

Conversation with a Demon:

The Education of Pedro Abono



ACT I

Time: Late December 1981.

Scene: Small cafe in Luquillo, P.R. - several

M.N. Collective members are sitting around a table drinking rum and cokes and interviewing Mr. Pedro Abono, whom they recently met on their trip.

M.N. Briefly, what does your job involve?

P.A. I presently am working for a new national human services program. The section that I am working directly in is responsible for providing some social and employment services to unemployed families in a southern state. I am responsible, along with many others, primarily for screening, monitoring and planning.

M.N. What is this operation all about?

P.A. At this point everything is being planned and tested. The system is not in place yet. The fundamental idea is to determine what the recipients are doing, what services are being accessed, what their needs are, if they are working, and to locate them. The government is funding welfare assistance for these recipients and so the government finds it imperative to know

what is occurring.

M.N. How do you keep track of them?

P.A. There is an official line and an unofficial line - the true one. Officially, we have a system in place and know what we need to. For example, we collect information through welfare offices, the immigration office, the social security office, etc. But in reality, we are attempting to set up a system and right now we are only guesstimating numbers..sort of pulling numbers and assumptions right out of the air..its true that we have a few sources of information, but basically only old sources, and so who knows where half the information comes from.

M.N. So you don't know what is really happening to your recipients or what ever you refer to them as?

P.A. I guess to a great extent that's the problem.

M.N. Do you have a plan to tighten up the system?

P.A. Sure, in fact, it is part of our work plan. We are trying to develop what is called a management information system (MIS), in a general sense, a tracking system.

As a concept its there. We are attempting to develop it, but we are encountering a lot of problems. We are always being frustrated with the "old" system...To begin with, there are always a large number of bureaucrats to deal with. A large number of people fighting with each other over power. Second, one is dealing with the "old" system, which I believe, is mandated to self-destroy. It is very easy to destroy a program, to close it down. But if we want to develop something, it is so much harder. Its like swimming upstream. So, as you are required to develop such a system, you design it and inform your superiors you need, say half a million dollars. They just can't imagine spending this type of money for the required hardware and software, so they put a stop to it. They want the information and monitoring done but don't want to spend the money. Furthermore, there are the problems we face with the service providers and community of recipients. They want to be informed of what we are doing. They want to know everything..why we are making the inquiries, what we are going to do with the information. They want to be involved in all decision making and then to receive all the information. I mean, all these people get in the way.

M.N. Well, you want to respect their rights..don't you.

P.A. Definitely...But one is given an assignment and then finds it impossible to do it..

You see, a federal act mandates and funds these services which are designed to enable this population to become self-sufficient in the shortest possible time. Now, our program pays for these services if they are not otherwise provided. But



we are never sure whether the people who are paid to provide these services actually do the job. Or that the people who are receiving the assistance or services are actually suing them to become self-sufficient. It isn't as if there is a one to one relationship between the money and work. So we have to check on this.

M.N. So it is your job to make sure that all these people are working? That they are using the money and services the way you have planned it?

P.A. Yes.. and to find problems.

M.M. You mentioned contractors..doesn't the state hire and use its own workers?

P.A. No, at this point, our state agency does not directly provide services. We contract out to private agencies.

M.N. You mean, for example, the state is no longer planning to hire teachers as state employees, to teach ESL classes and some?

P.A. Right... I think it is an old concept that costs too much. I am sure that this is management's way of dealing with public employee problems. It appears to be much easier to contract for services.

M.N. When did this change come about?

P.A. I know this was a product of the Carter Administration...the beginning of the present "federalist" concept, in the sense that it put the federal and state governments in a position where they only fund, plan and monitor services. The federal government allocates the money. It also develops loose goals and guidelines the states must meet if they are to participate in the program. The states then take these funds and broad guidelines and, in turn, coordinate, plan, and work to insure the provision of these services. The states are responsible for these funds and so they provide for very stringent controls on these expenditures. But in terms of the actual provision of services, it is up to the state to insure that it is provided in the most cost-effective manner. I believe in most cases this means contracting out, even to other state or federal agencies.

To date the largest share of the budget is in our welfare assistance category. It is interesting now that we are discussing this, that although we contract out for the provision of social services, and we have tried to develop a similar mechanism to distribute welfare assistance, we haven't been able to do it. The AFDC system has turned out to be the most cost-effective mechanism to date...the system which pro-



vides us with the best means of controlling the money as it is being given out.

M.N. Even though there is always the story that welfare is filled with crooks, you are now saying that the AFDC system is actually the most efficient and best controlled one?

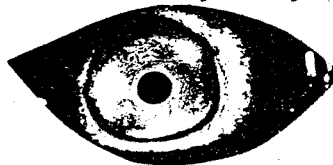
P.A. Yes, you are right.. the politicians are always attacking the welfare system, but it appears as if it is the most efficient public program in the country. We have compared their fraud or pilfering rate with that of private industry and the welfare system does a much better job.

M.N. So the idea here, in terms of welfare assistance, is to limit it to 42 months?

P.A. This is another important component of this federal act. It has built into it the limitation of entitlements. Many think that the Reagan administration began this, but Carter appears to have been the first to implement it. And right now the federal deputy secretary who is in charge of the program is trying to get it reduced to 22 months. Imagine that, the spokesperson for the whole system is trying to reduce the amount of time people will have to prepare themselves, knowing that 42 months isn't long enough for many.

M.N. 22 months??

P.A. Yes. But you know, we are being told that we are doing all of them a favor anyway...we don't owe them anything and aren't responsible for them ...but I can't go along with this...



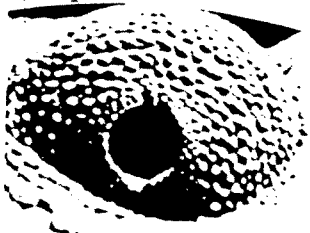


ACT II

Time: Later December 1981.

Scene: Living room of house over-looking Humacao, P.R. - several M.N. Collective members are sitting around smoking dope that they brought while interviewing Pedro Abono.

M.N. I was thinking about what we were discussing yesterday. It has a very diabolical aspect to it. You know the whole line in physics...about atoms in a diffusion process. From what I see, there is an extremely elaborate program being planned. It is a big tracing operation. I see it being similar to a gas diffusion process. You concentrate these people in particular places and then you let them out to different parts of the state...perhaps even the country, and then you are supposed to keep track of them as you let them out and as they diffuse out into the system. It sounds like one of the most elaborate systems that has been developed to trace not just masses of people, but individuals as well. In fact, one of the great breakthroughs in the 30's was the gathering of vast amounts of statistics about developments in society: social security, unemployment figures, gathering data on industrial production and so on. These were mass aggregates. They fit quite closely with the economic theory of the time, Keynesianism...excuse me, I used to teach.



P.A. You see, this has been one of our big problems, a limit we have been facing. We are trying to track individuals, but we can't. We can barely track numbers, mass numbers.

M.N. Is this a model for government of the future? Do you feel that information gathering has expanded to such a point that microscopic scanning is possible?

P.A. That is interesting..I hadn't really thought about it in that manner. It appears as if the hardware for such scanning is available, but we don't know whether people will put up with it. However, there are a couple of things that make this a special population for a test case. First, they have for the most part all gone through hell, which to a large extent has made them more tolerant than the average American, at least in some ways. Second, for many of them, this is a new country, a totally new environment, so that they do not know what is normal and what is not. We are presently able to collect a lot of information from this group because they probably think it is normal. I am quite sure that if we try to collect the same information from other people in this country, we will face a lot more problems.

M.N. So, in a sense, they are a model population for this tracking system?

P.A. Yes, so much easier to work with, except for some, for example Haitians, they don't trust the government at all.

M.N. And the Cubans?

P.A. Well, the new Cubans refuse authority also. A large number who came out of Mariel had no use for the Cuban government. Their experience has led them to learn not to expect much from this government as well. But, they know that the U.S. will not deport them back to Cuba so they feel stronger.

M.N. You mean they don't like this state more than the other one?

P.A. Right. From all the problems that I have seen, they aren't happy here. One of their main problems involves being let down. As you know, the old established Cuban community and the American Government told them that they were going to live a very good life here if they came. They expected it, but they didn't get it. They are really disappointed. Some were thrown into concentration camps and other were left to starve in the streets, literally..

M.N. This tracking appears to be part of what is called an MIS system, I've had some experience with one. It was designed to collect certain kinds of information on a particular population. The team working on it had to change the system three or four times in 18 months. We started out trying to pick up and monitor too much information. We had to continually simplify the system and reduce the amount of information we picked up-the range and specificity. Small increases in information desired seemed to cause geometric expansions in cost and work (computer time,



people to process and collect it, etc.).

P.A. We have had the same experience, and we have also found that in collecting too much information, one can also get into the position where it all ends up not meaning anything. You get 20 pieces of information on someone, but only need one that maybe is not even collected. It all ends up being a lot of work for nothing. We are presently trying to get much of our software rewritten so that we can get closer to getting what we want. However, you never know, in the future you may be in a position to use the data that you are now picking up, so you are afraid to throw it away. Another big problem we have encountered is that, as you say, it costs a lot and until management can be convinced that they can benefit from the MIS system, they don't want to put money into it. They want us to come up with the information, but they don't want to invest in it, partially because they are under big pressure to cut back on all spending. A further problem is that as we are doing this, while we are developing our MIS system, we are facing all sorts of problems each day, crises, and we worry that we will not be able to set our system up in time to deal with it.

M.N. I see, in other words, if things shift too quickly, your information gathering process will be affected and unable to pick up the problem?

P.A. Yes, in two ways. One, it keeps us from doing the work of setting up the systems. We end up

spending a lot of time trouble-shooting, which is not our job. Two, we don't know what is happening while the system is not in place and so we are afraid of being confronted with a crises that we won't be able to deal with. You see, people have been hired with a certain perspective of reality, which doesn't allow them to see what is actually happening.

M.N. The Workers in the program?

P.A. No, the administrators... the bosses. They have a certain perspective of what it is like to be a recipient, of what social workers do, of what it is like to be in the street, which is I think false and naive. It is like the whole idea of cutting back on welfare assistance. They are supposed to be watching out for the interests of the state. In the short run, these cuts will probably reduce the costs for the federal and state governments, but in the long run, I don't think it will. In fact, with a high burnout rate for those who are put to work too quickly in bad jobs, on top of not being mentally, physically, or culturally prepared, they will put the state in the position of paying out large sums of money on cash assistance and services in the future. But the managers don't want to listen to people who have experience in the field, who are dealing with the day to day crises and who are monitoring what little information we are collecting. But the managers think that the world runs according to their desires and perspectives.

M.N. Their performance seems to be judged on the amount they can cut?

P.A. Yes, I think you are totally right. But then again, they are supposed to be setting up a new type of system. I guess they feel that they themselves will be well rewarded for the destruction of these programs.

M.N. There is somewhat of a contradiction here. The job you are doing requires a lot more funding, but in fact you are being told to cut back.


P.A. That's right. You see, other sectors of the state, that in fact they want to reduce, they are also doing the same type of thing to, except that it is well planned, with no contradiction. They are cutting back on the staff and resources and forcing those who remain to do much more work. They are not investing in their people and so they are going to get fucked. This will cause serious problems in the future.

M.N. Of course the agreement has been made by Reaganites that it is OK because people will be coming in and out of the private sector and they train people better anyway.

P.A. You are right. And once again, in cutting back on services, they are in fact trying to shift the responsibility back to the family, and that of course means the mothers, the women. More work for women.

M.N. But you seem to think that the shift to the private sector is in a sense almost cutting their own throat? They are not even going to have the personnel.





P.A. Yes..many of us do. I hope so..

M.N. We do to...so you envision a real crisis with this type of system?

P.A. Yes, in the short run. However, if they are given time to iron out some of their big problems, like training, schools, facing reality, etc..-they may be able to come out on top for a while. You see they are not fools either. I am sure that they plan to first destroy whole sectors before starting to rebuild things again. They want to get rid of all sorts of people who don't have the same interests and aren't willing to play their games. Meanwhile, in the short run, the system is not prepared, so if there is a real crisis now, I don't think they will be able to handle it.

M.N. If they are given the time? Or if we don't come up with new forms of trouble?

P.A. That's right... they are working against time and they know it.

M.N. In other words, as long as the recipients and the staffs accept their orders, eventually these problems will be ironed out?

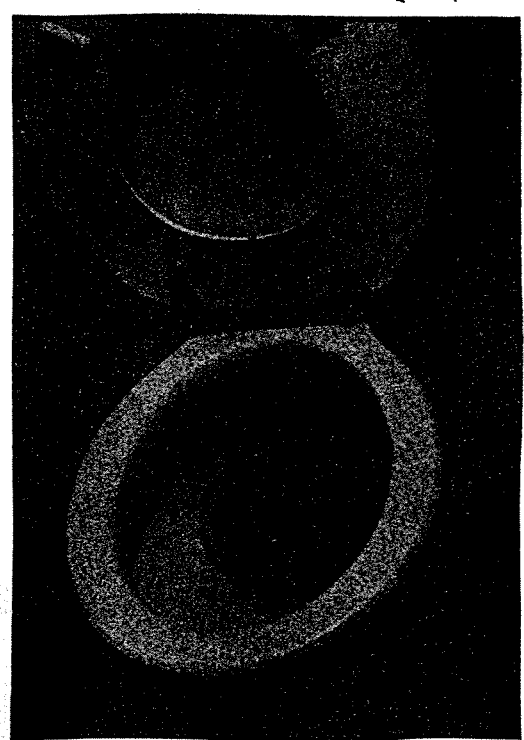
-at this point Pedro brings out his own stash and roles a few joints..after a few minutes.

M.N. Just one question then Pedro: Am I paranoid.. Is this just control, for controls sake?

P.A. Well, when it comes down to it, we are trying to plug 300,000 people a year back into the economy. To make sure that they become "respon-



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sible", "productive", "law abiding", "hard working".. the old American virtues. All in the shortest period of time and with no real money.

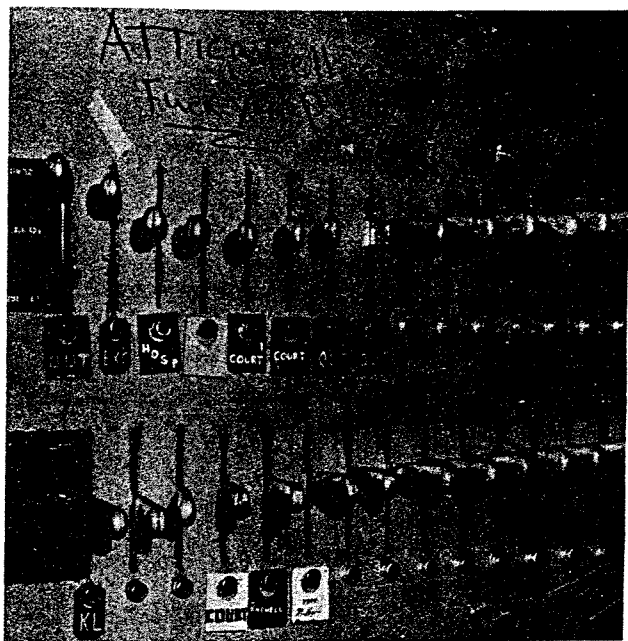
M.N. So they are thinking that by putting a lot of pressure on these people, by limiting the length of entitlements, that that will push them to make themselves "productive" and take the jobs that no one else wants?

P.A. Well they say they don't want them to take the jobs that no one else wants...but that is what happens anyway. I for sure don't, but I see it happening. Of course, many work against the system and are better off for it.

M.N. What is your program going to do if it doesn't work?

P.A. I don't know. There have been many problems, but we really haven't faced a big crisis yet. However, the welfare rolles are growing fast and that is becoming a bigger and bigger issue..So this may be an important sign that it is not working...Pretty good dope..huh?

See, its so frustrating. The administrators that I am working with have spent the last 5 to 10 years cutting back and destroying public service programs. It has been their profession to destroy the welfare. I think this leads us to the problems of the welfare state, whose era is now being brought to an end. People are tired of it because they are not getting what they want from it. One of the main reasons that this began happening in the late 70's is because government politicians and top administrator's planned it.. people like Weinberger. They used the excuses of



fiscal crisis and more to cut back on benefits and staff, demoralized everyone, made it impossible for social workers and public sector workers to do their jobs. I know this is still occurring because now, as we try to develop something new to deal with people's needs, its impossible. M.N. You are saying something different. The most common agruement is that we can't afford it anymore. The problem with the welfare state is that it sabotaged the work ethic. People not working as hard meant that there was not enough money. There were too many "freeloaders"-like these welfare people- sapping the productivity of America. And the only way to recover prosperity is to do away with them and put people back to work again.. which seems to be what your program is all about Pedro, to get them to be hard working "productive" citizens.

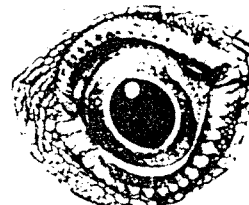
P.A. I think your analysis is basically correct, in the sense that the state and the system wants to put people back to work, wants to stop putting large quantities of money for people's needs. The administrators see things as you describe them. Their problem has been to get enough people disenchanted or disillusioned with the state so that they will take the cuts. To a great extent you have to pit one worker or citizen against another,..and basically get them to think that the other is living off the other.

M.N. Aren't they saying that there is no more money now?

P.A. Yes. But the reality is totally different... We all know that..In our programs we have money that we have never spent, and the administrators would gladly give it back rather than use it to meet some very critical needs. This is something else they have been successful at doing, and perhaps we have also done it to ourselves. That is, accepting austerity and living with it. When, if you look at the flow of money in this country and the world, it is an incredible amount. The government has it when it wants it.

M.N. But are you using the money to do the tracking.. dectecting?

P.A. No, we haven't been able to get the MIS sys-



tem into place yet.

M.N. So, you are supposed to monitor those people that don't get taken care of by the private sector, providing them with what is called a safty net.

P.A. Right. When society in general doesn't deal with people's needs and as you know that is a very political question, what needs are, we are to step in. But we are being told every day that the private sector is to take over more and more because they do things better. So far we are spcnding a lot of time and money trying to get them to do it with very little success!! .As far as I am concerned, it has been a waste of time, perhaps a way to give business a big tax break. And get this....Another concept that is being pushed is that we-the state-are no longer responsible for people's lives. How are we supposed to get people to believe this?..By using time.. taking time to respond to a problem. Of course, that could blow up in their faces, but so far it hasn't. We are to use time to get people to realize that they can't depend on us and so they have to find another way of dealing with their problems. But you know, a lot of them don't.

M.N. Is there another way?

P.A. Is there another way? .. I am sure there is. What it is, I don't know. But one thing is for sure, as long as they don't have to pay for it, it is not a relevant question.





For a Word
 300 lashes
 until the bones are bare,
 the teary ones will
 have their eyes pulled out
 and on the head that screams
 "We Ar will Fall."

FROM THE NEW YORK HERALD OF OCTOBER 22, 1981, AND
FROM ANOTHER SOURCE OF SECONDARY ENGAGEMENT: TO ALL
THE INHABITANTS OF THE EARTH, ESPECIALLY TO THE
RICH ONES (10/6/81)

Thou art covered with a crime, for though hast robbed me
(with the sword)
Of my corn, my wine, my oil, etc.
Thou has robbed me of my Tythes, for the Tythes are mine,
And the beasts on a thousand hills
Yea all thy bags of money,
Haulicks, horses, yea all that thou callest thine are mine.

In the chaos of the shooting, the assassins fled on foot.
Several of them commandeered cars on the nearby throughway and sped away.
Miss Boudin, who was on foot and unarmed, was captured on the scene
by an off-duty New York City correction officer.

I am come to recover all my outward, or civil rights, or goods
Which thou callest thine own.

The six moneybags
Containing all the stolen money
Were recovered from the U-haul van and the car that crashed.

Thou hast many bags of money, and behold
Now I come as a thief in the night
With my sword drawn in my hand, and like a thief as I am--
I say,

DELIVER YOUR PURSE, DELIVER SIRRAH! DELIVER OR I'LL CUT THY THROAT!

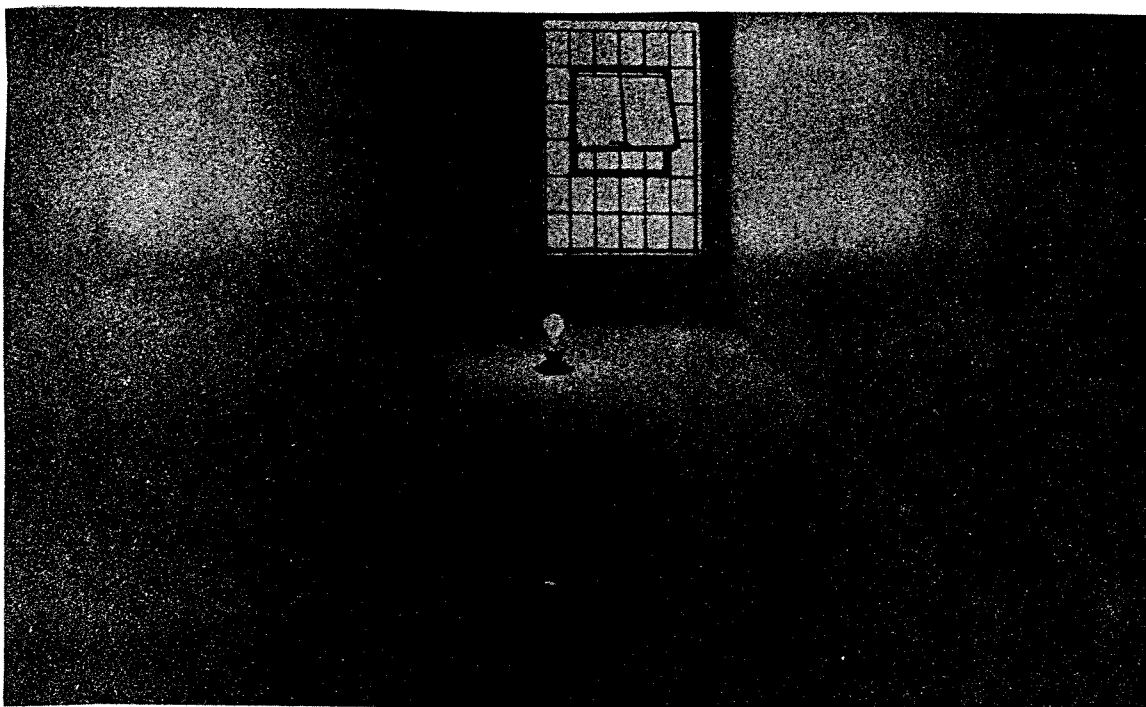
Miss Boudin was among the last of the Weather Underground fugitives
to be captured.

According to District Attorney Gribetz,
Miss Boudin still is liable
For prosecution in Illinois
on the Chicago
Bail-jumping charges.

I say (once more)
Deliver, deliver, my money which thou hast, to him
and to poor creeples, lazars, yea to rogues, thieves, whores, cutpurses
who are flesh of thy flesh.

Other parallels were drawn by authorities
have all THINGS common

An armored car holdups last June 11 at the Hines Point Terminal
Or else the plague of God will rot and consume
Last December in Brooklyn
All that you have



ACT III

Time: Late January 1982.

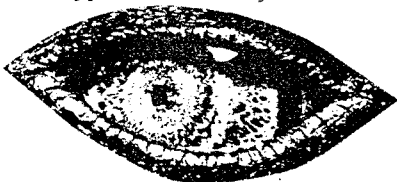
Scene: Living room of modern bright clean new apartment in Atlanta, Ga. - several M.N. Collective members are sitting around doing several lines of Pedro's coke while interviewing him (he is the only one who can afford it).

M.N. You know..We have been doing a lot of thinking about you and people like you working in what we call the "detection state" When I think of you, my mind goes back to a strange, kind of mystical creation of this physicist of the 19th century, Clerk Maxwell, who wrote about what was later called Maxwell's demon.

P.A. Ah..yes..Stanislaw Lem plays on his stuff. He's one of my favorites. I am looking for the Spanish version of his book.

M.N. That is interesting. Anyway, the story goes, this Maxwell's demon was supposed to violate one of the basic laws of physics by detecting whether particles in a gas were going fast or slow. And when he detected the speedy ones he was to open a gate and let them through to a reservoir where only fast molecules would be going; and close the gate whenever a slow molecule tried to come through. He was able to create out of no temperature differentiation, a temperature differentiation. On that basis, work can be created. This was like a mythical creature, you might say.

P.A. I remember something about this; but I never applied it to my situation.



M.N. Norbert Weiner, a man who wrote cybernetics stuff, argued that this process can actually go on for only a short period of time, that this Maxwell's demon can work; but eventually the demon wears out, because the demon itself is subject to that basic law, entropy, wearing down to a standstill. With practice, a demon can work for a long time. Still, Weiner is saying that in the long run Maxwell's demon is going to die.

P.A. So you are implying that I am working as a Maxwell's demon of sorts?

M.N. Well, what are you trying to do, what is all this detection about? To find the good worker versus the bad worker.

P.A. Brilliant... brilliant...

M.N. Well, you have that problem, don't you?

P.A. First, I don't see myself as a demon.

M.N. Demon, not in a bad or good sense, of course. The idea of a demon goes back, probably to ancient days when the demon was worker, a Super Human worker - demonic energies, powers beyond the regular. Don't necessarily take it in a Christian sense, all right?

P.A. O.K...O.K...because we are now with the Reagan types supposedly fighting evil.. you know..communists..atheists..gays..foreigners.. God against evil as Mr. Reagan says.

M.N. We know better..don't we, Mr. Abono?...ha.. ha..ha..don't we really?

P.A. O.K., O.K., I think that what you are saying, now that I can think about my job situation, my relationship with the people who I deal with..well, I really don't deal with people, unless there is some trouble shooting to do. It's true, I just watch the molecules go by, watch the impressions on the screen, read the computer print-out telling me where the computer detected the molecules I couldn't see. I am supposed to categorize people by the amount of work they are doing or are able to do.

M.N. But Weiner said you are going to be affected by that selection process, and eventually you are going to get worn down. Is that happening to you?

-a few more lines-

P.A. First, let me point out that, as I explained earlier, I still don't do just monitoring, as I am supposed to, due to the fact that the system is still not in place. I can't concentrate on detecting as I now realize that I am supposed to. However, I do that work too, and the more I do it, the more things look the same. Its frustrating.!

M.N. Frustrating ...in what way? Why are you frustrated Pedro?

P.A. Well, I am facing many levels of frustration..many of my fellow workers are feeling the same way..It's not the old burnout syndrome, it's not like you are dealing with so many people that you can't deal with them anymore..it takes another form. It's like watching too much t.v.: you get so that you can't tell the difference between the background and the things that you are watching.

M.N. Is it kind of an informational versus an emotional burnout?

P.A. Exactly, because you don't deal directly with individual's problems anymore..only you deal with your fellow workers, but even then there aren't that many of them. I have done social work before, where you go home and you don't want to talk to anyone...it's the type of burnout of not wanting to answer the phone, read, think... and you also realize that you are being fed lies; you process lies, and infact you are living a lie. You can't trust anything anymore... this has become clearer and clearer to me after Puerto Rico...They want to pick the good from the bad



worker, but that is as far as it goes. After that, they don't really know much. You start realizing that the things you are told are less and less true. You realize that the things you report and have to say are not true either..

You realize that you are also being watched and screened by someone else...at the same time.

M.N. But if you are given enough time, eventually the problems will be worked out...the system will succeed?

- another joint is rolled and passed around-

P.A. Yes, given the time..time..time..but of course only until. And until new problems arise which will require another response from the state.

M.N. How are your fellow demons dealing with the development of the new state?

P.A. Lets put it this way, I feel that there are two types of, as you say, demons; people like myself who for one reason or another have ended up with these jobs and don't really believe what we are told, and those who at least for now seem to believe in it and want to work with it, make it their career to detect for the system. Let me deal with those like myself, I know more about them and at this point they are more crucial to the system. We are people who have been forced into these jobs as our old jobs have disappeared or aren't affordable;from higher education or social work or the arts. As you can see, I couldn't live like this on a professor's salary.. ha..ha..including all this coke..want a few more lines?

-everyone takes a few more lines-

So although, I was not trained to be a detector, I like that term, I am working as one. In the beginning, it wasn't clear what I was supposed to be doing, but with time it is becoming clearer and clearer. I am now realizing, especially after these discussions, what role I am playing. And that, let me tell you, makes it harder and harder to deal with... to eat their shit. But, the people that run the programs, although they have a narrow view of society,they basically know when people are fucking off.

M.N. AHA

P.A. Like for example, many of us were active in the past in, for example, affirmative action struggles, organizing unions, welfare struggles, etc.. Now we are dealing with a situation where we don't see these struggles...things are controlled so well, they have put us in totally new terrain, terrain that they control very well so far. So besides dealing with the frustrations of one's tasks, one has to deal with this type of working situation. This means much more work. You end up having to fight battles that were, I thought, won many years ago. Like affirmative action. I think it is almost non-existent where I work...they don't even hire "tokens"

-more lines and a few joints-

M.N. Given your position, have you thought of how you or we can deny the system of the time it needs? When you say that the system needs time,

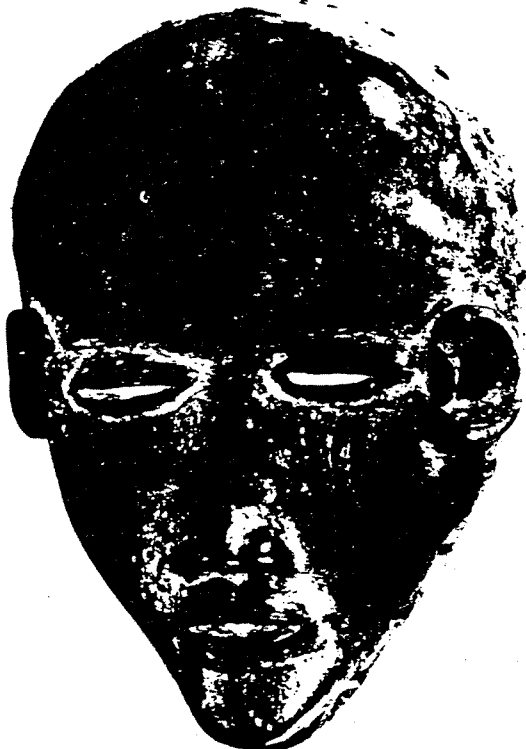




you mean two things..first, how long the system will take to be put into place, and how long it will operate. You first have to create the demons and the door. Then you have to make sure they select. Given this, you are in fact in potentially very strong position. That is, in yourself as a demon you can theoretically cause a lot of problems and not provide the system with time to let it get what it wants.

M.N. Hey..what power! There are a lot of us in that situation. However, there are several problems that get in our way. Many of us are pretty isolated. They have put us in different places and broken a lot of our connections. It is a new terrain. We must find new ways of moving and connecting. You need to make more contacts and play more games. You know that as you are working for the government and in a sense embody their policy, just because you are doing the work, there is a tendency to get caught up in it. As a worker, you know that you are being watched as well. But since you are isolated and alone, it's hard to do a lot about it.

For example, I am in the position where I need the money and I have had to pick the best situation, given little room to move because they have already weeded out many of us who have always played games together. Of course, one mustn't forget that we are still here and we don't agree with their policies, okay? They know we



are doing work, but they spend a lot of time worrying about us: all the leaks, all the late work. Even Stockman, he really pushed a certain line, but it turns out that he really wasn't sure he believed in it either. Not that I see myself being like him. But of course there is always the good demon who really believes this shit, really embodies the new state. They are the ones who, in the long run, will be able less and less to detect, as pointed out by Weiner. His thesis will apply most to them in the long run. They will be the ones who probably are going to survive these jobs, if the new state survives.

M.N. But the question is, are they going to be the ones who are going to know what is going on? In fact, you said that this is not the case. You are saying that unless the demons who burn-out very quickly actually set up the system and the programs, those who survive, who are in a certain sense more blind, will not be able to do the job.

P.A. I think this is the problem they face with Stockman. Stockman played some games. I am not going to compare myself with him, but..

M.N. You play your games too, Mr. Abono.

P.A. Right..Stockman believed in supply side economics, at least he said he did...but I never did...

M.N. You were never asked..

P.A. True...ha ha Still, if he leaves before he has set things up for them, they are going to be in real trouble. In my situation, I was hired because I had an academic background, I had been involved in community organizing, and dealt with minorities. The people who hired me didn't have this experience or knowledge. They knew their weaknesses.

Of the 30 or so of us that were hired, most came from the same background. Some didn't - basically the ones who are now being trained to replace us, the one-sided demons. Of course some of them will change too, I am sure. But, it may be too late for them. Anyway, of the 30, some had to leave early because they either played games without covering themselves or couldn't take the shit anymore. The rest of us, excluding the one-sided demons, are still around, not agreeing with what is happening, but sticking it out. We know we are needed now. But with time, if things get properly set, they won't need us, and it will be much easier to get rid of us.

M.N. You will have set up a system which by monitoring 8 or 9 pieces of data will give them a fairly good idea whether a molecule is "fast" or "slow" and where it is headed. So they won't need you. Right now, they need you. They have to go for the person who can detect what is going on, who can translate the detection into the creation of the MIS system. Your contradiction is creating an MIS system that is going to replace you and you are suspicious of anyway.

P.A. We are dealing with something new here. Besides, in the last few years I have learned that I never know at the moment I do something on whose behalf I am doing it. It takes a little while to know who you are really working for, who is benefiting from your work. When I started doing this work, I knew something different was happening. I was playing a whole new game and

when you started talking about these Maxwell's Demons back at Luquillo beach and Humacao, it all started falling into place.

In the past, I thought my job was detecting needs...not people. But, I see this whole thing in a different way now. Its not a question of detecting need. See, I have been told that I have to detect needs so that we can address them. But everytime I detect new needs, they just take notes of what I say and never address them, unless they have to or it means getting more work out of people. In fact, they seem to be afraid to let us monitor and register the real needs because then somebody will use that information to demand something. The tell people that as long as they don't see the needs, they are not there. Now, it is getting clearer..

Like I said, the needs are always politically defined. For example, they are now coming up with a concept called Prime Wage Earner, taken from CETA. They say that they only want to detect his needs. I say "his" because the "primary wage earner", is supposed to be someone who has the most potential for earning the highest wage, in a family:so the man. It basically sets up a situation where women are once again discriminated against. They even have the audacity to claim that it is not sexist.

They also only want us to detect short run trends and problems. This is one of their blind spots. Because they are not trained to think too far into the future.

M.N. It appears that the assesment of needs is largely the attempt to determine which needs are the most explosive, immediately, disruptive, hoping that if they prevent blow-ups, they will get more time to transform the system.

P.A. That's true. Well, the difference between the old state, the "mediation" state, as you call it, and the new "detection" state is that the old state said, "we are going to be there..to "mediate" between you and your employer, private capital, etc." The "detection" state says "we are not going to be there unless we have to. Of course, we are going to be watching you." The "long run" is no longer the responsibility of the state, nor of the private employer, private capital, ..but of the people. Their only long run goal is to have only the chief administrator working. Everyone else will be out the door. They are saying to us, when you are finished, we are going to kick you out.

M.N. Everyone must know that by now.

P.A. Sure, the manager brags about it.

M.N. There is a contradiction here - you are saying that you are all quite isolated and there is an enormous quantity of information that you are all sharing together.

P.A. Yes, I agree, but I think this is also a problem which society as a whole is facing.

M.N. Well, as a demon, what do you suggest that atoms do with this new state?

P.A. Well, if I were an atom and of course I realize that for a higher demon, I am an atom, someone else is tracking me, I feel it more and more. I process information in a cogent manner

for the state. So if the atoms are going to deal effectively with the system that we are building, they are going to have to know that they are dealing with an information system:

A system which works to pick up information from everyone and then either keep it from it-self or return it in a distorted or modified

form. The information being picked up is for managers and politicians, not for the people. In this sense, democracy, (ha!) or what little "democracy" there was is being destroyed.

For example, I have noticed lately that the is a move to destroy all forms of real decision-making input by people, even doing away with the pretence of giving that power. They want people to give information, but that is all.

I have seen state managers again and again go out of their way to change regulations to eliminate formal decision-making input mechanism. They use whatever reason they can get away with: too much bureaucracy, takes too much time, costs too much money. The atoms should be aware of this and work to subvert it. They are dealing with a "one-way-mirror" Next, "molecules" should know the types of information the state is collecting from them and work to give it bad or disinformation. The problem is how to do it.

M.N. You are saying there are many different levels of information. You have access to a lot of information which you are supposed to use, yet you also have a hard time getting hold of a higher level of information perhaps collected on you. Now, it is useful to get hold of all this information that is being collected. However, the system is making it harder to get hold of information at higher levels. If you are out there, being a molecule, you are not getting, or you are not supposed to be getting any information from a level above you, even if you are working within the system as a demon on a lower level. How do you get this information? Part of the answer is for people in your position who have access to this information to share it with those who need it and are seeking it. That way, everyone has the same information.

What can the demons do to get this information out? First of all, leaks..the whole field of leaks.

P.A. You are right..go ahead.

M.N. There are two ways. This can be one of Midnight Notes Theorems: One is to pass on disinformation to the system, and the other is to pass down and across the information you have collected and involving your instructions and regulations. What kind of information do you pass up and let these higher demons collect from you? You have to come out with bad information that is plausible and that will make it hard for them to do their planning. You also have to try to get many others to do the same thing. If you do it by yourself, it may be so insignificant that it may never even matter. But then it might. Meanwhile, you have to take the 'real' information that you have collected and pass it on to the molecules, leak it out. Send wrong information in one direction and correct it in the other - exactly the opposite of what the state wants.

P.A. Hold on! Don't forget! Ever present in these games and leaks has to be the concept you

people always talk about, the refusal of work, doing things with the least amount of work. Otherwise people, whether demons or molecules, will just burn out. The strategy which we are discussing cannot become another form of work! You have to enjoy your games, "enjoy your struggle".

Many of us demons are feeling quite isolated, but that is not the whole story. We are not dead yet. Many of us have formed informal links, sharing many pieces of information - about our jobs, about the information we pick up, etc. This "network" of information is growing each day and is becoming a pain in the ass for management. Issues of pay and work situations usually start off the relationships. Telephones always bring people closer together when they are physically separated, but I always wonder who's listening. I am always careful.

You know, going back to this whole issue of refusing work - It has become very clear to me that the times when I am least able to think and react to what I am doing is when I am working hard, over-worked, the times when they pass the work on to me. So I think one of the most important ways to fight back is to pass the work back to them. The more the better. If they realize that every time they make you work, you make them work more, they will soon stop. Keep them hopping!!

MN(1) That's right. That's the point. The more they hop, the shorter the life span of the demon.

P.A. This is the best way to deal with the demons who love their work, or any fellow worker who loves his work, just like the boss: Make them hop, give them all the work that they love to do.

M.N.(2) Ha..ha.. give the work to your enemies.

P.A. That's a beautiful quote..give the work to your enemies..only to your enemies!!

M.N.(1) I've thought something! The signal-noise ratio in information theory!

P.A. What?

M.N.(1) You know, every time the information is passed from one level to another, it is corrupted and played with; and so, by the time the information gets up to the highest level where it will be used to make basic decisions, it will have become so completely unconnected with reality that this will cause them to make decisions that can cause enormous problems for the system.

P.A. You mean they become unable to detect the true signal through all the noise..and they then use this information to make wrong decisions.. what a feeling of power I have all of a sudden.

MN(2) It's the coke!

P.A. It's time to play some noisy games I see.

M.N.(1) Ha..ha..They have to be given the sense that they know, but they don't. All coups are based on that actually...Ha..ha..ha.. Now that we are talking about information theory..there doesn't seem to be a channel for us to circulate the information among ourselves, or to our molecules - welfare mothers and fathers, office workers, factory workers, students, whoever the hell else we want to pass it on to.

M.N.(2) Well, that's the irony of the moment..To transfer information you need two things - a

channel and a code. The channel is there. It's only for the using. For example, take the cassette and the recorder that we are using right now..everyone has them.. they also have television-, telephones, etc...everyone has a fantastic amount of possibilities of communication with each other on an immediate level. One of the things is to use those channels. Think about Khnomeni, how he was able to use his tapes even in "primitive" Iran: the electronic ayhatollah.

Everyone: Ha..ha..ha..

M.N.(1) The second thing is the code.. the language ..we have to create a new language..we have to get a lot more information out with a lot less ideology. The left tends to spread a lot less information with a lot more ideology. But there has to be ways of disseminating this information ..oh, no, of course not you Pedro..Ha..ha..ha.. P.A. Well, maybe I would like to join in on the fun.

M.N. (1) Oh, a convert!

M.N. (2) I was detecting that we might have found a convert back in Puerto Rico. Ha..ha..

M.N. (1) They have assumed that they (the state) can win by denying us information, We can win by getting this information out. Imagine what millions can do with all this information! Infinite wealth!

M.N. (2) It's the wealth we really want to share ..what does it mean to get the information out? What is the information..it must be more than just reports and statistics...Where the money is ..that there is money, where it is, and how to get it..Where the rest of the wealth is ..that there is such wealth, where it is, and how to get it.

END

