

**A TECHNOLOGY BILL OF RIGHTS  
FROM THE INTERNATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION OF MACHINISTS**

**APPENDIX**



On April 30, and May 1, 1981, William Winpisinger, then president of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), AFL-CIO, hosted the IAM Scientists and Engineers Conference in New York City. It was chaired by Seymour Melman, Professor of Engineering and Operations Research at Columbia University. The purpose of the event was to bring social scientists from major universities and engineers from large manufacturing corporations into direct dialogue with each other and with top IAM officials and rank and file members, an attendance of about forty people in all.<sup>1</sup> Their assignment was to examine what was happening to the nature of work and employment as the mechanized forms of automation get replaced by those involving computers and robots.

The Technology Bill of Rights was produced as a direct result of the conference.<sup>2</sup> Beyond circulation given the bill directly by the IAM staff, it was also published in the quarterly journal *democracy* (Sheldon Wolin, ed.), New York, Spring 1983, pp.25-27.



International Association of Machinists Congress hereby amends the National Labor Relations Act, Railway Act, and other appropriate Acts to declare a national labor policy through a New Technology Bill of Rights:

I

New technology shall be used in a way that creates jobs and promotes community-wide and national full employment.

Unit labor cost savings and labor productivity gains resulting from the use of new technology shall be shared with workers at the local enterprise level and shall not be permitted to accrue excessively or exclusively for the gain of capital, management, and shareholders. Reduced work hours and increased leisure time made possible by new technology shall result in no loss of real income or decline in living standards for workers affected at the local level.

## III

Local communities, the states, and the nation have a right to require employers to pay a replacement tax on all machinery, equipment, robots, and production systems that displace workers and cause unemployment, thereby decreasing local, state, and federal revenues.

## IV

New technology shall improve the conditions of work and shall enhance and expand the opportunities for knowledge, skills and compensation of workers. Displaced workers shall be entitled to training, retraining, and subsequent job placement or re-employment.

## V

New technology shall be used to develop and strengthen the U.S. industrial base, consistent with full employment goals and national security requirements, before it is licensed or otherwise exported abroad.

## VI

New technology shall be evaluated in terms of worker safety and health and shall not be destructive of the workplace environment, nor shall it be used at the expense of the community's natural environment.

## VII

Workers, through their trade unions and bargaining units, shall have an absolute right to participate in all phases of management deliberations and decisions that lead or could lead to the introduction of new technology or the changing of the workplace system design work process, and procedures for doing work, including the shutdown or transfer of work, capital, plants, and equipment.

## VIII

Workers shall have the right to monitor control room centers and control stations, and the new technology shall not be used to monitor, measure or otherwise control the work practices and work standards of individual workers at the point of work.

## IX

Storage of an individual worker's personal data and information file by the employer shall be tightly controlled, and the collection and/or release and dissemination of information with respect to race, religion, or political activities and beliefs, records of physical and mental health disorders and treatment, records of arrests and felony charges or convictions, information concentrating intentional and private family matters, and information regarding an individual's financial condition or credit worthiness, shall not be permitted, except in rare circumstances related to health, and then only after consultation with a family or union-appointed physician, psychiatrist, or member of the clergy. The right of an individual worker to inspect his or her personal file shall at all times be absolute and open.

## X

When the new technology is employed in the production of military goods and services, workers, through their trade unions and bargaining agents, have a right to bargain with management over the establishment of Alternative Production Committees, which shall design ways to adapt that technology to socially useful production in the civilian sector of the economy.

## NOTES

- 1 David Noble was a participant.
- 2 "I drafted this version of 'The Technology Bill of Rights,' with considerable input from Seymour Melman and the other attendees of the 'Scientists and Engineers Conference.'" From Hatley Shaiken, *Work Transformed: Automation and Labor in the Computer Age* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1984), notes to Chapter 8, p.296.