

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-

The alternative would be to cut everybody's worktime without trimming the payrolls. But that won't happen unless workers fight for it.

★ Unemployment hurts all of us

Even for people who have jobs, rising unemployment has its effect. When more people are pounding the pavement in search of work, employers may find it easier to turn their backs on employee demands. And people may find themselves forced into jobs less to their liking. On the other hand, a more plentiful supply of job openings makes it more difficult for employers to ignore their employees' concerns. Fellow workers are more willing to resist the bosses and stand up for each other in countless on-the-job conflicts.

When employees are cut from payrolls, the hardship for the jobless affects society in a variety of ways. Studies have shown that increases in the number of unemployed are correlated with increases in murder, suicides, family violence, and burglaries. A study by the Joint Economic Committee of Congress in the late 1970s claimed that each one-percentage-point rise in the official unemployment rate cost the government \$5 billion in food stamps, unemployment insurance outlays and other social expenditures. In other words, the unemployed are still consuming a part of the social product but they are not helping to produce it. It would make more sense to reduce everyone's hours of work by incorporating the unemployed into the workforce.

Even though unemployment

doesn't make sense for society as a whole, it continues to grow. It does so because each separate business profits when it can get the same sales revenue while employing fewer people. That's why the present economic system, based on control of economic facilities and revenues by bosses and owners, tends to generate increasing unemployment. Despite economic "recoveries" and the "full employment" promises of politicians.

★ How many new jobs would be created?

How many jobs would be generated by a shorter workweek? In 1978 the United Electrical Workers Union estimated that *a 35-hour workweek in the U.S. would generate 7.9 million new jobs.* On the other hand, if the workweek were cut to a four-day, 32-hour week, the UE estimated that this would require 13.8 million new positions. And a ten-hour cut in the workweek to 30 hours would create 18.3 million new jobs.

There are skeptics for every proposal, however, and the shorter workweek idea is no exception. One sort of skeptical argument goes like this:

If the system always tends to create more unemployment, your shorter workweek movement won't be a solution. As soon as this shorter workweek is imposed on the employers, you can bet that the bosses will be pressing for more work per person. Between speed-up and automation, a shorter workweek doesn't mean the lost hours will be necessarily made up by new hires.

There is some truth to this objec-