

**The Revolution Will
Not Be Televised**

Robert S. Swiatek

Copyright June 2013, Robert S. Swiatek. All Rights Reserved

First Edition

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without written permission from both the copyright owner and the publisher of this book.

Printed in the United States

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

To Grace Lee and James Boggs

Table of contents

Introduction	1
1. She works hard for the money	4
2. Takin' care of business	13
3. My old school	25
4. Taxed to the max	30
5. It's only money	36
6. Nuclear blues	44
7. Changes	51
8. Another brick in the wall	61
9. Revolution	67
10. Farmers' market	77
11. We'll sing in the sunshine	89
12. Wind	96
13. River	103
14. Tomorrow	108
References	123

Introduction

Tick Tock, Don't Stop, was my first book on work, published in 2003. It dealt with unnecessary work, my consulting experiences, management, the Union, the unions and listed all the work I had done, paid or otherwise. That list was long and I was a bit surprised that I had engaged in so many different endeavors. Four years later, my second book on the same subject came out, *This Page Intentionally Left Blank*. It handled some of the same ideas of the first book, but some new thoughts, including the length of the workweek and the minimum wage. Not enough people read the latter book because workers still have excruciating long workweeks. Many workers are still paid a pittance despite their efforts and dedication at the factory or office. Doing book signings over the last few years, when I mentioned \$15 an hour and the 30-hour workweek to people, there was unanimous approval of both. Everyone thought they were great ideas and exactly what we needed. We just have to convince the politicians and big business. I had a few more thoughts about work and considered writing another book on it, and didn't completely abandon the idea.

Over the last few years, I learned about Grace Lee Boggs from a few magazines, including YES! I'll say a few more words on that fine publication later. You can characterize her as possessing great vision, brilliant, caring, and revolutionary. She was married to James Boggs until he died in 1993, and you could use the same attributes to describe him. They lived in Detroit – she still does – and cared about the worker and social justice. They were both progressive thinkers who envisioned possibilities not considered by others, who were stuck in tradition.

After discovering more about the Boggs and their work in Detroit, I contributed a few dollars to their project and not long after that I wished Grace a happy birthday through an email. You can do the same this year. Her birthday is June 27. In the year 2012, she celebrated her 97th birthday. If you're reading this after her birth date, wish her a belated birthday and blame me. Thanks. Last year the good people in Detroit sent me a publication with essays from Detroit Summer participants, including thoughts from James and Grace and other progressives. It was in my home for a

while before I started to read it. Soon after that, I decided to write this book.

In any treatise on work, the writer will probably mention big business, money, jobs and materialism, or at least a few of these. There's all of that in this book and it may be considered a follow up to the two others. But it's more than that. I begin with the distinction between work and a job. There's a monstrous difference, and I include some of my consulting adventures. Some are jobs, others are work and still others could be a combination of the two. There's even a case of a fictional character who performs what he thinks is work, who doesn't have a job and all his efforts don't amount to anything being accomplished on his part.

The next chapter attacks big business for its performance – nothing short of lackluster. Do you know any phrases with the word *business* in them that give you a good feeling? If you do, I'll mention a few practices that corporations engage in of which you probably won't approve. Three type of businesses will be considered just briefly: major league baseball; Henry Ford and cars; arts and entertainment. Other business concepts such as outsourcing, downsizing and settling out of court enter into the chapter.

Chapter 3 looks at education with a few examples that indicate that there are a few flaws in the system. The next two chapters tackle taxes and money. They seem to fit together. In the chapter on cash, I'll start with some big spenders – really big – and get into the minimum wage and workweek. Slavery and slave labor can't be left out since plantation masters and owners of the plants have relied – and still do so today – on the workers for their financial success. Why do the work when others will do it for you? Stress and 24/7 go together and fit right in, as do thoughts on television, another moneymaker. Greed follows naturally. As is obvious, the first five chapters have a common thread. They're all about money.

Fossil fuels are big news in the headlines today, so I'll spend some time on them. From the beginning up to this point, the book appears to be too depressing to continue reading. Here on out, things will be rosier. There is much that each of us can do to remedy matters and replace the greed, hunger, poverty and injustice with insight, action, love and compassion. Chapter 7

handles change – something that is a dire necessity in these troubling times. The rest of the work is about revolution. As you might guess, it's the good kind. Education has and can continue to take place outside the walls of a classroom, as I point out in chapter 8. Chapter 9 gets into the heart of the book: revolution.

Though I have given examples of inspirational projects in the previous chapters, chapter 10 has more examples of projects all over the country just like Detroit Summer. An answer to the foul fossil fuels fiasco can be found in the chapters whose titles are *We'll Sing in the Sunshine*, *Wind* and *River*, all of which you might recognize as the titles of songs. I left out chapters titled *Blowin' in the Wind*, *Sunny*, *Windy*, *Please Mr. Sun* and a host of other appropriate names. The last chapter of this treatise continues with more great efforts and ideas.

For two of my last published books, each chapter title was that of a song or at least words from one. In this book, I've done the same. I thank the late revolutionary poet, writer and singer Gil Scott-Heron for the title that I chose for this book. It's the same as what he chose for the song from his 1970 release, *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox*. Gil was born in Chicago and considered himself a bluesologist: a scientist who dug into the birth of the blues. Known as the Godfather of rap, his music in the 1970s was a forerunner of neo soul and hip-hop. I'd bet that James and Grace knew his music and writing. He fit right in with their thinking. I couldn't think of a more suitable title for this book.

bobcooks.com

1. She works hard for the money

The six words above are the title of a number one R&B hit from the album of the same name by Donna Summer. Released in 1983, it was one of her biggest hits and the biggest hit of the decade. The song was a blockbuster, reaching the number three spot on both the US Billboard Hot 100 and US Billboard Club Play Chart as well as in the top twenty-five in the UK, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and Australia.

Numerous songs have been written about work, including *Workin' for a living* by Huey Lewis and The News, *Get a job* by The Silhouettes, *Working in the coal mine* by Lee Dorsey and *Sixteen tons* by Tennessee Ernie Ford. That's only the start. There are many more. There'll be mention of coal later but here we'll just concentrate on jobs and work.

You probably think that those two words mean the same thing. Joe said, *I love my job*, and Anne replied, *I just love work. I can't get enough of it*. The latter sounds like she might be a workaholic, but Joe could be heading in the same direction. I've always felt that the phrase *good job* was and still is an oxymoron. There really is no such thing. Having been in the business world for over thirty-five years – I feel that's enough to qualify for retirement – I think you might appreciate my thoughts what a *job* is. What follows are a few examples.

1) In the mid 1980s, I left a full time job in Syracuse to return to consulting, which I had done for four years. I met a salesman from a consulting firm who knew a few people at some corporations in central New York. Work was hard to find as a consultant, but he knew a manager or two at a company in Liverpool, close by. Let's call it P & C Foods. They gave me a job there – a software contract for one month – and I began working on requests from a few users. I was busy, but when I finished doing what I had to do in each case, I spent time waiting around for return calls from the users, which never materialized. As a result P & C Foods let me go after four weeks. This assignment involved work – for me – but it was a case of a few people finding a job for me – the consulting firm representative and his friend at the company. I should have known better because of the short

length of the contract. I would be able to put food on the table and pay the mortgage, but only for four weeks. Once again, I had to find work.

2) Corporations are notorious for having numerous vice presidents and we wonder what work they actually do. No one knows. Obviously, they have a job, but I'm not sure about the *work* part. Apparently if you're the relative or friend of the CEO of the company, you could be a vice president of the company. We're all familiar with what the tasks of the vice president of the United States are, usually being sent to funerals of other heads of state. Just recall the words of Will Rogers, *Will you please tell me what you do with all the vice presidents a bank has? The United States is the biggest business institution in the world and they only have one vice president and nobody has ever found anything for him to do.*

From my experience in the business world, there are too many people with jobs who just don't do any work. If so, it probably involves a minimal effort with very little actually being accomplished. I might add a thought about meetings, which can only be described as part of the job. If you're in attendance at one, no work is getting done. Many people feel that the amount of productivity at a meeting is indirectly proportional to the number of attendees at that gathering.

3) On my very last contract at Blue Cross in Rochester in 2001, if I'm not mistaken, there was someone in the company – maybe he was even on our project – but I don't think anyone knew what his job was. I hope that he did. Sad to say, this was not an isolated occurrence in the world of big business.

4) We're all too familiar with the words: *look busy*. On Tuesday morning, Chris the manager comes around to the department and mentions that tomorrow afternoon, the big guys in the corporation will be coming around. He admonishes the staff to *look busy*. Note: that he doesn't say, *Get to work*, or something to the effect that you should be productive. You can also find the bumper sticker

Jesus is coming – look busy

I wasn't aware that He was in management. I assumed that was the Father's task. I believe the Third Person has something to do with the Union.

5) I taught some computer courses in the COBOL language in Burlington, Massachusetts quite a few years ago. One of the students in the first class I taught wanted a job after the course was finished. That's not unusual, but he didn't want to have to do any work. Apparently his idea was to collect a paycheck and not have to produce anything worthwhile.

Work involves something getting done, as in the following cases.

1) Spring finally arrives, so I have to begin preparing the land behind my house for a garden. A few months before that, it snowed almost a foot, so I had to shovel the driveway. In the summer, I have to cut the lawn – in French, that's *mo de lawn*. In each case, I had work to do, but received a workout, so it wasn't a bad scenario. I enjoy the benefits of growing my own herbs and vegetables. Having one's hands in the soil is very therapeutic as well. Shoveling snow, cutting the grass and working in the garden are all examples of work. Work can be a joy, but it may not be at all times.

2) In the late 1990s, I began work at Blue Cross / Blue Shield in Rochester on their Y2K project. It may have been a job, but there was no time to slack off on this assignment. After a few months I departed the scene, but immediately began another assignment on Y2K in Monroe County government. This was a time when much work had to be done.

3) I taught high school mathematics for eight years in schools in New York and New Jersey. In each case, I had a job, but make no mistake, it was work. Just ask any teacher about that. Actually the work of someone in front of the classroom can involve so much effort, that teachers experience burn-out and end

up being divorced – neither of which is a good thing. That's because a teacher's day doesn't end at three in the afternoon. It also involves lesson plans, being prepared, going over homework and meeting parents during Open Houses.

4) During most of the years while in high school as a teenager, I worked at Weber's truck farm within commuting distance of home. I did that on my bicycle. Work there was involvement with vegetables during the summer and fall and flowers in the spring. We worked in the greenhouses in March and April and in the months that followed, we were out in the fields, hoeing, weeding and harvesting. We had lunch breaks every day – for which we weren't paid and probably ten minute breaks as well. We were always doing something productive and couldn't goof off.

The examples above point out the difference between work and a job, but in many cases, the distinction isn't obvious. Here are a few more to consider.

In the early 1980s, I worked at DEC in Massachusetts on a capacity allocation system tracking and location project (CASTL). We called it *castle*. What else? Another gentleman and I collaborated on this assignment representing nothing more than a very complicated inventory system. One day at the end of the week our supervisors on the project called to tell us that CASTL was done. On relating to them that we were just about finished, but not quite, we were corrected with the words, *No, it's finished. We ran out of funds*. Here, both the work and the job were done, the former turning into the latter. Yet, in a way, the work wasn't really done.

Not long after that I had a short contract at Blue Cross in Syracuse. I had different assignments, which meant I had a few supervisors, even if it was only for a short time. One of them was Bill, who ushered me into his office. He told me about what work needed to be done, but wasn't very specific. I was under the impression that I wasn't going to obtain any more details so I told him I'd get started on the project and report back to him soon. When I did and showed him what I had accomplished and inquired if that was what he wanted, he said, *No*. You may recall George Costanza's boss giving him an assignment but not telling him what

it was, only telling him that he had to go downtown. Maybe the writers of the show were spying on Syracuse.

A few months after that, I started a job at Xerox in Rochester. It began with a weeklong conference – that certainly wasn't work, but I needed the break. I believe the assignment was initially for six months but was renewed for another six. It was one contract that I despised. My use of the work *job* should have tipped you off. The work – we actually did something, I think – was functional analysis, which was just what it sounded like. We had to examine computer programs and systems and describe what each was doing. It was something I could do, but truly boring work. The people I worked with created a huge document that we copied over and over and provided to a host of individuals. I doubt that many people read it, or even opened to the first page. Our work became a job.

While on that assignment, a memo came out one day – for employees and consultants. It was rather mysterious. People who read it were puzzled and wondered what it was all about. The announcement directed us to keep a specific date open. It turned out to be a day of recognition for jobs or work well done. There was an entire day for the affair, starting with a check-in around eight in the morning, meet and greet, a few talks, luncheon and then the awarding of praise for certain people with various gifts. All that took a few hours. By about three in the afternoon matters seemed to be done. However, we weren't dismissed, since the workday was 9 to 5 – that sounds like a good title for a movie. Since there were gifts left over, probably planned, those in charge awarded them through games of BINGO. I didn't think Xerox was Catholic. I couldn't believe that I was getting paid as a consultant to play that game. That fiasco wasn't work but rather a job. I should have called in sick, but I wouldn't have gotten paid.

The corporation was deceptive in the weeks leading up to this day at the grove, where other lunches and get togethers are held. They didn't lie – usually you can't accomplish that if you don't say anything – but were quite sneaky in the manner in which they acted. By not letting employees and consultants depart at 3 pm, they were exercising their control. It's ironic that they could waste an entire day on this agenda but couldn't be decent enough to give the workers a few hours off that day. That BINGO bulloney

was a good example of corporate deception – certainly not comparable to the spy business – but something I would witness often in the years to come.

I mentioned working on a truck farm earlier, and if I haven't convinced you of the job and work difference, let me relate my other experience on another farm. It was my dad's and it wasn't really a farm but the garden in the back yard of the house where I spent my years as a teenager. My sister, two brothers and I were roped into handling garden chores – the ones where we couldn't do any harm – in exchange for food and a place to sleep. It was a deal we couldn't refuse. Was it work or a job? Maybe it was both and we certainly had to work. We wouldn't have been whipped, but we didn't want to hear the words, *No soup for you*.

In a way it was good for us to have the work ethic instilled within us. I was going to say beaten into us but changed my mind. Besides the already mentioned benefits of our efforts, it was great being outdoors working in the soil. Baseball would have to wait. Also, we would see the harvest of vegetables later in the year.

In a way, this may have been a job since my father planned a larger plot for the tomatoes, onions and cucumbers than normal gardens – thank goodness, no kohlrabi or kale – but his idea was to sell some of the crops as they matured. Sure enough, the siblings helped to do the work at the front of the house by the road. It wasn't sales work, only collecting the payment. This might have been a means of control on my parents' part: keep the children out of their hair, busy doing something productive, off the streets and out of trouble. Isn't that what parents have kids for?

The four of us had a job that was work. This is divorced completely from having stuff to do to keep busy. In general, each of us probably hates our job, but doesn't mind work. In the case of the latter, there is a feeling of great satisfaction after completing the task. On the other hand, the job is a drag. I don't mind work, but I want to be productive and not bored.

This scenario I appreciated while in the world of consulting. I wished to be paid, but not as a goof off who sat around doing very little. While teaching and at Nestlé Foods, my first full-time effort in corporate America, the loafing idea never was an issue. Unfortunately this belief in minimal effort for maximum rewards is the one of the reasons why there are so many

problems in society today relating to work. Obviously, there are other factors involved. It seems that too many people are pretenders when it comes to doing any productive work.

One day when Jerry Seinfeld asked Cosmo Kramer what was going on when the latter was in his kitchen all dressed up, Kramer uttered the words, *Taking care of business (TCB)*. The K man just found a job in the business world. It was an accident as he was in the building of some company when the other employees swept him away into the office. I applauded the manager who only took a few days to realize that Cosmo was a fraud. When the boss talked to Kramer, he said that Cosmo appeared to have no business experience at all and the work just wasn't getting done. The Seinfeld character said he'd spend extra time, doing whatever it took, but the manager replied that this approach wouldn't cut it. Kramer then said that he didn't actually work there, to which he heard, *That's what makes it hard to for me to let you go*. In this case, Kramer didn't have a job and despite what he did, no work was getting done. He didn't really accomplish TCB.

Seinfeld was nothing more than a humorous fantasy, but as a consultant, I met a couple guys who were faking it on the job. The first was programming the system that I designed the specifications for before he began the assignment. He was leaving for greener pastures and mentioned that program A was about 85% done and program B was 90% done, and so on. In reality, program A needed 85% more work to get finished and the other 90% more work. He left before he was found out to be incompetent. I wonder if he then went to another contract or two and performed in a similar manner, repeating this until he could retire.

The second person wasn't entirely to blame for being canned at another contract years after this one. I was leaving my assignment when my sales representative asked if I would spend some time with Larry, my replacement, so that there would be a smooth transition when I departed the contract. I said I wouldn't mind. Somehow I glanced at Larry's resume and discovered that he appeared to have more experience in this type of work than I had when I began the contract at the same company a few months before. Actually, he wasn't that knowledgeable and was let go in a few weeks. The consulting firm had doctored his resume – a really

dumb thing to do. Maybe he never even saw what they had done to that document, but he was in way over his head.

If Joe is hired for a position, he sees it as work and a way to pay the rent and feed his family. On the other hand, somewhat high up in the corporation, who has relations and friends that are at the employment office, sees an opportunity of goodwill. He fulfills this by creating jobs for them. We'll be revisiting this concept later.

There are a few contradictions that come up in this work vs job discussion. The first is the matter having to do with that bumper sticker I mentioned above. The second has to do with the person I mentioned on my last contract, whom no one knew what his job was. There probably are people in that same company – maybe the same department – who have to work fifty or more hours a week because of some impending deadline. These employees are tired, doing so much while someone else does very little, if anything. The same applies to many other corporations. Third, we're all aware of people that are unemployed, underemployed or simply not working, but as you can see there is so much work to be done.

This leads right into the politicians who campaign to get elected by creating jobs. That's all wrong. In fact those who offer to put people to work aren't much better. There's work to be done and what is required is to match the unemployed with those tasks. Cities need to be resurrected while the infrastructure offers plenty of work – bridges, roads, and energy systems. Messes left by corporate America need to be cleaned up. Training may be needed and there's much more. The people in government positions promise to lower taxes. I'll cover that topic in chapter 4, since it's really important.

“We stand without apology for the principle of paying people well, which is morally right, and we believe the right way to organize an economy.” – Ron Bloom

“We should be able to earn a living wage without sacrificing our psychological, spiritual and sometimes even physical well-being by giving over our entire lives to our jobs.” – Paul Rogat Loeb

“In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as ‘right to work.’ It is a law to rob us of our civil rights and job rights. Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining by which unions have improved wages and working conditions of everyone.” – Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“The man who digs the ditches, the man who cleans the sewers deserves just as much pay as the man who sits behind the desk.” – Peter Maurin

“It is one of the characteristics of a free and democratic modern nation that it has free and independent labor unions.” – Franklin D. Roosevelt

“Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration.” – Abraham Lincoln

“Only a fool would try to deprive working man and working women of their right to join the union of their choice.” – Dwight D. Eisenhower

2. Takin' care of business

The words above are the title of a song written by Randy Bachman from the 1973 album, *Bachman-Turner Overdrive II*. It was performed by the Canadian group, Bachman-Turner Overdrive and is probably their best-known song. It reached number three on the Canadian RPM charts and number twelve on the Billboard singles charts. Replace the letter *i* in *business* with a *y* and the result is a new word, *busyness*. If you're an employee in a company in which those two words mean the same thing, it might be time for you to update your resume. From the first chapter it should be obvious that I hate *busyness*, which really is nothing more than unnecessary work or created jobs. From my observation in twenty-one years of software consulting during two dozen contracts at various corporations on the east coast – far too many for two decades of work, with too many *look busy* days – I don't have a favorable impression of big business. It started after I left the teaching profession after eight years.

I began a fulltime job at Nestlé Foods in White Plains, New York as programmer or maybe it was programmer analyst – systems analyst came later. Those three designations are just titles, somewhat like that of vice president. Those labels were probably applied when it was time for a raise. The work I did in my years there was to design, write, analyze, test and document programs and systems. I had good feelings about the company, the work was challenging and I was never bored. My superiors liked my efforts and accomplishments, so much so that Ivan, the head of the department, called me into his office. Knowing of my good efforts, he said he had a great opportunity for me: I could move to another department and learn a new system. It would involve longer hours each week and no increase in pay, at first. I told him I would think about it and left the room. It wasn't very long – about a minute or two – before I decided I'd have to be crazy to take this step and leave the group I was with. I didn't tell Ivan about my decision until about a week later. Not long after that, I left Nestlé after landing a consulting gig.

In the previous chapter, I related a few other big business experiences. After over twenty years of consulting, I only added to the list of reasons why I wasn't that thrilled with the world of

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

