



WORKS

times, you're just paid the same and expected to produce more. Despite all the innovations of the past century, the average work week has not decreased. Not to mention that your initiative outside of work gets eroded too. We're so burnt out by work that we can hardly pursue the interests and activities we actually enjoy doing. As a result, some can't even imagine a world without work, where people are able to invest their energy in projects they actually want to do.

The mythology of work insists that work teaches responsibility, but workers check their own consciences at the workplace door. The Nuremberg defence of "just following orders" has been employed to avoid accountability for mass pollution, mass animal cruelty, mass wastage, mass destruction, mass surveillance, mass imprisonment, mass enslavement, and mass violence. Lastly, the mythology of work insists that work provides security, despite the hazards and instability that practically define work. But true security would be found in a community built on mutual aid, where people support and look out for each other. Work is really the thing that keeps us from building and sustaining such communities.

Abolishing Work?

People are sick of work and yearning for more. Some turn to individualistic entrepreneurship, UBI, or reformist unions; there's still a widespread acceptance of the inevitability of work. Sadly, it's still hard for many people to consider, let alone imagine, the ambitious aim and effort to abolish work and advance freedom and fulfilled potentials for all.

Contemporary hunter-gatherers, according to anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, enjoy what he terms "the original affluent society." They "work" for about four hours per day in total, but based on my earlier definition, what they do can hardly be defined as work. It is not forced labour. Their quests for food are intermittent, leisure abundant, and varied. What they do is more akin to "play": free activity stimulated by a superabundance of life and the liberty of thought and feeling.

Play has been reduced to "mere child's play," but play is a far greater and more expansive activity than we might initially recognise. Play is energising and enjoyable. It is the exuberant expression of human creativity. I hinted at it briefly in my video on *The Importance of Imagination*, but we seriously need to undertake the task of creating a new way of life, based on play instead of work. The enormous task of transforming work into play will require a lot of effort. But work abolitionists recognise that, unlike the vast majority of work today, such an effort would actually be worthwhile.

