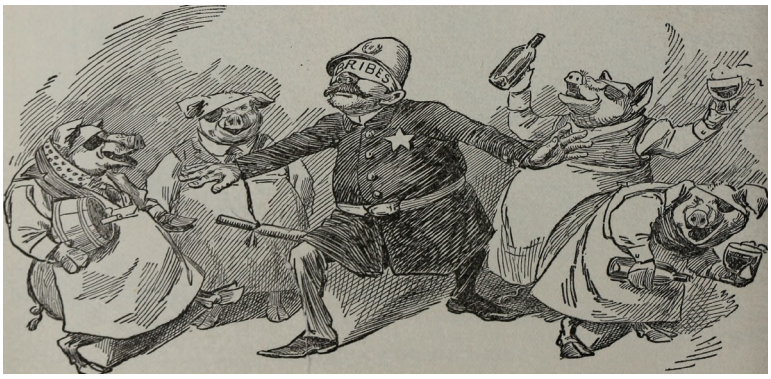
MUTUAL AID MONTHLY

A Production of Des Moines Mutual Aid June 2023



DSM City Council: "Feed the Pig"

Budget reflect's local gov't subservience to police dept

Comrade Nolan

This April, the Des Moines City Council approved its budget for the upcoming year. Yet again, funding for police is by far the largest cost shouldered by Des Moines taxpayers. Next year, more money will go to the police than road maintenance, sewage and libraries combined. With the exception of 2020, each year has seen the police take up a larger chunk of the city budget than ever before.

Des Moines is not the only city that puts police above other services. Despite violent crime hitting an historic low in the US, funding for police has more than doubled since the 1970s. Funding that previously went to hospitals and schools has shifted to law enforcement and prisons. American cities now police their citizens and not much else.

It's easy to say that our incompetent leaders are just making a mistake by overfunding the police. But we've known for decades that increasing police funding has little to no effect on public safety. Our city council reads the same news we all do, and they don't fund police because they think it makes us safer.

So why would our local governments spend more money that doesn't make us safer?

The decision to waste taxpayer money on police makes sense only when we ask if public safety isn't the point. Police act as the first wave to make 'cool' neighborhoods safe for rich, new residents. Police keep poor, black & brown communities fractured and unable to organize. While they don't deserve credit for Des Moines being a safe place to live, they deserve much credit for keeping its poorest residents kept out of sight.

No One is Coming to Save Us - The Disaster of Electoralism, Part 2

To Run in Circles is to Go Nowhere

Subcomandante Randy

A common tactic advocated by those without a historical analysis is that if we can get "our candidate" elected, they will fight for us and shape the state to our interests. This assumes two things: (1) that capitalism and the state are neutral platforms and (2) that they can be reformed.

These premises are faulty, and the argument built on top of them crumbles upon examination.

From the first step Columbus took in this hemisphere this system was founded on exploitation: the theft of Indigenous land and Black bodies to benefit a minority class. Later, this new nation currently known as the USA, the first born capitalist, designed its state/government to protect its theft from the rest of us. Every part of the US is built from horrific exploitation and protected by the pigs and their prisons. They feast, we die, all by design.

As discussed in Part 1 (April '23), if we manage to elect one of ours, at a huge cost, their power is negated immediately and gains are temporary. The state considers these electoral losses as pressure valves to release class tension and the confused comrades take these "wins" as proof that the US is fixable, that the state can be reformed. This "loyal opposition" strengthens the system by legitimizing its structures and devouring liberation movements.

It's clear that our only path to change is to destabilize, delegitimize, and replace their (temporary) power. This only comes from strong organized mass movements armed with the understanding that our enemies' institutions are rotten at their roots and unusable, and to know without a doubt that we will win. The democratic party, or any capitalist party, has no role in our liberation.

Artificial Intelligence and Jobs

Under capitalism, AI is poised to discipline labor, not liberate it

Jenots Tumsa

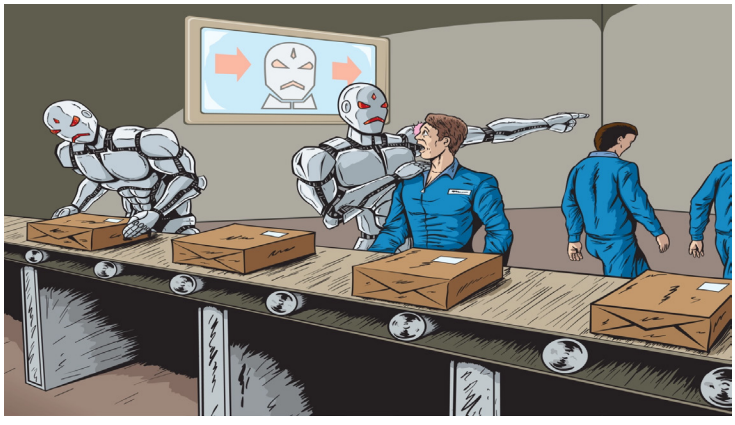
"On the horizon of the modern world dawns the black sun of boredom[.]" - Henri Lefebvre (Critique of Everyday Life Vol. 2)

It is well-established that AI techniques can 'automate' (poorly) many of the rote, uncreative aspects of many jobs. Jason Smith points out in 'Automation in the Age of Stagnation' that while there has been talk for decades about the loss of jobs to automation, very little automation has really happened in the service sector. While work has been 'computerized', the essential creative tasks of service (e.g. restaurant) work have not been automated. Human ingenuity factors heavily.

It is commonly claimed that service sector productivity has risen due to automation. It has risen - but not due to automation of service jobs. The automation of the industrial sector has led to a greater pool of unemployed in the service sector, leading to a greater pool of available unemployed, and to lower wages.

Can we apply the same logic to the use of AI language models? I don't have a crystal ball, but: if AI doesn't 'take your job', it may be the case that AI can simplify your specific work tasks, or (perhaps simultaneously) swell the ranks of the unemployed by taking someone else's job. This puts the capitalist class in a position to lower your wages.

Communists are not opposed to AI doing boring work for us in a stateless, moneyless, classless society. We are, however, opposed to its development as a weapon against workers in the present. As it stands, that is what AI is. We should be hostile to it.



This flyer is a production of Des Moines Mutual Aid, which is a local network of anarchists, communists, and socialists building community autonomy from capitalism and the state. Below are our points of unity - basically, the political and social outlook which binds us together.

0. We believe in working shoulder to shoulder and standing in solidarity with all oppressed communities. We ourselves are oppressed, and our mutual aid work is a fight for our collective liberation. We do not believe in a top-down model of charity. Instead, we contrast our efforts at horizontal mutual aid, the fostering of mutually beneficial relationships and communities, to dehumanizing and colonizing charity.

1. We believe in community autonomy. We believe that the communities we live and organize in have been largely excluded from state social services, but intensely surveilled and policed by the state repressive apparatus. Capitalism is fundamentally unable to meet people's needs. We want to build self-sustaining communities that are independent of the capitalist state, both materially and ideologically, and can resist its repression.

2. We are police and prison abolitionists. Abolition and the mutual aid that we practice are inextricably linked. We don't rely on capitalist institutions or the police to do our work. We believe in building strong and resilient communities which make police obsolete, including community systems of accountability and crisis intervention.

3. We work to raise the political consciousness of our communities. Part of political education is connecting people's lived experiences to a broader political perspective. Another component is working to ensure that people can meet their basic needs. It is difficult to organize for future liberation when someone is entrenched in day-to-day struggle.

4. We have open disagreements with each other about ideas and practices. We believe there is no formula for resolving our ideological differences other than working towards our common aims, engaging with each other in a comradely manner, and respecting one another, whether or not we can hash out disagreements in the process.

If you want to get involved, let a volunteer know. For more information, including how to donate, visit https://iowamutualaid.org/.