

# Work's in need of work today

A MainFrame City Script [Sketch] - 1921 / 1971 / 2017

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## Cast:

SB: Stafford Beer - British Cybernetician who is dreaming. The scene takes place in his dreamscape and references many possible outcomes, problems or situations of his endeavours to construct new systems and technologies that were imbued with with political ideals in opposition to the common sense of the day.

SC: Silver Collar Statistic - a Statistic from the Future who is seeking refuge from precarious working conditions in the early 2000's - This statistic is helping Stafford with maintenance of a broken machine.

RB: Rebeldia -The central Character in a 1921 Workers Theatre Play, and now a wandering avatar representing the notion of rebellion in the workplace. Her role is one of a conduit of information and hopes to enable change through the design of new rebellions in a multitude of medias.

Just outside Mainframe City 360\* lies a ruined temple, the OPS RUIN, a once thriving monument to Project Cybersyn\*\* - the 1970's Chilean project to implement a cybernetic form of socialist government - the ruin being a monument for a past future that never was - sitting in the desert as a defunct celestial computer. The ruin houses a broken black box - where our characters congregate. The characters are all involved in trying to make a black box work once more, and try hard to define exactly what it is that is broken. Work it turns out is what needs of alot of work.

\*Mainframe City 360 - a city situated inside the computer software of Cyberstride, an important tool of Stafford Beer's Cybersyn. The City is made up of Multiple Buildings in the form of IBM Mainframe 360 computers and is the home of millions of newly politicised Statistics - all working within an algorithm that has been designed with socialist-democratic ideals.

\*\*Project Cybersyn - an attempt to implement a Cybernetic computer system within the Chilean Economy in 1971-73

[Loop if desired]

SB: I can't see

SC: nothing?

SB Ok - try and reach this part

SC: For fucks sakes! The other edge? - or this edge?

SB: No - the other edge

SC: They all look the same - and its not as if its asked to break away

SB: You have to feel it -

SC: I'm trying to but the input doesn't reach -

SB: the output should be closer

SC: (grunt) It hasn't changed has it? -

SB: no - the light still isn't coming on

SC: unbelievable! and you are sure we can't turn it off and then on again?

SB: this isn't that kind of device

SC: what kind of device is it!? - I was almost certain it couldn't fall apart - its just so fucking unexpected...

SB: it must have been an error that was slowly teased into reality - like an invisible threat - maybe in the code...

SC: I have to stop a minute - give me a second to compose myself (shouts) "FUCK"

SB: there's not enough variety

SC: bad design?

SB: kind of, but also variety absorbs variety

SC: absorbent variety?

SB: you don't learn about this in the future do you

SC: no

SB: to control something complex, you must have complex enough tools.

SC: fixing with complexity

RB: Makes sense - in all these complicated systems we have to be prepared to understand complications or else it doesn't work

SB: wow - I didn't see you there

SC: just in time - hold this (hands RB a part of the broken device) and you are?

RB: fine

SB: But

SC: what?

RB: I take it this isn't working.

SB: no- but we are working on it.

SC: we've been working for a while

RB: work is complex - and worth fully grasping how we can interpret it -

SC: tell me about it -

RB: Where are we anyway?

SC: A future ruin of a past that doesn't stand a chance...

SB: have some faith! - please - this is surely more than that...

SC: This is the OPs RUIN- a temple built around the ideology of  
Projcet CYBERSYN

RB: which does what?

SB: it is a tool for integrating a cybernetic government

SC: and we are at the ruin of the temple built in its honour

SB: A libery machine - a hopeful prototype

SC: an organisational tool - distributed networks of decisions -

RB: for what?

SB: the people -

SC: the economy -

SB: the mind -

RB: meanaing?

SB: a way to move into a future that actually works - systems that are broken  
need fixing... this was, is, could be...will be...

SC: (whispers) Cybersyn was a way to reorganise the way that this country  
operated, communicated, adapted, but don't tell him that it has failed)

SB: a way to regulate the destabilised system that salvador inherited..

SC: he sometimes mutters names.

RB: tell me about you -

SC: me? - I'm just a ststistic....a silver collar worker - tired of interning,

RB: A statistic, ? so you are a piece of data?

SC: yes but advanced data, I'm a new format, a Silver collar worker from a future algorithm

RB: a silver collar? - a modern slave? -

SC: no a freelancer -

RB: ah - yes - freedom to work consistent and constant

SC: a nomad is how I have liked to see it, but recently I've been doubting my senses

RB: so you are here because?

SC:I'm taking some time out with Stafford in another of his dreams

RB: dreams? - of what?

SB: well it seems that they are more and more about the true organisation of a liberated society

RB: sounds like a worthwhile challenge - but something like this requires more time than often given,

SB: and you? - are?

RB: Rebeldia - a simple wandering avatar of hopeful change

SC: I could sense you were more of a universal character - but

SB: how did you find us?

RB: I spent some time in the north once, as a fiction, a provocation for the workers of that time, and I return every once in a while as an avatar of change, an agent of possibility

SB: sounds precarious...

RB: and the box?

SB: It makes sense of things

SC: It makes things easier

RB: I thought It just changes things

SB: Well it also offers guidance

SC: do you mean a spiritual machine?

SB: a liberty machine but with optional upgrades

RB: but the box is'nt working?

SB: ah - yes,,,,, the box is broken... but as an idea, it works...

SC: you know about these boxes? -

SB: "it is not necessary to enter the black box to understand the nature of the function it performs"

SC: pass that part please

SB: is it fitting again?

SC: can you see inside that part?

RB: a little bit - move it up past the corner

SB: like this

SC: well -? - can you feel it?

RB: its not quite there yet

SB: is it getting somewhere?

RB: not really

SC: in what way

RB: In a fundamental and logical way

SB: Ah - a metasystem

SC: WHAT?

SB: I think Rebellia can see what isn't working.

SC: and that is???

RB: work!

SC: what?

RB: work just isn;t working

SB: work, like toil?

SC: hold on? - is this a part of the machine?

SB: no - i think its the subject, work as a subject, not as an object...

RB: yes - the whole spectrum...i mean an understanding of all things associated with work - semantics, translations, illusions all of it...

SB: mmmm, you mean the current understanding of what work is

RB: yes - the stagnated complexification of what surrounds work - from the injustice of the 1 percent to the stigma of not working,

SC: do you still need us to hold this?

SB: I don;t think I can fix it straight away...

SC: can you see anything in there?

RB: I can make out something that seems clear,

SB: oh - is it reachable?

RB: the problem seems to be how ingrained work is into a sense of identity

SC: a hairline fracture

RB: mmm - work will not work out as long as there is an all pervasive pressure to submit to the all encompassing work ethic

SB: the systems diagram needs updating

RB: well - it is clear when thinking that most see unemployment as the result of a deficient individual work ethic - rather than a structural problem

SC: a collective rather than the individual -

RB: this part of the system of work is truly broken -

SB: can you see any further?

RB: why should work be a system where there is a set of incentives that compel people to act and identify as competitive subjects - the entire space is dominated by a focus on competing self realisation - work becomes a battlefield for survival in multiple platforms- where you can work on the self in relation to the whole.

SC: can you pin that down?

RB: Work needs work if work is good no matter how degrading, low paid or inconvenient -

SB: is there another part we can use?

RB: Why is it that work has become intrinsically linked to goodness - does it always pay to work?

SC: work just always seems to be just that -

RB: work has become central to the notion of self conception - the idea of doing less becomes a scenario of worry for many -

SB:But hard work does work out!

RB: yes- but that is not my point - there is a more problematic world of work and it is hard to imagine a way to fix this when so many find themselves tied to drudgery - valuing drudgery - relying on it.

SC:I know what you mean - statistics simply thrive on the banal

RB: and some-where along the way work found itself a a central means of self expression - surely this is out of balance - is work so linked to identity that it should be the only means for self-fulfilment?

SB: But when things work it is truly fulfilling!

RB: again, I don't disagree, but can you see that work cannot be thought of as working out, when we witness performances of productivity - a veneer of fiction in the workplace to smile throughout an oppressive scenario - this is acting as if things are fine, when clearly they are not

SC: I get shouted at alot

RB: And work does not seem to work in terms of durations - remuneration somehow translates to suffering - does this seem like it is working?

SB: it is hard to see why more people do not enjoy what it is that they do

RB: There is work that needs to be done in order to mobilise peoples real desires that can address the dominance of the broken work ethic..

SB: mobilising what parts?

RB: so many different elements are needed - but optimism could be useful

SC: is there any of that in reach down there?

RB: not really

SB: well perhaps we can make some attempt at fabricating new parts?

SC: are they easy to imagine?

RB: the parts or the logic?

SB: the logic is simple, we can all see whats broken but just don't have the tools

SC: I can take a look

SB: see anything?

SC: not yet and definitely not any logic - pass me the flat bit

SB: maybe I'll try

SC: ok - but I'm telling you its almost impossible

SB: just hold onto the edge properly

SC: I am holding onto it PROPERLY

SB: Let me get a bit closer

SC: what can you see?

[LOOP]