitalists much more. For starters, these machines made for a perfectly exploitable employee. And it's pretty obvious why. A machine demands no wages. It doesn't demand adequate working conditions, reasonable hours, or bathroom breaks. A machine costs what it costs to buy and maintain, and [00:18:00] every single penny of its 24 hour our workday afterwards goes back to the capitalist. It's a perfect arrangement. At least, that's the way it seems. 1Dime covers this aspect of automation extensively in his video. Of course, this arrangement has its own consequences.

Suddenly faced with a new machine that performs better, cheaper, or faster, an entire workforce might be more easily undermined. In theory, its value plummets to the robot's standards, allowing the owner class to threaten mass unemployment, and eroding whatever resistance workers had created with their collective power. If the employee is not entirely replaced, their job either becomes more menial and alienating, or more brutal and unprofitable. Workers are pitted against the machines they are now directly threatened by, rather than the capitalist class, which can shield itself behind the values of technological innovation.

Today, this process is happening across all sectors of the economy. Factory jobs were of course the first to go, but they were soon followed by many service and white collar jobs. [00:19:00] As AI progresses, even highly specialized tasks are delegated to machines, taking with them jobs for which humans are no longer the cheapest option. And this poses a dilemma for workers. Asking for higher wages is both good and necessary, especially as living costs everywhere go up, but it puts them and their industries at greater risk of their labor being automated. You can't bargain when someone is holding all the chips. So, rather than settling for low wages out of fear of automation, we should embrace automation, demand higher wages, or perhaps some form of universal basic income, which will not only be necessary for workers, but may even be necessary for capitalism itself to function.

Planet of the Robots: Four Futures of AI (Documentary) - 1Dime - Air Date 10-15-21

TONY CHAMAS - HOST, 1DIME PODCAST: In this third future of socialism with scarcity then, people no longer have to work nearly as much as to survive, yet people are also not free to consume as much as they like. And even though capitalistic economic classes will be presumably abolished, some kind of government will probably be [00:20:00] required to distribute resources, making pure communism a stateless society, an unlikely option. Given the need to determine and maintain stable levels of consumption and thus set prices, the state can't entirely wither away just yet, as it does in the communist scenario. And where there is scarcity, there will surely be some sort of political conflict, even though if it is no longer the same class conflict.

However, this form of socialism does not have to adopt. The exact same systems as previously existing socialist countries did. We can learn from the drawbacks and the benefits. In addition to being sabotaged by catastrophic wars and economic sanctions, experiments like the USSR, Yugoslavia, Cuba, Vietnam, and China started off with significantly lower levels of development and did not have the access to the technology that exists today. Facing this underdevelopment, these countries resorted to modes of production that could be described as [00:21:00] capitalistic, while having some form of socialist redistribution.

Despite this, however, these systems were nevertheless able to drastically improve their societies. Just look at the development from before versus after their transition to socialism, if you even want to call it socialism—which is more a matter of semantic debate. The point is that different socioeconomic conditions lead to different outcomes. After all, Marx himself thought that

communism would be impossible without first passing through the stage of capitalism, which he saw as a necessary evil that would exploit workers to death, but would develop the forces of production and create a lot of wealth, which could then be distributed and utilized for the common good during the transition to communism.

With the exception of the exploited Global South, most of the Global North countries like America, Canada, and Western Europe are already highly developed and we are starting to have access to labor saving technologies which can accelerate production while giving people more free time from work, which could [00:22:00] potentially one day allow us to transition to the fourth and most promising future, communism—an egalitarian society with abundance. But as mentioned before, if a worsening climate crisis and disappointing results of space exploration make this possibility too late, then we can settle for a socialism where we are given life's basic necessities and more freedom from work, but still have a limitation as to how much we can consume. Maybe it won't be fully automated luxury communism, but maybe we can get a partially automated socialism.

But assuming resources are not scarce, and climate change is slightly ameliorated, or we happen to find an abundance of natural resources in outer space, then, let's envision what a full communism with abundance could look like. Communism, egalitarianism, and abundance. It is already hard to escape the capitalist mind prison, but it is even harder to imagine what full communism could look like. The term fully automated luxury communism [00:23:00] has been popularized by theorist Aaron Bastiani in his book of the same title. This book deserves a video of its own, and it has quite a lot of compelling insights and evidence, despite what the goofy title might suggest.

This might all sound like an impossible utopia, yet the trend of widespread automation could very well make this a possibility, or at the very least, allow us to start liberating people from work. We can try to envision a classless society of abundance that was envisioned by theorists like Karl Marx. A partially automated communism, perhaps.

A communist post scarcity society would require a combination of labor saving technologies with an alternative to the current unsustainable energy system that still exists today, which is limited by the physical scarcity and ecological destructiveness of fossil fuels. Once again, this is not a guarantee, but there are hopeful signs of progress.

For instance, the cost of producing and operating solar panels has been falling [00:24:00] dramatically over the past decade, and based on their current

trajectory, they will soon be cheaper than our current electricity sources. Now the notion of post work tends to confuse a lot of people. People often think about this issue in a very binary way, in which either we live in a society where we don't work at all, or we work in a society where we have to work just to survive and be entitled to life's basic necessities, and this really misses the point. In a post scarcity society, it's not like all work would be abolished in the sense that we would all just sit around like sloths. As Karl Marx put it, labor would become not only a means of life, but life's prime want. People could just continue doing whatever activities, hobbies, and projects that they did out of their own will because they found them inherently fulfilling, not because of a needed wage.

The profit motive is unnecessary, especially considering the degree to which many decisions about work are already driven by non material incentives.

[00:25:00] Among those who are privileged enough to have the option, millions choose to go to graduate school, study degrees with little job prospects, become social workers, make music, make art, or start small organic farms, even when there are far more lucrative careers open to them.

It is also worth noting that even this post scarcity communist future would most likely still require some sort of human labor for certain occupations that can't be automated. We would most likely have to have a certain level of labor hours to complete in exchange for labor vouchers. Which could then be used to purchase leisure products and services provided by small worker cooperatives, perhaps. Those who put in more labor time could get access to more labor vouchers, which they could then use to purchase more goods and services. Thus, while arbitrary economic classes would be abolished, there would not be inequality of outcome, which is essentially impossible. Rather, society would be formulated according to need and ability. [00:26:00] "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

Although there are many possible ways to allocate the necessary labor that a communist society would still need to do, I would recommend looking into the various theories of Michael Albert and Paul Cockshott, who hold different compelling ideas. The demise of wage labor may seem like a faraway dream today, but at one point American and European labor movements used to demand shorter working hours as opposed to just higher wages and employment.

Workerism and the Protestant work ethic is an ideology that must be overcome. To get past wage labor economically, we must get past it socially. The idea of post scarcity communism has been loosely represented in one of the most popular works of science fiction—Star Trek. Now keep in mind, even a post

scarcity communist world would still have its own conflicts and contradictions, rather than one in which we all live in perfect harmony and politics comes to a halt.

There would probably be some sort of [00:27:00] social hierarchies, probably based on reputation and clout. But if it's not a vision of a perfect society, this version of communism is at least a world in which conflict is no longer based on arbitrary classes and control over scarce resources and the means of production. It is a world in which not everything is decided by money.

To conclude, these four different futures are useful to speculate about, but we might not necessarily only get one of them, we could get them all. And the author of the book, *Four Futures*, notes that there are paths that lead from one future to all of the others. And in many ways, aspects of all four of the futures are already partially here, but it's ultimately up to us, the masses, to build up the collective power and organization to fight for the futures that we desire.

Universal Basic Income Explained (An Automation Solution) - Futurology - Air Date 5-28-24

HOST, FUTUROLOGY: It is not a discussion of the technological revolution in automation without mentioning universal basic income, and for good reason, as in our and many others opinion, it is one of the best potential solutions to the automation conundrum. [00:28:00] In the simplest terms, UBI is about giving every member of society enough money to cover, as the name implies, the basics in life. This is not a new concept, with the idea of a state run basic income going as far back as the 16th century, and Sir Thomas More's book *Utopia*, which depicted a society in which every person receives a guaranteed income and is relieved of the burden of their essential needs. For what greater wealth can there be than cheerfulness, peace of mind, and freedom from anxiety?

Moving forward a few centuries, what we now know as UBI has been championed from a diverse group of individuals of every profession, race, and political stance. From Martin Luther King Jr., Thomas Paine, Milton Friedman, Richard Nixon, Stephen Hawking, Alan Watts, the Pope, we can go on and on.

The premise of the UBI has also inspired policy, with economist Milton Friedman's negative income tax. He held that the NIT would raise the poverty floor without negatively affecting the price system and market mechanisms.

This would then go on to inspire the earned income tax credit from the Nixon administration in the 1970s. Essentially, a tax credit benefiting individuals who are [00:29:00] earning a low or moderate income the most.

After a relatively dormant few decades, it has only been since recently, 2015, where the UBI discussion has been picking up steam again, as it's started to become a prominent talking point amongst technologists, such as many of those working in Silicon Valley and other tech hubs. This makes intuitive sense, as deep learning was starting to make rapid strides forward around this time period, and many in the industry were extrapolating forward and beginning to realize the long term impacts in terms of automation, which then led tech CEOs such as Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk, and Bill Gates to talk about UBI, thereby raising public awareness.

Beyond awareness, in our opinion, when UBI as a policy really began to spread through the mainstream consciousness was during the presidential run of Andrew Yang. While he did go on to lose that race, Yang and his team truly understood the impacts of automation and broke it down in a concise and easy to understand way for the general public, while also highlighting the need for a UBI, or as they called it, the Freedom Dividend of \$1,000 a month, translating to \$12,000 a year, just around the US poverty line.

With the origins of Universal Basic [00:30:00] Income understood, we can see that UBI has taken on a few distinct forms in different historical and geographical contexts. However, the core defining characteristics of it always remain the same. 1. A UBI is periodic. In other words, a recurring payment, for instance, every month as opposed to a one off grant. 2. A UBI is paid in cash, allowing recipients to convert their benefits into whatever they would like. 3. A UBI is paid per individual person versus per household based. And 4. A UBI is truly universal and unconditional, paid to every member of society, and not targeted to a specific population.

A universal basic income following these core principles intuitively makes sense. When you're a shareholder for a profitable company, you expect a dividend. And likewise, as citizens of countries with GDPs worth trillions, which are only set to increase as automation increases societal productivity, a UBI can be considered a dividend of this productivity to the populace. A UBI would also value much work today that, while important, society doesn't monetarily value.

For instance, stay at home parents and [00:31:00] caretakers. People in these roles work just as hard, if not harder than those in typical full time roles, and are needed for a society to function. However, they are not currently monetarily

compensated for their work. In the age of automation, as more jobs are lost to technological change, and as society gets more productive, no one should have the burden of worry about covering basic living expenses, such as rent, food, electricity, internet, and so on.

While this all sounds great in theory, the benefits of a UBI can also be backed up through real world testing. Since the 1900s, there have been many pilot tests for a UBI, from the United States, Canada, Kenya, Finland, and India to list a few. And these tests are only increasing in frequency as more countries, private entities, and non profits are entering the space. From the tests that have already been completed, many come to the same conclusion, that a UBI boosted recipients mental, physical, and financial well being, decreased the consumption of vices such as tobacco and alcohol, and led to modest improvements in employment.

To give more concrete results, an Ontario Canada's UBI pilot project of 4, 000 subjects over the course of 17 [00:32:00] months with a \$1,000 basic income, 79 percent of subjects reported better physical and 83 percent better mental well being. 50 percent reported a decrease in drug use, and while 17 percent did leave employment once basic income payments commenced, most significantly, nearly half of those subjects who stopped working during the pilot program returned to school or university to upskill for future employment. It is worth noting many argue the less than expected increases and sometimes decreases in employment are due to the efficacy of these tests.

In Ontario's case, the decrease could be attributable to conditions about non trial earned income, in which basic income payments would be reduced by 50 cents for every dollar of earned income. Efficacy issues of other trials include but are not limited to small sample sizes, short time frames, and too low of an amount of monthly payments to actually provide the stability of a real UBI.

The Two Futures Of Automation Capitalism VS Socialism Part 2 - Second Thought - Air Date 12-15-21

JT - HOST, SECONDTHOUGHT: As a quick refresher, a socialist economy is one in which the means of production, meaning factories, machines, farms, and so on, are owned in common rather than by private individuals. This can vary quite a lot in practice, but the [00:33:00] basic idea is that the economy is subject to democratic practice, not the whims of deeper pockets. In general, socialist economies are characterized by the provision of basic services to

everyone. Food, water, shelter, and medicine for all are the greatest priorities of this economic model, rather than profit, which often comes from gatekeeping these essential needs.

In this kind of system, automation looks very different. While automation, under any system can bring improvements in the quality of life for all under a socialist economy, it does not do so at the expense of the security of the individual. You might lose your job to a more productive machine, but that won't suddenly throw you into your savings and threaten to kick you out of your home. Quite the contrary, in practice, this can mean any number of things. Where innovations in medicine or agriculture are developed, they are no longer held hostage by intellectual property patents so that only a few people can gain access and only for the highest prices. Vaccines and other life saving innovations don't have to be life saving and [00:34:00] profitable to be worthwhile. They can just be life saving. This is innovation under a very wide lens.

But automation specifically works in just the same way. And the best way to prove that is to look at how automation affects work under a socialist economy. Whereas the capitalist exploits the advancements of technology to pit the workers against themselves, bringing down their wages, working conditions, or kicking them out of their job entirely, a socialist society has no such pressure to exert. Work being taken out of human hands is just that, no strings attached. Even if automation does not abolish all work, in capitalist or socialist economies alike, it will definitely reduce the amount of work we have to do. Whereas A capitalist system responds to this with unemployment, worsening working conditions, lower wages, or even meaningless jobs that only serve to increase profits without improving anything, a democratic organization of the economy can simply grant the worker more free time.

Picture your average day at work when automation has all but taken over. [00:35:00] With fewer responsibilities and fewer hours of human work needed, divided across more people whose jobs are also largely taken care of, a work day could be just a few hours long, if that. A work week just a few days. You could return home after a short day, knowing that your needs are taken care of, allowing you to spend your free time whichever way you like. More time means you can take up more hobbies, continue your education, or simply enjoy your life a whole lot more. You could take pleasure in activities that make you more fulfilled, or choose to spend your time working in your community, teaching classes, helping to plant trees, fixing potholes, whatever you want.

In our current society, this kind of freedom is a luxury awarded only to the lucky few. Under its automated extreme, that same freedom is lost to meaningless

work, to fatigue, and desperately trying to stay afloat. In a system where your survival isn't directly tied to the hours you work, automation is a blessing, both for you and for everyone else. Automation grants you more freedom rather [00:36:00] than punishing you simply for existing in a society with scientific progress. It could allow us to move beyond our basic necessities, and start climbing up our hierarchy of needs the world over. To start pursuing what really interests us in life. To take up educational, artistic, innovative, or creative pursuits that we would normally not be able to under capitalism without taking immense personal risks or being born into similarly immense privilege.

The truth is, we've been waiting for this for decades. Back in the 1930s, economist John Maynard Keynes predicted that technological advancements would allow his grandkids generation to only work for 15 hours a week, long before automation and artificial intelligence showed us the extent to which human labor could be replaced. The only reason we aren't there yet is the unnecessary capitalist obsession with always extracting more profit. But we can improve our lives without that suicidal greed, and so long as we continue to ignore that fact, our future is clear.

Universal Basic Income Explained (An Automation Solution) Part 2 - Futurology - Air Date 5-28-24

HOST, FUTUROLOGY: Speaking of payments, this is one of the largest reasons [00:37:00] a widespread UBI hasn't taken off in the decades it has been in discussion. There are valid concerns on how to fund an initiative of its scale. Using the USA as an example, and assuming a \$1,000 UBI, that would be on the order of \$2-3 trillion a year. Do we dare utter the dreaded T word as a solution?

Whenever there is talk of taxes, it comes with many interesting connotations. In terms of a robot or automation tax, it is an even more contentious topic, as many believe it is disincentivizing innovation. However, the argument of a robot tax is not to prevent innovation, but slightly slow down the speed of automation adoption, as we figure out how to transition into this new economy.

In fact, currently there exists incentivization in the exact opposite direction. A business that pays a worker \$100 pays \$30 in taxes, but a business that spends \$100 on equipment such as robotics pays only \$3 in taxes. The 2017 Taxes Cuts and Jobs Act lower taxes on purchases so much, that you can actually make money buying equipment. In other words, the USA in some ways is paying

companies to automate. By introducing a robot tax, [00:38:00] we can even the playing field so to speak, so that we can more gracefully transition into an automated society.

There could even be an incentivization to retrain or upskill employees by introducing tax credits on the robot tax. This tax could also slow down or prevent what we like to call toxic automation, in which a company's sole purpose is to automate as rapidly as possible without any regard for its employees. What is commonly seen in many gig employment companies such as Uber, in which they are not only paying below a fair market wage, but also use those excess profits to fund autonomous vehicle initiatives, with the goal to replace those very same workers.

In addition to the robot tax, there are many other methods of taxation and talks as well on the technology sphere, which can help curb or rein in companies on the more unethical end of the spectrum, and give back to society what they have taken. For instance, the data tax or data dividend as it is often called. Data is often referred to as a new oil due to how valuable it is, especially for deep learning algorithms. It is also one of the progress traps of the information age, as it could be used to build better, smarter applications, but often at the trade off of our privacy.

While this is [00:39:00] a topic for another video, the key takeaway is that our data is worth billions. The data brokerage industry alone is estimated to be worth nearly half a trillion dollars, with near 50 percent of the revenue coming directly from selling consumer data. And these numbers don't even take into account companies made to solely profit off our data such as Facebook, which made \$86 billion in 2020. Taxing for storing excessive quantities of data, transference fees of sending data between different brokers, or a host of other methods could be another way to collect revenue from companies who are benefiting from our data. and in many cases using it to automate away jobs.

The robot and data tax are two potential policies that can ensure increased production due to automation and technological change is not just captured by a select few at the top, but rather is spread across society by funding a universal basic income.

Furthermore, to the aforementioned sources, funding from a UBI can come from various other tax or budget adjustments, which in many cases is dependent on the values of the society implementing a basic income. For instance, funding could come from a value added tax, VAT, which some nations already have. Reducing the defense [00:40:00] budget, a wealth tax, inheritance taxes, fees on financial derivatives contracts, and so on. Beyond taxes, another substantial

funding source was best stated by Milton Friedman about the negative income tax, but also applies to UBI. That being, a UBI would reduce the paternalistic and intrusive state bureaucracy required to decide who among the poor merits assistance.

As you can see, by removing the excessive amounts of bureaucracy in our current aid system, about who and how they receive aid, tens to hundreds of billions of dollars could be saved. That could go straight into funding a universal basic income. A UBI as opposed to welfare programs would additionally end up motivating individuals on these systems to pursue other job opportunities, volunteer work, etc. With welfare as it presently is, each program comes with its own set of stipulations to receive money.

Take as an example disability income. If you break those conditions by say getting a part time job or freelance work, you can end up making less money than if you had just stayed on welfare. As the name implies, with a UBI, it is universal, meaning there are no stipulations, and an individual would not be penalized for looking to earn extra [00:41:00] income. To transition gracefully from our current welfare system, many have suggested making a UBI opt-in, in which case you would forgo any welfare program you are currently enrolled in.

While the funding sources we have discussed thus far would work in making a UBI economically viable, there is a much simpler option.

Quantitative easing, or put more simply, money printer, go brr. Now on a more serious note, whenever money printing is brought up, it does bring with it inflation fears. However, automation by its very nature is deflationary, so if we QE proportional to the jobs automation displaces to fund a UBI, these forces could balance out. To add to this, this pandemic has shown that governments around the world have the ability to print trillions of dollars when push comes to shove. Unfortunately, much of this money has gone directly to corporations, with what was told to us is that it would trickle down throughout the economy. In reality, this money has only gone into inflating asset prices and the coffers of executives and shareholders, thereby widening the wealth gap and increasing societal inequality.

If instead this money was provided to the general populace, rather than a wealth ceiling, it could serve as a floor for the new [00:42:00] economy. With people no longer burdened by their basic needs, they could afford that car repair they've needed, daycare, little league sports, and so on. Put another way, money provided by UBI actually trickles up through society, benefiting people who need it the most.

There is real world data to back this claim up. Referring back to Ontario's UBI pilot project, there was an uptick in economic activity, with individuals paying for education and student loans, purchasing new eyeglasses, paying for transportation costs such as bus fares to work rather than walking, purchasing necessary items like fresh produce, hospital parking passes, winter clothes they couldn't previously afford, and so on. One couple even used the money to keep their business afloat. Furthermore, an IPS study supports this take, in which for every \$1 given to high income earners results in \$0.39 added back to the economy, whereas for every \$1 given to wage earners, it results in \$1.21 added to the economy. In economics, this is referred to as the multiplier effect.

Another area where we would see this multiplier effect would be in an increase in entrepreneurship. Currently, entrepreneurship is not as prevalent because the [00:43:00] last thing someone who is struggling to pay for basic living expenses thinks is I'm going to start a business or a non profit. What is more common is that once one acquires financial security, and thereby more risk taking capacity, they can start a business. With the safety net provided by a well designed UBI, more organizations could come about, with some focused on tackling global problems, and others focused on the local community and hiring people, thereby spurring economic activity and generating wealth.

While on the subject of wealth generation, an important note to make here is that we have been looking at implementing a UBI from a purely capitalistic, GDP oriented perspective, when in actuality, we need to re envision this economic structure entirely for the technological revolution.

The People's Republic of Walmart

Interview with Leigh Phillips and Michal Rozworski Part 2 - Novara Media - Air

Date 6-13-19

AARON BASTANI - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: Finally. Regarding states and markets, what can socialists do in the here and now? What sort of, what sort of demands can be made if you're a Bernie supporter or AOC follower on Twitter or a Labour Party member here in the UK or anywhere else in the world and you're a socialist and you're engaged in electoral democratic politics or even non-electoral democratic [00:44:00] politics? What could you learn from this book and then say to people that hold public office, we should be doing this?

MICHAL ROZWORSKI: I think a lot of the things that, at least when I think of, for example, Bernie in the U. S., a lot of things that they're doing are already on the lines of this. For example, I think the Medicare for All demand in the U. S. is sort of, in a way, absurd, it seems, say, from Canada or the U. K., where we've had socialized health care for 50 years, even though it's not perfect, even though it's not democratic, even though it is sort of, you know, it's kind of paternalistic nationalization at times, at least it is sort of a de-commodified, democratically, in some way, decided over sector. I think that demand is a really good one. And then, for example, in the U. K. and other countries, I think, looking at big sectors of the economy that could be de-commodified, where there are already existing movements to start to do this. Pharmacare is another one and looking at actually the production of pharmaceuticals, which we don't have time to go into, but there's huge, huge, you know, problems with markets allocating resources for what gets produced, especially in terms of [00:45:00] antibiotic resistance, all this kind of stuff. Child care, transit you mentioned already. So I think on that sort of very, very high level social scale, like here's a sector of the economy that we could run democratically in, in the sort of very abstract overarching way. But I think at the same time, and I hope that comes through in the book, looking at, you know, that sort of low level of democracy, how can we democratize workplaces?

And I think that's where UK Labor is doing a really good job under Corbyn at looking at both of those, right? What are alternative models of ownership for particular enterprises, particular projects? And ones that give people more of a say, more of a capacity to participate in that planning at the sort of shop factory whatever level, and hope fully you kind of have those those pinchers that are moving in both directions from the bottom up and from the top down. And I mean, we talked about central banks a lot, I think doing that job of demystifying these big institutions, repoliticizing them and [00:46:00] cutting against that really strong neoliberal argument, that I think is falling apart slowly, that these are just like outside the realm of politics, that this is just like pure dry economics kind of working itself out. I think being, being really brave and forward about saying, No, we can have different social goals, you know, right at the heart of monetary policy or at the heart of these like large institutions that already have a coordinating function, but that have been effectively depoliticized.

So I think there's a whole host... in short, there's a whole host of things, because I think we, as we try to show that planning is really everywhere in our economy. It's just making it explicit and making it participatory, making us actually be the agents of it rather than small groups of people.

LEIGH PHILLIPS: The two examples I would give concretely would be, one, yes, I do really want to underscore the scale of the threat that we face from antimicrobial resistance. It was fascinating a few weeks ago to see the UK's antimicrobial resistance czar discuss the idea of potentially nationalizing big pharma in order to resolve this problem. [00:47:00] Viewers might not be aware but basically 30-35 years ago, the major pharmaceutical companies got out of the business of doing any sort of research and development or even commercialization of new classes of antibiotics. Research continues to happen, but at public universities or government labs, which do not have the money to engage in clinical trials.

And so, the UK antimicrobial resistance czar happens to be a former executive with Goldman Sachs. And his argument is that they might need to be nationalized because the antibiotics are simply insufficiently profitable. If you, you know, take a course of antibiotics for five, six weeks, at the end of that, you want the infection gone. You're not going to be taking a drug every day for the rest of your life, as you would with some sort of chronic disease, which is where the real money is. And that, the scale of the threat there is sort of undermining modern medicine. It is probably even more of an existential threat to our modern [00:48:00] way of life, throwing back to Victorian sort of types of medicine. Most of modern medicine depends upon a background of antimicrobial protection. Even diagnostics sometimes do that. So, it really is very existentially threatening. And that would be a... I would add that as a sort of number one... in fact, I kind of wish that there was as much of a left movement around antimicrobial resistance as there is around climate change. It's happening much faster. With, the green deal, I'm very excited about that framing because... and it is about planning now, it's talking about infrastructure, state-led development, full employment, and it leaps over the two sort of main framings of the climate threat that we've had so far, which are both forms of capitalist realism.

One is sort of, like, market mechanisms of carbon taxation or cap and trade, or feed-in tariffs, which end up, you know, more negatively impacting working people. On the other side, there's a sort of, like, personal, individual, what can I do? Can I, travel, you know, fly less or whatever? And again, it's this [00:49:00] sort of individualized, capitalist realist conception of responsibility for this. The Green New Deal framing for the very first time locates the real source of the problem of market failure, of who is responsible, not as individuals, but a system, the market system.

Some of the particular demands within it, I would like to see a little bit more robust. So, I have some minor criticisms there. I'd like to see more engagement with trade unions from the get go, where Green New Deal activists have, from

the start, worked with trade unions, they've had much more success than those areas where, sort of, activists or environmentalists have come up with their series of demands and never spoke to trade unions. And now there's a number of trade unions who've actually been protesting the Green New Deal in California and elsewhere in the United States, even some quite radical unions like the electrical workers. So, there needs to be a sort of finessing of that. But overall, the framing is absolutely an example of what we're talking about in terms [00:50:00] of planning as a solution to climate change and a raft of other environmental issues, rather than degrowth or individual consumption or market mechanisms, cap and trade or whatever.

AARON BASTANI - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: It's interesting you mention the pharmaceutical stuff because in my book I talk about a great disorder and all these crises. I don't talk about that one, but most people aren't aware of this: in 1900, the leading causes of death globally, pneumonia, infections, disease...

LEIGH PHILLIPS: Influenza.

AARON BASTANI - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: ...yeah, exactly. It's all infections. And we just take it for granted that increasingly causes of death will be dementia, cancer, stroke, age-related conditions, but the other...

LEIGH PHILLIPS: That was one of the greatest humanitarian developments. It is such a precious thing, you know, a price above rubies, antibiotics.

AARON BASTANI - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: And they weren't patented. Fleming didn't patent penicillin, which is interesting.

LEIGH PHILLIPS: Oh it is, yeah, absolutely. There's all sorts of lovely little...

AARON BASTANI - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: Comrade Fleming.

LEIGH PHILLIPS: ...all sorts of lovely stories of, sort of socialist ethos, of socialist values within the history of modern medicine. And [00:51:00] revival of that is absolutely necessary.

BONUS - The People's Republic of Walmart Interview with Leigh Phillips and

Michal Rozworski Part 3 - Novara Media - Air Date 6-13-19

AARON BASTANI - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: So the socialist calculation debate, which you explicitly talk about in the book, we've already sort of really touched upon it, is this idea that it's only really through the price mechanism that you can have this optimal allocation of resources, and it feeds into sort of everyday, off the shelf ideology for just capitalist realism, right? You don't even need to think that you're defending capitalism. It's just that's how prices work. That's how they always work. And what Hayek and Friedman and people like this say is that this will always be superior to centrally command economies because they are acting with limited information. Now we can debate whether that was ever true or not. Let's say it was true. Let's say it's historically contingent, it was limited to a certain period of time. What you guys are saying is that technology now makes that general debate quite moot. And furthermore, if anything, big data gives us far greater information than prices do. Is that correct?

LEIGH PHILLIPS: Yeah, absolutely. But I mean, you could also say that, if that were the case, if you [00:52:00] require some sort of external prices for that, then you could say the same thing about the Soviet Union. Soviet Union traded with the rest of the world. So that doesn't really work. So you have to have some other explanation as to why the Soviet Union did not work, rather than simply planning. Because if planning, if a command economy is the reason that Soviet Union didn't work, then neither should Walmart, neither should Amazon, neither should any of these, and just sort of saying, Oh, well, we know about Coase, I mean, that's their sort of get out of jail free card. And they, basically what we're doing with this is, we're looking at it a little bit more seriously, investigating that, and really thinking about it more deeply. And the reason that this is absolutely necessary for us as socialists, why we need to return to the socialist calculation debate, is because it is hard. If we are going to replace the market and all of the inequalities and the irrationalities that accompany that, it is not just enough for us through the force of will and our optimism and sense of injustice to right the wrongs. We actually do have to think very [00:53:00] seriously about the challenges of calculation.

And what's fascinating about the socialist calculation debate from the 30s to the 50s, and why Hayek and so on and so forth made such really good arguments was because they, in some respects, were on the back foot. With the existence of socialism, social democracy, militant trade unions, they were responding to an ascendant, sort of intellectually confident left. And they had to be as good. And now what we see, and we were talking about this just before we started here, the

right's response to our book already and I think to yours as well, is that it's sort of off the shelf arguments. They're not really responding to this. And I find it very interesting and exciting to be in a moment where the left once again is beginning to be intellectually confident, and that they're having to respond to us once again, which is nice. Sorry, I went off on a bit of a tangent.

AARON BASTANI - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: No, no, it's good. I mean, I've just, because obviously my book was launched yesterday, Tuesday.

LEIGH PHILLIPS: Congratulations.

MICHAL ROZWORSKI: Congratulations, yeah.

AARON BASTANI - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: Happy to be joining this oeuvre of, you know, quite inflammatory opinion on the left that the right feel they [00:54:00] have to respond to. And yeah, the responses were, or even the responses in the reviews prior to the publication, Danny Finkelstein in the *Times*, and it's just churlish, undergrad, Facebook-post level prose. And it's like, okay climate change, demographic aging, automation, the collapse of the neoliberal model since 2007-2008, whatever your politics, we can all agree this is a thing. And they're not even talking about that. They're not talking about, for instance, this book as an intervention to those debates. They're just saying, do you apologize for 1917? Will any sort of effort to make society better result in, you know, the Russian Civil War mark two or, you know, the Ukraine famines and so on. I'm like, it's an off the shelf debate. Are there any smarter people on the right? There must be people. For instance, my book got positive reviews. I know you have as well in certain publications one might not expect, the *Financial Times*, for instance. Are there not people in those [00:55:00] circles who look at this and go, there's something really here that's quite interesting. Have you encountered any reviews like that?

LEIGH PHILLIPS: The anarcho-capitalists vey much...

MICHAL ROZWORSKI: Yeah, I was going to say, of all people, the anarcho-capitalists are willing to take it. So, you know, a fringe, but again, someone like Hayek was a fringe figure in his time, but there's definitely people on the right who are willing to take it seriously. There's the *Reinventing Capitalism* book, Schönberger, this, I think he was like a...

LEIGH PHILLIPS: Viktor Mayer-Schönberger

MICHAL ROZWORSKI: ...consultant management sort of, you know, management consultant who's written kind of the definitive kind of pop book on big data and now has a second one about how big data is going... you know, he's basically making some of our arguments in, you know, the usual type of thing of saving capitalism from the right, but he's even willing to say that maybe this new system enabled by information technology will not really be capitalism, but something else, but we'll still have the hierarchies and all of that. But yeah, so there's definitely people on the right thinking through this stuff. And I think there's a big contrast between them and the people who [00:56:00] are just, you know, like making these off the shelf arguments and, you know, Laffer Curve, writing on a napkin level of intellectual curiosity, right?

LEIGH PHILLIPS: Mayer-Schönberger, I think, is very, very interesting and because, as you say, he's in many respects making some of the similar arguments we make, but from the opposite point of view. He's nakedly pro-capitalist and he's just finding it fascinating that more and more transactions already are taking place where the price signal is playing a smaller and smaller role now that we have sort of machine learning, big data allowing for multi-dimensional comparison of different factors. He uses the example sometimes of airline ticket recommendation engines, where you, as a human, might find it actually quite difficult to like, Okay, so I want to fly on this date or possibly these other dates, and I don't want to fly out of this airport, but I could if it were cheap, and, but I want an aisle seat, and my wife wants a window, but I don't want any, uh... all those different things, and we actually find it very difficult as [00:57:00] humans to have that multidimensional comparison, but the recommendation engine knows, having seen how you've purchased things in the past, begins to actually know you better than you know yourself, is able to make these recommendations. And price is just one smaller aspect of this.

What's fascinating, I think, there, with him, is that you can sort of see, you know, there's a challenge to neoliberalism since 2008. They haven't really grappled with the... they haven't fully resolved the crisis. And there are interesting figures, horrifying figures on the right that are like people like Marco Rubio, who are making arguments that there needs to be more state planning, more intervention, more industrial policy for the United States to be able to compete against China. And you could imagine a world where sort of after neoliberalism, where the right fully recognizes once again the necessity of planning, but hierarchical, authoritarian planning, a return to that, and never being any sort of, like, final reckoning between the classes. And so our [00:58:00] argument is, it is sort of the flip side of that, which is planning is possible. It's everywhere already. It's hierarchical. And what we need to be doing is making it work for us. We need to make sure that it's democratic.

BONUS - The People's Republic of Walmart Interview with Leigh Phillips and Michal Rozworski Part 4 - Novara Media - Air Date 6-13-19

AARON BASTANI - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: Yeah, because I look at big data and I look at all the tendencies you're talking about in the book and I basically see two potential futures. So one is data-driven public services, universal basic services, which are freely available to all on the back of declining cost of information, energy, labour, etc. I think that's one highly plausible future. So, permanently cheaper. The question is, how cheap, right? And then a big variable in all of that will be big data. So if you've got universal basic service of public buses, free public buses for everybody everywhere. Obviously, predictive modeling about who's going to go where, for how long, etc, would be very good at allocating resources for a public transport network. So that's one future. Another is China, where you have WeChat, which is not just a social network, but also a payment system. You [00:59:00] have smart cities, which have facial recognition around them. And people would be fined for jaywalking or so on. Something like that, a minor infraction, and they'll be immediately fined. It'll be through their mobile phone. Is that a fair conclusion to say that? Planning of a considerably increased kind is inevitable. The question is, in whose interests?

LEIGH PHILLIPS: You hit the nail on the head, absolutely. This Marco Rubio report that came out a couple of months ago, *Made in China 2025*, where he makes this call for, you know, more planning so the United States can stay ahead in robotics, AI, biotech, a number of other areas. Then Intel came out with a similar white paper making an argument for more an interventionist industrial policy. And one can absolutely imagine a sort of convergence of these ideas and the dystopia is genuinely that inability to, I think, make a distinction between the sort of surveillance capitalism of Amazon and Facebook's of the world and the surveillance communism of the people's Republic of China, and, yeah, [01:00:00] social credit and all these, convergence of those. I'm not predicting that that's going to happen, but I do think that the key at the moment for the left is, in the face of both of these sort of tendencies, is to remain as the guardians of freedom. That whatever path that they go down along this more definitely surveillance sort of planned market economy, our responsibility is to be the champions of freedom and democracy in those situations.

MICHAL ROZWORSKI: And we already see how much Silicon Valley cooperates with the U. S. government, with the surveillance state, with the national security state, all that. We also see, I mean, the upside is we also see tech workers starting to rebel against that, and some, you know, very nascent forms of organizing there that are partly driven by working conditions, but partly driven by these sort of, you know, deeply political pressures where people see these possible futures. And again, not making really super dystopian predictions, but even today there's enough there that people don't want to be involved in whatever projects, whether at home or abroad... we saw that with Microsoft and some of the facial recognition stuff and other things. And yeah, in terms of the sort of smart city thing, we're already seeing that there's Sidewalk [01:01:00] Labs, which is run by Google, setting up shop in actually Toronto, Canada, and trying to create these sort of model, the first sort of model neighborhood that would take this sort of capitalist road of big data and planning, marrying urban planning with economic planning, with a host of other things and enabling the kinds of fairly, again, authoritarian technocratic solutions that we're deeply critical of here.

AARON BASTANI - HOST, NOVARA MEDIA: I mean, it's one of the things I really agree with in the account of Marx's *Grundrisse* by Antonio Negri. There's lots of things to disagree with Antonio Negri, but the idea of the real subsumption of society, the gradual expansion of the surveillance of the factory, superimposed onto society at large, I think that's quite a clear and prescient account of what Google wants to do, for instance, with smart cities, it seems to me. They want to gather and collect as much data as possible about every iterative act, every movement, and somehow subordinate it to the profit motive.

MICHAL ROZWORSKI: Yeah. Yeah, and I think the challenge for the left is to [01:02:00] come up with, uh, and I don't think we even pretend to do that here, but to start to come up with ideas for these kinds of coordinating functions to be done democratically, to be done in a way that, you know, somehow walks that tightrope between centralization and decentralization, between decision making at the individual level and freedom and control, as well as sort of those big broad social goals that we'd want to achieve together in a way that avoids exactly this kind of subsumption. And I mean, yeah, I think that that observation is happening. The one we quote in the book is, that also famous quote from Marx, where, I won't get it right, but it's something about, you know, how we learn about society at the factory, like, you know, the factory, in his time teaches us just how reliant we are on other people, just how social beings we are, where, you know, production under feudalism or under other social systems would not have taught that. And I think this is, you know, sort of like the next logical step. If that's [01:03:00] already implicit in capitalism, is this sort of reliance on others and this common building of a world, why don't we actually, actualize

that, which is sort of trying to show us where we actually socially decide on what we want to be doing.

Final comments on living our values and stepping away from work

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: We've just heard clips today, starting with the introduction of the book *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*. *Novara Media* challenged the arguments against a planned economy. *Second Thought* laid out what mass automation under capitalism would look like. *1Dime* explored the ideas of socialism under either scarcity or abundance. *Futurology* gave some historical context on universal basic income. *Second Thought* continued the discussion of a democratically controlled socialist economy. *Futurology* also looked at how to pay for UBI. And *Novara Media* continued their discussion about planned economies.

That's what everybody heard, but members also heard more bonus clips from *Novara Media*, getting deeper into the weeds. To hear that [01:04:00] and have all of our bonus contents delivered seamlessly to the new members-only podcast feed that you'll receive, sign up to support the show at bestoftheleft.com/support, or shoot me an email requesting a financial hardship membership, because we don't let a lack of funds stand in the way of hearing more information.

Now to wrap-up, I don't really have the time or energy to say much today, which is actually right to the point because we're getting ready to try to live some of the values discussed during today's show. It wasn't really planned, but it worked out nicely that this episode brings us right up to a vacation week, but not to worry, we have automated some hand-picked episodes from the archives to drop into your feed. So be on the lookout for those. In the meantime, we will not be working, not defining or valuing ourselves by our work, and if we're really lucky, hardly looking at the internet at all, and then we'll be back refreshed and recharged, ready to face the absurdity that is 2024 a new.

That is [01:05:00] going to be it for today. As always keep the comments coming in. You can leave us a voicemail or send a text to (202)999-3991, or simply email me to jay@bestoftheleft.com. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show, and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to our transcriptionist trio, Ken, Brian, and Ben for their volunteer work, helping put our transcripts together.

Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic designing, web mastering, and bonus show co-hosting. And thanks to those who already support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships. You can join them by signing up today at bestoftheleft.com/support, through our Patreon page, or from right inside the Apple Podcast app.

Membership is how you get instant access to our impressively good and often funny bonus episodes, in addition to there being extra content, no ads, and chapter markers and all of our regular episodes all through your [01:06:00] regular podcast player. In addition to the warm and fuzzy feeling you get by knowing that your support helps the people who make this show go on vacation every once in awhile. You'll find that link to sign up in the show notes, along with a link to join our Discord community, where you can also continue to discussion.

So, coming to you from far outside, the conventional wisdom of Washington DC, my name is Jay!, and this has been the *Best of the Left Podcast* coming to twice weekly thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from bestoftheleft.com.