

## **Ingenuity: Capitalist Style**

**08-07-2020**

Humans are naturally creative and ingenious people thanks to our distant ancestors having learned that our hands and our bodies are like tools attached to a machine from which we could make our own world. Human labor is not only necessary to keep oneself alive but also a way to broaden the horizons of the life that we do live with open ended possibilities. It is also something that can be appropriated and monetized for the profit of others.

A House subcommittee recently had executives from Amazon, Facebook, Apple and, Alphabet (Google) give testimony regarding their dominance of economic sectors giving them the power to absorb and monopolize the creations of others.

An example. Facebook's capacity to clone a version of Instagram and then convince the competitor with that name that they will be using their vast wealth to drive their product into obscurity was enough to make them sell-out to.

Amazon showed how brute economic force is all that's necessary. It was making no headway in its diaper competition with Diapers.com. The latter made a good product that was marketed at a reasonable price. Amazon eventually concluded that the only way they can prevent losing the market to this competitor was to make a product of similar quality that will be sold at greatly reduced prices. According to a document revealed by the subcommittee, Amazon was losing \$200 million a month in diaper sales in order to undercut Diapers.com. It only took a few months before Diapers.com sold itself to Amazon. Of course, Amazon then eliminated promotions and raised prices.

Since the capitalist enriches himself by paying the maker less than the value of the commodity produced, theft is at the core of its business model and has existed since the time that an identifiable capitalist appeared on the scene.

Gutenberg devised what many people regard as one of humanity's most significant inventions: a method of moveable type printing. Before his invention books and documents had to be copied by hand. It took a long time for a scribe to copy a large book. Gutenberg, as a goldsmith, was able to conceive of such an improved way of copying

text, but he needed financial support to transform his thoughts into a practical reality. He managed to obtain a loan from a moneylender/banker who envisioned high profits if the examples shown him could be mass produced.

Gutenberg built such a machine and set out with an assistant to design and print a beautiful edition of the Bible that could be made available to the multitudes. Then, after he sold enough to pay off his debt, he could continue printing and selling books for the intellectual advancement of humanity and a better life for himself.

But when the capitalist banker saw the beauty of these printed and illustrated books, and imagined the profit if he possessed the means to make them, he immediately called in Gutenberg's loan before he had a chance to earn enough to pay his debts. The capitalist then took possession of Gutenberg's assets; hired the printer that Gutenberg had trained; had him marry his daughter so that his profit-making worker was tied to him by blood; and had great success.

As for Gutenberg, the very first redundant worker, he was cast off into oblivion. But at least his name and the admiration of humanity has survived which is something that cannot be said for the duplicitous banker.

### **Migrant workers in China**

China has almost as many migrant workers as the US has people; 290 million. The 'Iron Rice Bowl' no longer exists. Those were the days when one didn't have much, but a share of what was available was yours by right. But now under capitalism one's fate is left up to chance. China's official unemployment rate is only 5.7%, but migrants are included in those statistics. Recessions, competitive trade wars and non-economic crises like pandemics often mean a return to their homes in the country where they can try to eke out a living by their own labor. But in some areas a shared worker program has been set up. Those who have lost jobs can sign on to work as temps in plants that have short term need for them. What once was made of iron is now a shifting breeze that feeds or starves a person based on the fluctuations of the market.

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