

tion. We can expect that a shorter workweek would be followed by a struggle over the pace of work as employers try to get the work done while hiring as few new people as possible. This is what happened in West Germany after the 1984 35-hour strike ended. When German workers went back to work under the 38.5-hour workweek compromise, they then faced a speed-up.

The number of new jobs created would depend upon how successful the workforce is in resisting such speed-up campaigns. It is likely that a workers movement strong enough to impose the 35-hour workweek would not be a patsy for such stratagems. Moreover, the employers would need to hire millions of new employees even if many of the worker-hours lost due to a cut to a 35-hour workweek were made up by speed-up or lower production.

★ End forced overtime!

"Ah, but you're forgetting about forced overtime," says our skeptic. "Because of the expense associated with an employee's training and benefits, bosses prefer to demand overtime from the people already employed rather than add new people to the payrolls. Cutting the standard workweek to 35 hours would only move the dividing line where time-and-a-half begins. People would in all probability work nearly as many hours as today. They might make more money, but they wouldn't have more free time. And new jobs wouldn't be created."

This is in fact an important point, and shows us why *the fight for a*

shorter workweek can't be separated from the fight against forced overtime. When the Milwaukee Brewery Workers Union won the 37-hour workweek some years ago, people were still asked to work 40 hours. They simply got time-and-a-half instead of straighttime for three of those hours. The "37-hour week" was a joke. They just made a little more money than before.

A *real* 35-hour workweek won't exist if employees are forced to work hours of overtime on top of a "standard" 35 hours. Of course, there are times when individual workers do want to work overtime, to get extra money. Very often overtime is not voluntary, however, and even when it is nominally "voluntary," people are often pressured to agree to it. People will often accept overtime so as to keep the boss off their back, or to maintain a favorable impression.

One way to discourage the bosses from demanding overtime from their current employees would be to *increase the overtime premium from time-and-a-half to double-time.* This would mean that it would be cheaper for the employers, in many cases, to hire additional workers. And those people who want to work overtime because they need the money would not need to work as many hours.

Even in situations where people have the option of working fewer hours, they often choose to work 40 or more hours a week because they need the money. This is a reason why *a movement to shorten the workweek must insist that people be paid at least as much as they now earn for 40 hours even after the workweek is cut.*

Although the shorter workweek is a means of *fighting* unemploy-

ment, the skeptic is right about one thing: Shortening the workweek is not a *long-run* solution to unemployment. There can't be a stable, long-run solution as long as the people who control the economy can profit by cutting workers from the payrolls.

But this is no different than any other improvements in our economic or social conditions that working people have fought for. As long as the workforce is not in the driver's seat in economic and political affairs, the labor/management war is bound to continue. Unions have been built up and achieved improvements at one time only to be broken or forced to make concessions later on. Freedoms that people have won through past struggles have at times been threatened by new forms of repression. Wage increases won on one occasion are eaten up by inflation. The success of struggles at certain times does not mean struggles won't be necessary later on. But that doesn't mean that improvements such as the shorter workweek are not worth fighting for.

"Okay," the skeptic concedes, "maybe fighting for a shorter workweek can help to combat unemployment. But is this the right time to push this idea? During economic hard times, the bosses aren't too sympathetic to employee demands. It's hard enough to resist employer demands for 'concessions.' Maybe we should wait until the economy recovers. When prosperity returns, we can press this sort of demand."

And when is the system going to "recover"? Business leaders have touted the economy's present performance as a "recovery." Yet millions of people remain jobless and

the average length of time people remain unemployed has increased dramatically since the 1970s. There are plenty of indications that the bosses' system has problems that are very deep-seated — chronic high unemployment, farm foreclosures, the Latin American debt crisis, bank failures, etc. We can't sit back and expect that the bosses' system will automatically create better conditions for working people if we just wait. The wider solidarity and direct action that would be needed to fight effectively for a shorter workweek is also the antidote to the employers' concessions drive.

★ Let's make time for ourselves!

And why shouldn't we have more free time to enjoy life? The present "wage system" forces us to "rent" our time, energy, talents to employers, to do what they want. We have to do this to get money to buy back the things that we (the workforce) produce. Under this set-up, the time we spend at work is not our own. Why not take back some of that time, to spend on our own projects, to spend with friends and loved-ones, to do what *we* want?

It is no longer as common as it once was for workers' residences to be concentrated around their work-sites, as in turn-of-the-century factory neighborhoods. Because employers make the decisions about where workplaces are located, the time spent commuting is really time spent at the employer's bidding. So, why shouldn't the bosses compensate us for the time it takes us to commute to their offices and work-