

DELABORING REPUBLICANISM

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This article criticizes radical labor republicanism on republican grounds. I show that its demand for universal workplace democracy via workers' cooperatives conflicts with republican freedom along three different dimensions: first, freedom to choose an occupation...and not to choose one; second, freedom within the very cooperatives that workers are to democratically govern; and third, freedom within the newly proletarian state. In the conclusion, I ask whether these criticisms apply, at least in part, to the more modest, incrementalist strand of labor republicanism. To the extent that they do, delaboring republicanism might be the best response.

Contemporary (or neo-) republicans have only recently begun to debate the implications of their theory for political economy, especially regarding labor markets. The *summum malum* for all republicans, contemporary or classical, is slavery, and they are understandably concerned that the relationship between capitalists and workers can, at least under certain circumstances, parallel that between masters and slaves. If workers are poorly informed, face monopsonistic or oligopsonistic labor markets, and have few resources at their disposal, they may be in a position to be dominated by their employers, who can exercise arbitrary power over them with little to no fear that they will exit in response. Company towns like early-20th century Matewan, West Virginia, were often studies in labor servitude, despite operating within a legal system of ostensibly “free labor.”

A subset of republicans, commonly referred to as “labor republicans,” have responded to this problem of employer power and workers' corresponding vulnerability by turning to the kinds of solutions that classical republicans applied to the state itself in order to prevent it from becoming a dominating force. These solutions to state domination came in two forms. The first, *participatory* approach gave citizens a voice via contestatory democracy, which consists of “not only electoral rights but also the effective opportunity to contest the decisions of their representatives...[through] impartial ‘courts of appeal’ [that] can include the press and the streets as well as more formal channels of protest.”¹ The second, *constitutional* approach safeguarded citizens by means of the

dispersal of power, such as the checks and balances associated with the separation of powers, bicameralism, federalism, and international legalism.² Labor republicans have put both of these approaches to work in the economic sphere. For example, in labor markets with concentrated employer power they have favored solutions both participatory (e.g., labor involvement in managerial decisions through German-style “works councils” and even socialism) and constitutional (e.g., the countervailing power of either the state through democratic regulation or workers by means of privileges to form unions and strike).

This description may understate the internal diversity of labor republicanism, however. For example, on the more moderate and reformist end of the labor-republican spectrum, Nien-hê Hsieh proposes what he calls a “workplace republicanism” that “constrains the discretion of managerial decision-making” (e.g., by means of legal regulations) and “provides institutional guarantees for workers to be able to contest managerial directives as part of the decision-making process internal to economic enterprises” (e.g., through union representatives).³ Similarly, Elizabeth Anderson argues for reforms both participatory (e.g., works councils) and constitutional (e.g., “a workers’ bill of rights...[with] more robust protections of workers’ freedom to engage in off-duty activities, such as exercising political rights, free speech, and sexual choices”).⁴ Both authors keep their distance from more drastic solutions, though, including workplace democracy.⁵ Their approaches to constraining employer power are generally modest, incrementalist, and institutionally flexible.⁶

By contrast, those scholars at the radical end of the labor-republican spectrum focus almost exclusively on participatory approaches, demanding universal workplace democracy by means of workers’ cooperatives as the solution to capitalist domination. Michael Sandel, for example, offers a rather laudatory portrait of labor-republican advocates of a “cooperative commonwealth,” one in which “the wage system” would be replaced, by means of both “political action” and “strikes and

trade unions,” with “a scheme of cooperatives in which workers would share in the profits of labor and govern themselves.”⁷ Alex Gourevitch, who acknowledges his debt to Sandel, more directly endorses a cooperative commonwealth, supporting a “mixture of [worker] control rights at the national and local, firm level. At the very least, it would include democratic control over productive assets and equal worker control over the conditions and processes of work.”⁸ These changes would be revolutionary in nature, replacing capitalism with a kind of associational socialism; Gourevitch freely admits that “centralization and some amount of coercion are unavoidable” in realizing this dramatic transformation.⁹ At the same time, though, the appeal of such an approach is clear. If we refuse to tolerate unilateral, unaccountable rule in government, then why should we tolerate it in the workplace? Why shouldn’t democratic means be used here, too, to constrain arbitrary power?

My main task in this article will be to criticize this radical strand of labor republicanism on grounds internal to republicanism itself. In the first section, I will set the stage for what follows by describing and comparing two ideal-theoretic republican economic models; throughout the article, I will ordinarily compare these ideal models with one another rather than with existing institutions. In the second section, I will argue that the radical demand for universal workplace democracy via workers’ cooperatives conflicts with republican support for *freedom as non-domination* (hereafter **FND**) along three different dimensions: first, freedom to choose an occupation...and not to choose one; second, freedom within the very cooperatives that workers are to democratically govern; and third, freedom within the newly proletarian state. Finally, in the article’s conclusion, I will turn to the question of whether these criticisms apply, at least in part, to the more modest, incrementalist kind of labor republicanism represented by Anderson and Hsieh. To the extent that they do, delaboring republicanism might be the best response.

TWO ECONOMIC MODELS OF REPUBLICANISM

To fix ideas, consider two different economic models. The first, embraced by Sandel and Gourevitch, is *associational socialism* (hereafter **AS**), which demands public ownership of all non-labor factors of production via workers' cooperatives. It entails universal worker self-management, whether direct or indirect (by the election of supervisors), and is therefore anti-statist, emphasizing labor's right to control land, capital, and the production process itself. David Miller describes AS's constitutive workplace environment as follows:

A co-operative is taken to be a productive unit democratically controlled on a one person—one vote basis by everyone who works in it. Its capital may be owned, individually or collectively, by the members or leased from an outside agency, but in any case carries no rights of control. The profits of the co-operative are shared by the members according to an agreed schedule and constitute their income.¹⁰

The second economic model, *property-owning democracy* (hereafter **POD**), involves widespread private ownership of land and capital (physical, financial, and human) in order to “put all citizens in a position to manage their own affairs,” as Rawls, one of its foremost advocates, puts it.¹¹ It offers a petit-bourgeois rather than social-democratic vision of economic democratization, one achieved via inheritance taxation, “capitalist” demogrants, etc. Demogrants could come in the form of small-business awards, seed money for playing the stock market or for purchasing an annuity to subsidize a low-paying but rewarding vocation (e.g., topiary gardening), educational vouchers, etc. Notice that POD permits but does not require worker self-management: workers are free to pool demogrants, for example, and practice voluntary syndicalism, owning and running their own workplaces with or without the support of elected managers.¹² However, they may also opt for traditional, hierarchical capitalist employment relations, whether as employers or as employees.

Under POD, citizens are empowered by both competitive markets (for products, services, and production factors, especially labor) and demogrants to select any kind of workplace environment they prefer, whether by creating them, joining them, or leaving them.

These workplace environments will of course operate with varying degrees of productive efficiency, as measured by the cost (in terms of the factor payments, e.g., payroll) of producing a given quantity and quality of output (i.e., products, services, and/or produced factors), which will itself be a function of not only factor prices (e.g., wage rates) but also managerial practices and production technologies. Some preferences for workplace environments may be quite expensive to satisfy (in terms of lost income, leisure, and opportunities) compared to preferences for more productively-efficient alternatives, like hierarchical assembly-line settings.

As even its supporters (including David Miller and John Stuart Mill) admit, the cooperative workplace is beset by a variety of inefficiencies, all of which result from its fundamental feature: workers owning and running their own workplaces. First, because workers will tend to maximize income per-capita rather than total profits, a cooperative will do less hiring than a capitalist firm and will consequently remain inefficiently small.¹³ Second, because cooperative ownership is indivisible, the effective time horizon of the median voter-worker will be short compared to that of a capitalist, leading to chronic underinvestment: why reinvest profits and “deepen capital” when many if not most of the benefits will accrue to a younger generation of workers? Trying to solve this problem by introducing divisibility (e.g., permitting workers to own shares of the cooperative that can be sold at a future date) merely converts the cooperative into a joint-stock company, i.e., a capitalist enterprise.¹⁴ Finally, the cooperative ownership structure makes spreading risk more difficult for its member-workers, leading them to make excessively conservative management decisions, e.g., resisting innovations in production techniques and technologies.¹⁵ These

inefficiencies will place cooperatives at a significant cost disadvantage *vis-à-vis* traditional capitalist firms.

These theoretical predictions may seem to conflict with the real-world performance of some worker-participatory firms (e.g., the Mondragon cooperatives in Spain, employee stock ownership plans [ESOPs] in the U.S., etc.) and economies (e.g., the co-determination system in Germany) that appear to compete effectively with traditional capitalist firms and economies, but they are not. First, all of these examples fall far short of being cooperative firms and economies: Mondragon has a mixture of divisible and indivisible ownership, ESOPs are fully divisible (after vesting) and usually constitute only partial ownership of the firm, and German co-determination involves no ownership by employees and merely minority representation on management boards. Second, even if these firms and economies were entirely cooperative, they might still be able to compete effectively with more traditional ones by paying lower wages, demanding longer hours, etc.; therefore, competing successfully does not necessarily demonstrate equal productive efficiency. Finally, even if we were to observe fully cooperative firms competing successfully without offering lower wages, etc., we would have to worry about the issue of worker self-selection: cooperatives may attract more skilled or conscientious workers (given that these qualities are likely correlated with a preference for self-management), in which case they might be able to compete effectively with traditional firms. This would be comparing apples and oranges, however, as the quality of labor would then be higher in the former than the latter, while impartial productive-efficiency comparisons assume equal-quality inputs. The only fair test, then, is at the economy level, in which all workplaces are cooperative and thus high-quality workers cannot self-select. There has been only one large-scale test of this kind, however: Tito's Yugoslavia, whose unique experiment with AS featured precisely the under-employment, under-investment, and

under-innovation predicted by economic theory.¹⁶

The cost disadvantages of cooperatives tend to make them uncompetitive in open markets with more efficient workplaces, e.g., hierarchical assembly lines. However, they might still be able to compete effectively in such environments by paying lower wages, demanding longer hours, etc., which would keep labor costs down and allow prices to be set at rates comparable to those of more traditional workplaces. Whether laborers would agree to this, given competitive labor markets and the exit options made available by POD, would hinge upon the strength of labor's taste for them. Their defenders, of course, would contend that their costs—e.g., forgone income (lower wages and benefits), leisure, and/or opportunities—are outweighed by their benefits, especially working-class autonomy and solidarity.¹⁷ POD puts both workplace environments within reach, but for a price: workers must bear the full costs of their expensive tastes for inefficient but fulfilling employment settings.

Some authors, like Mill, have suggested that AS might spontaneously evolve by voluntary means out of POD or even presently-existing capitalism.¹⁸ Workers could scrape together capital through savings, loans, or perhaps gifts and bequests from sympathetic capitalists, creating the economic basis for self-management; POD would make this process far more feasible. The result would be an immaculate conception of AS, unsullied by expropriation or revolutionary violence. Given the heterogeneity of worker preferences for workplace environments, however, it seems extremely unlikely that anything approaching AS would emerge in such a voluntary fashion. POD would surely increase the prevalence of workers' cooperatives, but that is a far cry from the *universality* of worker self-management envisioned by AS. Only some workers are likely to share the idiosyncratic and expensive tastes of Sandel and Gourevitch, who often seem as motivated by civic-humanist and Marxist assumptions about the good life, respectively, as by republican worries

regarding domination.¹⁹ If so, the extent of worker self-management under POD would fall (far) short of what AS demands.

Such a democratic deficit in the workplace must be rectified, according to AS, and if labor will not voluntarily seize the opportunity POD provides to do so, then perhaps a less voluntaristic approach is necessary. Worker self-management may have to be imposed in ways that fail to track the workplace preferences of labor. The need for such guidance by a properly enlightened socialist vanguard suggests why AS might, in the long run, diminish FND in a way problematic from a neo-republican point of view—as I now hope to demonstrate.

RADICAL LABOR REPUBLICANISM VERSUS REPUBLICAN FREEDOM

The first way in which AS is inconsistent with the republican commitment to FND is with respect to worker freedom to choose an occupation...and not to choose one. When I choose to work in a non-participatory workplace, I choose to be a simple wage laborer. If I am instead required to work in a cooperative, as AS demands, then I am forced to become both a wage laborer *and a co-manager*, either directly or indirectly (via delegation).²⁰ By assumption, however, I did not want to be a co-manager, and forcing someone to take a job that they do not desire is a clear violation of free choice of occupation and employment. Given the importance of this liberty to freely shaping our own lives (the *sine qua non* of personal autonomy), we betray republican values if we sacrifice it for the sake of building working-class autonomy and solidarity, a Marxist preoccupation.

Free choice of occupation is a liberty that is closely associated with liberals such as Rawls, but it is also embraced by republicans, especially Pettit himself.²¹ Pettit includes “the freedom to change occupation and employment” among what he (like Rawls) calls the “basic liberties”; these liberties, “secured by public resourcing and protection,” are necessary for realizing a “full and

meaningful life” and for securing the status of each as “a free person.”²² As for this latter point, Pettit maintains that the basic liberties protect essential (co-exercisable and co-satisfying) choices “that people ought to be enabled to make, and to make without the domination of others—without dependency on their goodwill and forbearance.”²³ Within the framework of universal cooperatives demanded by AS, my ability to escape the occupation of co-manager—to “change occupation and employment,” as Pettit puts it—hinges on the “goodwill and forbearance” of my fellow workers, a majority of whom must vote to either grant or deny such an exception to cooperative policies on joint management. But this is precisely the kind of dependency that Pettit always condemns...and associates with Rousseau, who appears “to celebrate a form of dependency upon the will of the corporate whole—in effect, the will of the majority—at odds with a vision of freedom as non-domination.”²⁴

A socialist-republican like Sandel or Gourevitch might object here that a right to exit from cooperative co-management responsibilities would be exactly like a right to exit from *political* co-management responsibilities by giving up one’s political liberties: both of these rights to exit are effectively rights to servitude, to having vitally important decisions made on your behalf by either an economic elite (capitalists) or a political elite (dictators or oligarchs), respectively. But such a strong analogy between economic enterprises and the state will not withstand much scrutiny. In a nation-state, the right of control can be effectively exercised only by means of voice (protesting, voting, etc.), as exit is too costly. This is simply not true of workplaces, though, at least under the competitive conditions and resourced exit that POD offers. Empowered workers can demand the workplace conditions they desire via open, competitive labor markets (be it by entry, exit, or the creation of new workplaces). Voice—the power to participate in the determination of workplace rules—is unnecessary to provide workers with the control that they deserve over their conditions

of employment, though voluntary syndicalism does remain an option under POD. They vote with their feet instead. The socialist-republican objection fails because there's a key disanalogy between workplaces and political societies: workers, unlike citizens, can be given control by means of the market rather than the forum. Gourevitch would retort that this gives workers nothing but a choice among different capitalist masters, leaving capitalism's structural domination in place.²⁵ This might be true for welfare-state capitalism, but it is not for POD: given large capitalist demogrants, workers are not beholden to capitalists, be it individually or as a class, because POD turns all citizens into capitalists; it abolishes the domination of the capitalist class by universalizing private capital ownership.

The second way in which AS is inconsistent with the republican commitment to FND is with respect to worker freedom within the very cooperatives they democratically govern. Under AS, each cooperative workplace is a miniature *demos*, authorized to pick whatever rules or policies or to make whatever executive decisions that a majority of voter-workers will temporarily support. To repeat Pettit, this is “a form of dependency upon the will of the corporate whole—in effect, the will of the majority—at odds with a vision of freedom as non-domination.”²⁶ What forms will this dependency and the resulting arbitrary power of worker majorities take? Consider the issue of worker participation in cooperative decision-making. Once workers have replaced the capitalists as the masters of their work environment, one might expect an easygoing attitude toward worker compliance with co-management and production duties, a live-and-let-live attitude in sharp contrast with the cruel and exploitative discipline of capitalists and their managerial cronies—but this would be a mistaken expectation, at least for cooperatives that have any prospect of surviving long term. In a cooperative workplace, the benefits of self-management are a public good enjoyed by all workers: a well-run cooperative firm will yield a bigger surplus to be shared by all workers,

ceteris paribus, than a badly-run one. If this is so, then a worker-run firm is highly likely to require participation and enforce it by censure, fines, threats of firing, etc., lest worker free-riding cripple its efficiency. Shirkers, in short, will be curbed by proletarian discipline, whether in their roles as co-managers or producers. This is perhaps why Mill, himself an admirer of cooperatives, says that “their rules of discipline, instead of being more lax, are stricter than those of ordinary workshops.”²⁷ Whether such strict discipline can be meted out without arbitrariness is a question I will leave to students of human nature.

The problems with handing arbitrary power to worker majorities do not end there, however. For example, what would prevent such a majority from discriminating in hiring, promotion, firing, etc., on such grounds as race, gender, or national origin? The long and shameful history of the labor movement on these issues (e.g., the American Federation of Labor’s restrictionist position on legal immigration during the bulk of the 20th century) does not fill one with confidence. More generally, what would prevent such a majority from singling out vulnerable individuals or groups within the cooperative for abuse? The potential for domination, humiliation, and exploitation does not simply disappear when we convey arbitrary power from capitalists to worker majorities: only the identities of the potential abusers change.²⁸

There are various ways we could prevent or at least counter the exercise of such arbitrary power, but as we’ll see, radical labor republicans have often ruled these out due to their peculiarly zealous commitment to what I have called the participatory approach. The first and most obvious way to deal with these problems is with the complementary constitutional approach, as the more moderate and institutionally-flexible labor republicans like Anderson and Hsieh have suggested. For example, worker majorities enamored of Taylorism, say, or of interfering in the political lives of workers in the name of working-class solidarity (e.g., threatening to fire any workers who voice

support for pro-capitalist parties) could be curbed by means of “a workers’ bill of rights” imposed by state regulatory agencies or the court system.²⁹ Worker majorities of a racist, misogynistic, or xenophobic bent could be countered by guaranteeing the speech and associational rights of minorities internal to cooperatives (e.g., empowering them to form internal labor unions and go on strike against their own cooperatives). Radical labor republicans have been oddly silent about this second possibility (internal unions)—possibly due to misplaced faith in working-class unity—and actively dismissive of the first (state regulation). Gourevitch, for example, is decidedly skeptical of state-regulatory solutions to the problem of domination, calling them “slow moving” and “a crude instrument,” and hopes that in a cooperative commonwealth “a substantial amount of regulation would no longer be needed.”³⁰ As the above examples suggest, however, abandoning “a substantial amount” of labor regulation would be ill-advised, even under AS.

An entirely different approach to dealing with arbitrary worker majorities is to ensure that cooperatives are embedded within highly competitive and properly resourced labor markets so that workers in abusive places can exit them (individually or in groups) or at least credibly threaten to do so with the aim of modifying majority behavior. As I discussed in the last section, this is POD’s central strategy, so to speak, for thwarting domination in all types of workplaces, be they traditional or cooperative. Radical labor republicans could import a variety of POD’s policy instruments into AS (e.g., antitrust law, a basic income, and mobility vouchers...though obviously not the capitalist demogrants). Again, however, they appear to be highly doubtful of the efficacy of exit: Gourevitch worries that the “threat [to exit] is often either not credible or inadequate” and therefore that “exit is an inadequate substitute for voice.”³¹ By responding in this way, though, he implicitly relies upon a false dichotomy between pure exit and pure participatory voice, using the infeasibility of the former to argue for the necessity of the latter. As we have seen with the more moderate labor

republicans like Anderson and Hsieh, however, there is a Third Way available. The radical labor republicans fail to see that, once constitutional and exit-oriented approaches are added to the mix, universal workplace democracy (versus, say, Hsieh's more modest workplace republicanism) may be unnecessary...and even unwise, for the reasons canvassed above and below.

The third and final way in which AS is inconsistent with the republican commitment to FND is with respect to worker freedom *vis-à-vis* the newly proletarian state. Pettit and Lovett note that a "free state...promotes its citizens' freedom from domination, without itself coming to dominate them"; republicanism's task is therefore to minimize *total* domination, i.e., the sum of private and public (i.e., state) domination.³² Labor republicans have focused almost exclusively on one kind of private domination: the domination of workers by capitalists and their managers. As we saw above, however, there are other kinds of domination that labor republicans should concern themselves with. Not only can worker majorities dominate individual and minority workers within cooperatives, but the newly proletarian state envisioned by radical labor republicans might itself become a threat to everyone's FND, capitalists and workers alike—or so I shall argue.

Recall that a genuine cooperative commonwealth "would include democratic control over productive assets and equal worker control over the conditions and processes of work."³³ Replacing capitalism with AS in this way would be a *revolutionary* transformation, in two senses of that word. First, consider that in the U.S. in 2014, the top 1% of adults owned over 37% of net personal wealth, so equalizing control over productive assets and work would necessitate a sweeping redistribution of property rights—the expropriators would truly be expropriated.³⁴ No such redistribution has ever been accomplished peacefully; doing so without bloodshed would, in fact, be historically unprecedented. Walter Scheidel's recent book *The Great Leveler* has proven beyond a reasonable doubt that over thousands of years, only violent events of four kinds have

dramatically reduced inequality, which he labels the “Four Horsemen of Leveling”: to wit, “mass-mobilization warfare, transformative revolutions, state failure, and lethal pandemics.”³⁵ He sums up the evidence for the second of the Horsemen, which is the most relevant for our purposes, as follows:

Over the course of about sixty years, from 1917 into the late 1970s...communist revolutionary regimes successfully forced down inequality through expropriation, redistribution, collectivization, and price-setting. The actual amount of violence expended in the implementation of these measures varied hugely between cases, with Russia, China, and Cambodia on one end of the spectrum and Cuba and Nicaragua on the other. Yet it would go too far to consider violence merely incidental to forcible leveling: even though it would in principle have been possible for Lenin, Stalin, and Mao to achieve their goals with more limited loss of life, sweeping expropriations crucially depended on the application of at least some violence and a credible threat of escalation.³⁶

The fact that such drastic redistributions of property have always been accomplished by systematic state violence against capitalists and workers alike does not rule out the possibility that some future attempt, like that urged by the radical labor republicans, might be peaceful, but it does raise some extremely important questions about the great risks involved and who would bear them.³⁷

What have the radical labor republicans had to say about these questions? Precious little, as it turns out, and what they have said is not reassuring. Gourevitch, as I noted earlier, admits that because “the cooperative commonwealth [is] a challenge to the economic prerogatives of an entire class, it would require ongoing central coordination to create, let alone maintain”; in the course of doing so, the “hegemonic agent would have to be the dependent class of workers itself” and “[state]

centralization and some amount of coercion [would be] unavoidable.”³⁸ Given the sanguinary history of socialist revolutions, these equivocations are entirely inadequate. Radical labor republicans have a moral obligation to explain, in painstaking detail, how they plan to take us from the capitalist present to the socialist future without violence—or, if such a peaceful transition is admitted to be improbable, they’ll need to tell us why violence would then be justified, especially given the existence of powerfully domination-curbing alternatives like POD.

Radical labor republicans might respond that advocates of POD are likewise obligated to show that *their* ideal, which would also entail a great deal of redistribution, can be achieved without violence. This is a fair point, so I shall briefly respond. First, we should notice that POD is, despite appearances, not an egalitarian or even prioritarian economic model, but a sufficientarian one. Its goal is not to equalize ownership and control, differing with AS merely as to whether the property should be public or private; instead, it is to guarantee that everyone has access to adequate private property, especially capital in its various forms, in order to “put all citizens in a position to manage their own affairs,” i.e., achieve economic independence.³⁹ Consequently, the bar for achieving distributive justice under POD, while certainly high, is much lower than it is for AS and so less likely to require state violence—and provoke counter-violence—in its implementation and maintenance than AS. Second, nearly all of the policy instruments required to implement POD have already been adopted within advanced capitalist economies in one form or another, even in the U.S., so they would simply need to be scaled up to achieve POD’s goals: for example, mobility vouchers (see the federal Trade Adjustment Assistance program’s relocation assistance), capitalist demogrants (see the Small Business Administration’s subsidized loan program), and conditional basic-income support (see the federal Earned Income Tax Credit) already exist in embryonic form and could be brought to maturity through significantly greater funding and a broader mandate. By

contrast, AS has few contemporary precedents, particularly in the U.S.: there are only 500 workers' cooperatives employing 8000 or so people.⁴⁰ Again, POD looks much more politically feasible than AS in dealing with domination by capitalists and their managers—and, as a bonus, is significantly less likely to devolve into a FND-obliterating left-wing totalitarianism.

I will close this section by considering one more potential reply of radical labor republicans, not to one or another of my claims but rather to my whole line of criticism: that the FND-denominated costs I have identified here, even if real, are outweighed by the huge benefits in that same currency. I should acknowledge that, in the course of my critique of AS, I have probably underemphasized its considerable domination-reducing benefits. In fact—setting aside for one moment my concerns about the potential for revolutionary violence—I believe that AS would be a serious improvement in FND-terms over presently-existing capitalism, *even taking into account my first two criticisms*. Especially in the U.S., we are much less removed from Matewan, West Virginia, than we would like to think. Consider the fact that even in the high-tech industry, where labor markets are fluid and employees are highly mobile, Google, Apple, Intel, and Adobe just recently colluded in a scheme not to solicit one another's employees, successfully exploiting their software engineers for years before being discovered and successfully sued for antitrust violations.⁴¹ Contrast these workers with the more numerous ones who are poorly informed, face monopsonistic or oligopsonistic labor markets, and have few resources at their disposal. Their great vulnerability puts them in a position to be dominated by their employers, who can exercise arbitrary power over them just as the lords of old did over their serfs. The potential of worker majorities under AS to restrict FND should not be underestimated, but I admit that it pales beside the abuses of economic power under capitalism as it is currently constituted and that AS offers us an appealingly direct solution: democracy. Were workers empowered to govern their own

workplaces, capitalistic domination would be eliminated in one fell swoop, and managerial domination would at the very least be severely limited, as labor would now have the ability to appoint, discipline, and fire those same managers. The gain in FND-terms would surely be worth the accompanying loss, and the unilateral and unaccountable power of capitalists and their managerial lackeys would become as much a thing of the past as the feudal abuse it so closely resembles.

Having acknowledged this, two concerns remain—and I think they are ultimately decisive. First, the twentieth-century experience with revolutionary socialism, which includes a death toll numbering in the tens of millions, cannot readily be set aside. Radical labor republicans have not offered us a clear explanation of how, contrary to all historical precedent, they plan to expropriate the expropriators without violence, and even if they could offer a plausible story, the risks would still be substantial, to put it mildly. Second and relatedly, running such risks would (or should) be morally unthinkable if equally FND-protective alternatives are available, and as I have maintained throughout this article, POD is just such an alternative. Were AS and presently-existing capitalism the only options, we would face a cruel dilemma. But this is not the choice republicans face, despite the radical-republican reframing effort. POD is on the table and, as I argued above, more politically feasible to boot. Consequently, I believe the correct republican choice is evident.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, radical-labor-republican ardor for AS has dubious republican credentials. In fact, AS is questionable on the distinctively republican ground of FND: first, AS's requirement of universal workplace democracy is in sharp tension with free choice of occupation, a basic liberty endorsed by both liberals and republicans like Pettit; second, AS exposes individual and minority

workers to arbitrary power possessed by worker majorities within cooperatives, but radical labor republicans are highly skeptical of the very strategies (both constitutional and exit-oriented) that would be needed to thwart such threats of majoritarian domination; third, radical labor republicans offer little detail about the transition from the capitalist present to the socialist future—a worrisome lacuna, given that all prior successes at radically redistributing control over the non-labor factors of production have involved methodical state violence and a left-wing totalitarianism as dangerous to the freedom of workers as that of capitalists. In light of these varied and potent considerations, contemporary republicans would be well-advised to steer clear of AS.

All through my article, I've played the two wings of labor republicanism against each other, but can the criticisms I have leveled against radical labor republicanism be applied, at least in part, to the more moderate, reformist strand of labor republicanism represented by Anderson and Hsieh? To the extent that they can, a full delaboring of republicanism might be the best response. Although a definitive resolution of this issue is beyond the scope of this article, I can at least sketch a few of the more important considerations here. First and most obviously, given the more modest ambitions of the moderate labor republicans, I do not see how their reform proposals could possibly constitute a slippery slope to systematic state violence and totalitarianism. Believing so would be a kind of Hayekian precautionism gone sour.

With regard to the first two of my freedom-based objections, however—violating free choice of occupation and threatening majoritarian tyranny—they might be more vulnerable. Both Anderson and Hsieh rely upon participatory elements in their reform packages, with works councils or labor unions directly involved in managerial decision-making. As I argued earlier, such involvement has costs in terms of FND: regarding the first objection, workers have to spend time, whether directly or indirectly (by selecting and monitoring delegates), co-managing workplaces

with capitalists and their managers, though they might not have the slightest interest in doing so; regarding the second objection, works councils and labor unions can themselves be dominating agencies, with arbitrary power at hand to be deployed against capitalists, managers, and—most troublingly—their fellow workers, whether individually or as members of vulnerable minorities. Were the only institutional options either our current system or the reform package of moderate labor republicans, I think the right choice would be the latter, even in light of these FND costs, due to the even greater threat to FND from capitalists and their managers under the current dispensation. But this would once again be a false dilemma. An institutional Third Way is obtainable: POD, the exit-oriented strategy for minimizing workplace domination, which has no need for participatory or constitutional supports except *in extremis* (e.g., the gross abuses of sexual harassment or discrimination). POD avoids the FND costs associated with the moderate-labor-republican policy package by relying almost wholly on exit instead of voice, the market instead of the forum, and it has been backed by some influential contemporary republicans.⁴² As I said earlier, it is beyond the scope of this article to assess the relative attractiveness of moderate labor republicanism and POD, which would depend upon the answers to a number of difficult empirical questions (e.g., could exit become as free and easy as POD’s proponents seem to believe?), but if POD could be shown to be generally superior to moderate labor republicanism, then the case for delaboring republicanism would be compelling.

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NOTES

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¹ Lovett and Pettit, “Neorepublicanism,” 25.

² Pettit, *Republicanism*, 177-80.

³ Hsieh, “Rawlsian Justice,” 116, 135.

⁴ Anderson, *Private Government*, 68, 165n55.

⁵ Hsieh, “Rawlsian Justice,” 115-7; Anderson, *Private Government*, 69.

⁶ Certain other authors split the difference, so to speak, between the moderate and radical ends of the labor-republican spectrum. Mark Reiff (*In the Name of Liberty*), for example, also keeps his distance from workplace democracy and associational forms of socialism, but he is more programmatically ambitious than Anderson and Hsieh, arguing for universal unionization of workers in order to secure their republican liberty.

⁷ Sandel, *Democracy’s Discontent*, 186-8, 190.

⁸ Gourevitch, “Labor Republicanism,” 609, 612n9.

⁹ Gourevitch, *From Slavery*, 189.

¹⁰ Miller, *Market, State, and Community*, 83.

¹¹ Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 139-40, 160-1.

¹² Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 178.

¹³ Miller, *Market, State, and Community*, 84-5.

¹⁴ Miller, *Market, State, and Community*, 85-90. Miller sums up by noting that “in the longer term the pursuit of income-maximization by co-operators will lead to one of two unintended outcomes: competitive failure through under-investment, or degeneration into a capitalist form of organization” (90).

¹⁵ Miller, *Market, State, and Community*, 87-8; Mill, *Political Economy*, 154-5, 418-9.

¹⁶ Estrin, *Self-Management*; Estrin, “Yugoslavia.”

¹⁷ Miller, *Market, State, and Community*, 9-11, 17-9.

¹⁸ Mill, *Political Economy*, 148-9.

¹⁹ Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, 25, 202, 274; Gourevitch, *From Slavery*, 8-10, 185-9.

²⁰ One might think that the delegation of day-to-day decision-making to hired managers would allow workers to avoid most of the demands of self-management, but this is not so. Workers must still monitor, criticize, discipline, and at times fire managers, which requires a great deal of time and effort; if they fail to do so, managers will just pursue their own interests, maximizing *their* income instead of that of their worker-employers. This is less of a problem for capitalist enterprises for two reasons: first, ownership tends to be concentrated in one or a small number of people, who will then have the proper incentives to monitor the management themselves; second, even when ownership is diffuse and managerial rent-seeking increases, profits will suffer and share prices will fall, making the firm ripe for a takeover and management shake-up by corporate raiders. Neither of these options is available for cooperatives because their “shares” are equal, indivisible, and available only to current workers. The heavy demands of self-management are thus entirely structural and can only be ameliorated, not eliminated, by patches like delegation.

²¹ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 228, 363-4.

²² Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, 103.

²³ Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, 92.

²⁴ Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 12.

²⁵ Gourevitch, “Labor Republicanism,” 596, 609-10.

²⁶ Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 12.

²⁷ Mill, *Political Economy*, 149.

²⁸ Radical labor republicans may aver that “new socialist man” would never engage in such behavior, but such a claim would just be the photographic negative of Ayn Rand’s fantasy of heroic industrialists building their capitalist Shangri-La in Galt’s Gulch. True republicans believe absolutely no one is fit to wield arbitrary power, regardless of their SES.

²⁹ Anderson, *Private Government*, 68.

³⁰ Gourevitch, *From Slavery*, 179-80.

³¹ Gourevitch, “Labor Republicanism,” 608.

³² Lovett and Pettit, “Neorepublicanism,” 12.

³³ Gourevitch, “Labor Republicanism,” 609.

³⁴ World Inequality Database, “USA.”

³⁵ Scheidel, *The Great Leveler*, 6.

³⁶ Scheidel, *The Great Leveler*, 231.

³⁷ I should add that programs of radical redistribution, even if they ultimately fail, often provoke reactionary backlashes, as capitalists and landlords violently resist property confiscation, generally with the help of the military. For example, when the Marxist Salvador Allende was elected the President of Chile in 1970, he immediately embarked on a program of nationalizing large-scale industries and redistributing land to peasants. He was overthrown in 1973 by the military and national police, leading to nearly two decades of right-wing military dictatorship under General Augusto Pinochet.

³⁸ Gourevitch, *From Slavery*, 189-90. In a recent article defending the right to strike, Gourevitch is more forthcoming. He states that on his account, “there would be no strict prohibition on the use of coercive strike tactics like sit-downs and mass pickets”; in a very revealing footnote, he then proceeds to write the following: “Perhaps other tactics would also be ex ante permitted,

like sabotage, intimidation of replacements, or boss-napping. Those are more controversial because they are closer to violence, rather than just coercive interference with others' basic liberties. So I bracket them for now because they are unnecessary to the argument. But they would need to be considered downstream" (Gourevitch, "The Right to Strike," 914n33).

³⁹ Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 139.

⁴⁰ United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives, "Worker Ownership."

⁴¹ Streitfeld, "Silicon Valley."

⁴² For example, Lovett, *General Theory*, 198n13, 199n17; Taylor, *Exit Left*, Chapter 3.

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