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#RedditRevolt as Sympathy Strike

William Gillis

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Yesterday arguably one of the biggest general/sympathy strikes in modern history kicked off. I refer, of course, to reddit and the shuttering of hundreds of subreddits in protest of a woman's firing and, more broadly, the lack of democratic accountability on reddit.

Millions of people right now are excitedly joining a general strike with billions of dollars at stake. Now the leftist subreddits have expectedly sneered at the strike because they despise the broader culture in reddit and see themselves as adversaries to anything popular in the site's notoriously problematic userbase. But it's an interesting situation because, you know, I was raised to never cross a picket line. And one would be hardpressed if one stepped back and looked from a conventional union perspective to characterize going to reddit or keeping subreddits online as anything other than scabbing/crossing pickets.

I am, of course, a left market anarchist, who thinks the traditional models of unionism are laughably antiquated and map poorly onto anything of relevance in the modern world and

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that the Marxist expansion of “labor” to include literally every human activity including discourse is an insane colonization of all human experience into a dated historical lens.

Further as an anarchist I am adamantly in favor Reddit being destroyed/decentralized, not just to apply some much needed evolutionary pressures on the troglodytes that have found refuge in reddit’s reactionary aspects, but primarily so the internet can be the internet again. The anarchist orientation is ultimately not one of uncritical support for campaigns to make admins (and moderators) “more accountable” — replicating the same rotten forms of representational democratic society again and again as though a child whose imagination has been beaten away. Rather our goal is the dissolution of places of power, whether that be capricious and disconnected bosses or the enclosure of the web into walled gardens.

But this *is* an astounding moment in both the shattering of long ossified norms and the hands-on practice in resistance this such a rapid sympathy strike is giving the internet’s denizens. While a subcurrent of racist/misogynistic reactionaries is present in this struggle and seeking to push reactionary perspectives/memes such people are *usually* present in moments of great social contestation.

And it’s illustrative of just how deeply internet discourse has turned into defensive policing of clusters of identity/community that everyone is basically incapable of seeing this strike unprecedented in scale in the history of the internet for what it is.