1972

The attitudes of organized labor toward the four-day/forty-hour workweek

George Stafy McElhinney

The University of Montana

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.
Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd

Recommended Citation

McElhinney, George Stafy, "The attitudes of organized labor toward the four-day/forty-hour workweek" (1972). Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers. 5967.

https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/5967

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION .................................. 1
2. HISTORY OF THE SHORTENED WORKWEEK. .............. 5
3. UNION ATTITUDES CONCERNING THE FOUR-DAY/ 
   FORTY-HOUR WORKWEEK. ............................. 14
   - The AFL-CIO Position
   - The United Automobile Workers' Position
   - The United Steelworkers of America Position
   - The Positions of Other Major Unions
4. UNIONIZED FOUR-DAY/FORTY-HOUR FIRMS. ............. 48
5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS. .......................... 55

BIBLIOGRAPHY. ...................................... 60
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The four-day/forty-hour workweek is a business phenomenon of the past few years. It is defined as a work schedule of four ten-hour days for employees. Even though the employees work a four-day/forty-hour workweek, the firms may still operate anywhere from four to seven days per week. The firm can stagger its workforce to meet the requirements of cyclical manufacturing processes or customer service. Variations of the four-day/forty-hour workweek include the four-day/thirty-eight hour workweek and the four-day/thirty-six hour workweek.

A second category of shortened workweek consists of schedules such as the five-day/thirty-five hour workweek and the four-day/thirty-two hour workweek. These two workweeks are different from those of the first category as they do not involve any work in excess of eight hours per day. The difference between the two categories becomes a critical factor in the debate over new forms of the workweek. The focus of this paper will be the first category—the four-day/forty-hour workweek and variations such as the four-day/thirty-eight hour workweek and the four-day/thirty-six hour workweek.
Kyanize Paints, Incorporated, of Everett, Massachusetts was one of the first companies to implement a workweek of the first category—a four-day/thirty-six hour workweek. Word of its successful implementation spread and created new converts to the four-day/forty-hour workweek. In 1970, Riva Poor edited a book in which the various aspects of the four-day/forty-hour workweek were discussed and widespread interest was generated. Mrs. Poor's book provided the starting point for this paper.

Naturally the four-day/forty-hour workweek has advantages and disadvantages for the firm and the employee. A most comprehensive list was published in the September 6, 1971 issue of *Industry Week*.2

**Company Advantages**
- Attracts workers, frequently the most skilled.
- Less time lost weekly on washup, lunch, and relief.
- Significant production increases where longer day permits another "batch".
- Less exploitation of sick leave system.
- Built-in publicity value.
- Usually far less labor turnover.
- Higher equipment utilization.

**Company Disadvantages**
- Principal advantage, recruiting, is now a small management concern.
- Thorough preparation needed.
- Moonlighting increases.
- Salesmen remain on five-days.
- Managers, shipping, receiving, and office excluded.
- State waivers for women often necessary.
- Paycheck policy must be continually re-explained.
- Difficult scheduling.
- Supervisory and union problems.
- Nonuniformities between departments and managers on different schedules.

---


Some employees will quit.
Pioneering is always difficult.

Employee Advantages
Three-day weekend at no pay loss.
Babysitter savings.
Buying a vacation home more practical.
Can travel medium distances oftener instead of waiting for holiday.
Easier and cheaper commuting.

Employee Disadvantages
Long hours. Result: tired, grouchy.
Regular schedules upset.
Difficulties for women with families and especially those with school age children.
Car pool problems.
More spending on long weekends.

Some of these advantages and disadvantages will be touched upon later in the paper as part of the discussion of union attitudes toward the four-day/forty-hour workweek. A comprehensive study of employee attitudes would be a separate paper topic.

If the four-day/forty-hour workweek is to spread to the large companies in America, it will need the support of organized labor whose members work in their plants. All union contracts specify employee wages, hours, and benefits. Therefore, the issues of the four-day/forty-hour workweek must be resolved at the negotiating table. The paper will examine the attitudes of organized labor toward the four-day/forty-hour workweek. These attitudes are critical to the future implementation of the four-day/forty-hour workweek and similar variations.

Presently, union attitudes are only briefly mentioned in newspaper, magazine, and journal articles. The positions of the major unions in organized labor have been coordinated,
organized and stated in this paper. Naturally, the American Federation of Labor—Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) position is the most important as numerous unions support the AFL-CIO's goals and objectives. The experiences of small unionized firms are also important as they set the direction for future union-management agreements. The position of organized labor will be a major factor in determining whether or not the four-day/forty-hour workweek will be widely implemented in American industry.
CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF THE SHORTENED WORKWEEK

The struggle for the shorter workweek has been fought since the earliest times in the history of the United States. In the late 1700's, work was considered soul-saving and necessary for one's salvation. Journeyman carpenters in the City of Philadelphia worked a twelve-hour day, six days a week. These long hours supposedly combatted the vice of idleness.\(^1\) During the past two hundred years, moral attitudes have changed and the pursuit of leisure is an instrumental part of modern life. The achievement of the widespread five-day/forty-hour workweek was a slow and hard fought struggle of labor over the last two centuries.

The struggle for shorter hours began during the nineteenth century. The aim of labor was to achieve a six-day/sixty-hour workweek. In 1822, Philadelphia millwrights and mechanics demanded a ten-hour day from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. with an hour off for breakfast and for lunch. By 1830, a ten-hour day was sought on the East Coast of the United States. The ten-hour day was achieved by the building trades.

in 1835. President Martin Van Buren established the ten-hour day for some government employees in 1840. Despite these gains, the twelve-hour day was still practiced by some until as recently as 1923. The first authentic instance of an eight-hour day was in 1842 when ship's carpenters and caulkers at the Charlestown, Massachusetts Navy Yard won this schedule. Another milestone for the eight-hour day occurred in 1867 when Illinois, Missouri and New York passed eight-hour laws and Wisconsin passed an eight-hour day law for only women and children. The U.S. Government took action in 1868 when President Andrew Johnson established by executive directive, an eight-hour day for certain employees, laborers, and workmen. Organized labor demanded an eight-hour day in 1886 when the AFL-CIO's First Convention called for a general strike if the "eight-hour day were not attained."

In the late 1890's, the AFL again sought an eight-hour day. One of its member unions, the Brotherhood of Carpenters, did establish an eight-hour day for 46,000 carpenters in 137 cities. Yet at the turn of the century, the

---


The normal working week in the United States in manufacturing, building trades, coal mining, transportation, and for unskilled workers and Government employees was still 57.3 hours per week. A majority of employees were on a ten-hour day while most of the remaining employees were still on a twelve-hour day. In 1892, the U.S. Government did pass the Eight-Hour Law which limited to eight hours in one day the labor of mechanics and laborers employed directly by the Federal and District Government on public works. In 1912 the Act was extended to cover all work done for the Government by contractors and sub-contractors having contracts in excess of $2,000.6

World War I signaled a period of significant gains for organized labor. During the war, the eight-hour day spread as government attitudes were favorable. Saturday was reduced from a full work day to a one-half workday. The workday, for others, still remained at ten hours but the workweek decreased to fifty hours—a reduction of ten hours by the end of the decade.7

The five-day workweek appeared in 1926 when Henry Ford initiated the schedule to allow workers time to be a consumer.8 The reasoning of Henry Ford is notable as it is

similar to that of unions today. One of the major claims of unions today is that the shortened workweek will increase leisure time and therefore demand for consumer goods and services, thereby, stimulating the economy.\(^9\)

The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union achieved a five-day/thirty-five hour workweek for approximately one-half its members in the 1930's. Also during this decade, in 1937, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee under the direction of President Philip Murray, won the eight-hour day after a long and bitter struggle against management.\(^10\)

Current arguments for the shortened workweek parallel those of the 1930's when the goal of a shortened workweek referred to a five-day/fourty-hour workweek. Legislation for an eight-hour day had as its purpose the reduction of the amount of labor offered to persons at work and to give them additional time off. The ultimate objective was to enable all qualified and willing persons to obtain employment at the prevailing rate. The pressure of the Depression of the 1930's caused the country to create jobs by reallocating the time between work and leisure.\(^11\) The achievement of the five-day/forty-hour workweek during the Depression was attributed to the idea of work sharing and the industrial codes of the

\(^9\)Ibid.


National Recovery Administration which specified a forty-hour workweek. However, the work sharing movement was made possible also by the advance of technology and automation during this part of the century.

Organized labor began a call for the thirty-hour workweek at the end of World War II when war orders were cut back. Congress considered several thirty-hour workweek bills but none were passed. A notable point is that overtime was paid to workers on a five-day/forty-hour basis. Overtime premium payments were not suspended even though many industries had an extended workweek. After the war, anticipated unemployment did not occur and the unions turned their efforts to goals of higher wages and various fringe benefits.\(^\text{12}\) During the war, the Walsh-Healey Act provision that set standards of eight hours per day remained intact as it was considered absolute.\(^\text{13}\)

The Walsh-Healey Act of 1936 had its origin in the Davis-Bacon Act of 1931. The Davis-Bacon Act required companies performing construction work for the Federal government to pay their workers an overtime premium of time and one-half for all hours in excess of eight per day. There was no provision for overtime pay for more than forty hours per week. The Walsh-Healey Act stipulated overtime pay for all companies


\(^{13}\) Oswald, "Statement on the Four-Day Forty-Hour Work-week," p. 4.
holding government supply contracts of $10,000 or more. The Secretary of Labor was also authorized to waive payment of prevailing wage rates and overtime pay requirements "as he may find necessary and proper in the public interest or to prevent injustice and undue hardship." The provision allowing the Secretary of Labor to waive overtime pay requirements has become a key issue in the arguments concerning the four-day/forty-hour workweek. Management would like to have the overtime wage requirements waived in the case of the four-day/forty-hour workweek in order to keep wage costs constant. Organized labor feels that the Secretary of Labor would be exceeding his authority as a national need or emergency is non-existent.

Mr. Rudolph Oswald, economist for the Department of Research for the AFL-CIO, presented a statement on the four-day/forty-hour workweek to the Hearings of the Employment Standards Administration, Department of Labor, on September 9, 1971. In presenting his arguments against the four-day/forty-hour workweek, he referred to older arguments of the 1940's for the five-day/forty-hour workweek. Mr. Oswald quoted the Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin 917, "Hours of Work and Output." Conclusions reached by the study included the following key points:

Generally speaking, the study indicates that, everything else being equal, the eight-hour day and the forty-hour week are best in terms of efficiency and absenteeism and that higher levels of hours are less satisfactory.

Injuries also increased as hours increased, not only in absolute numbers, but also in the rate of incidence. In most of the observed instances, the number of injuries per million hours worked was very much higher at the longer hours.

Women at light and operator-paced work were four to five percent less efficient during the nine— or nine and one-half—hour day than during an eight-hour day. There was however, no marked change in absenteeism.

Work injuries increase disproportionately as daily hours are raised above eight and weekly hours are raised above forty.

With few exceptions, the longer hours resulted in greater output than that produced during the shorter schedules. As a rule, however, the increase in output fell considerably short of the increase in hours.15

It is significant that the arguments for the five-day/forty-hour workweek are being used in the 1970’s as arguments against the four-day/forty-hour workweek. Organized labor feels that the optimum day is eight hours or less regardless of the possibility of one less workday per week.

The next major event in the struggle for a shorter workweek was in 1954. The AFL-CIO went on record that "...after the guaranteed annual wage has been secured, the shorter workweek will take its place at the top of our...collective bargaining agenda."16 Two years later, Walter Reuther, president of the UAW-CIO, asked for a pledge to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act to make the four-day week a national policy.

The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 extended the principle of the eight-hour day and the forty-hour workweek


to companies engaged directly or indirectly in interstate commerce. Originally, the Fair Labor Standards Act provided for a forty-four hour workweek to be reduced to forty-two hours in 1939 and to forty hours in 1940. Overtime pay was required for all hours in excess of forty per week. The aim of the legislation was to eliminate "...labor conditions detrimental to the maintenance of the minimum standard of living necessary for the health, efficiency, and general wellbeing of workers." The overtime pay requirement was considered a penalty upon the employer for exceeding the forty-hour standard and a stimulus to further employment. The Fair Labor Standards Act would also protect workers who did not have the bargaining power to achieve these standards by themselves.

In the 1950's, the International Association of Machinists, the Textile Workers Union, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the Communications Workers Union, and the United Steelworkers of America also made pledges to attain the shorter workweek.

In the 1950's, the five-day/forty-hour workweek became a standard throughout American industry. In addition to the unions covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, unions in other industries such as services, transportation, and trade achieved the five-day/forty-hour workweek.

---

17 Shaffer, "Four-Day Week," p. 618.
18 Ibid., p. 619.
19 Boyce, "The 4-Day Week?" p. 337.
The significant events of the past two centuries have imbedded in organized labor a strong attachment to the present standards of a five-day/forty-hour workweek. Labor's achievements are virtually sacred and will not easily be changed. The stated positions of many labor organizations reflect this history. Understanding of the labor position toward the four-day/forty-hour workweek is dependent on the understanding of the history of the movement for the shortened workweek.
CHAPTER III

UNION ATTITUDES CONCERNING THE
FOUR-DAY/FOURTY-HOUR WORKWEEK

The AFL-CIO Position

In 1954, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations mentioned the shorter workweek as a future goal. This position was reiterated in 1962 by Walter Reuther at an AFL-CIO conference on the theme, "Put America Back To Work." Mr. Reuther claimed that it is the Government's responsibility to provide jobs for anyone able and willing to work if private industry can't provide them. He also stated that the workweek should be shortened from forty hours so that everyone who desired a job would be able to work.¹ His statement is based on the fixed amount of labor theory:

Unemployment is caused by the fact that there is no more than a certain amount of work to go around, and if some people work too many hours, others will necessarily be unemployed.

Unemployment is cured by recognizing that there is no less than a certain amount of work that must be done, and by shortening the hours of work this fixed amount of work can be divided up to give jobs to all workers.²

In June 1971, Frank Polara, assistant director, Research Department of the AFL-CIO presented a preview of

the position of the organization to the American Management Association. Mr. Polara stated that he was not there to advocate or denounce the four-day week. He did state,

Apostles of the four-day week remind me of a religious group that has just found the Holy Grail. It is not a momentous social innovation and it’s not a panacea...the trade union movement is strongly in favor of a reduction in the total hours worked.

Mr. Polara also pointed out that the union’s goal was not necessarily the four-day/thirty-two hour workweek, but a shorter number of hours worked per year. He also added,

By and large, most of us (union officials) would look with a jaundiced eye on extending the workday. They would be willing to study it. Time and a half after eight hours would have to be retained.3

In August 1971, the AFL-CIO Executive Council adopted a resolution titled “Shorter Hours of Work.” The resolution stated:

RESOLVED: That this Ninth Constitutional Convention of the AFL-CIO go on record as heartily endorsing a decrease in hours worked whether on a daily, weekly or annual basis with no reduction in wages or benefits.4

The resolution cited the rising unemployment as a source of numerous socio-economic problems affecting millions of workers. The AFL-CIO attributed the unemployment problem to improved technology, increasing use of complex computers and sophisticated automated equipment, the return of hundreds of thousands of ex-servicemen and women, the flood of low-priced imports, and unfair foreign competition generated by

3"Interest in Four-Day Week Grows,” Industry Week, June 21, 1971, p. 11.

powerful multinational concerns. The resolution calls for reduced hours chiefly to make more jobs available and to increase the leisure time of workers. The AFL-CIO claimed benefits of new demand in the leisure markets, increased productivity, improved employee morale, less absenteeism, and reduced turnover for the employers. For the worker, the AFL-CIO claimed benefits of less traffic congestion; less social stresses and tensions in working, shopping, and driving areas; greater availability to participate in community activities and all government processes; and the opening of wider educational, social, and recreational vistas.\(^5\)

Also in 1971, the AFL-CIO Executive Council adopted a resolution titled, "The Eight-Hour Day." The resolution stated:

RESOLVED:

1. That the AFL-CIO make known to all appropriate agencies its opposition to extended workdays; and

2. That if the Congress wishes to alter the current workday-workweek standards, such changes include an eventual reduction in the standard workweek to four days of eight hours; a requirement that no employee shall suffer any loss of earnings in the implementation of such a policy, and a requirement that all hours in excess of eight per day or thirty-two per week be compensated for at double the employee's basic rate.\(^6\)

The initial paragraph of the resolution states that, "A recent proposal that government contractors be allowed to institute a work-week of four 10-hour days is completely

\(^5\)Ibid.

The proposal was contained in suggested revisions to the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act and the Contract Work Hours and Safety Act. Specifically, the AFL-CIO is opposed to, (1) the loss of the eight-hour day, (2) the loss of overtime for more than eight hours in a single day, (3) the probable increase in safety and health problems, (4) increased exposure to poor working conditions and fatigue, and (5) the resulting increased profits to ownership alone.

The AFL-CIO is interested in shorter workweeks and days, but not one at the expense of the other. The granting of extended workdays on government contracts would lead quickly to the same conditions in private industry. The resolution of the AFL-CIO states that the adoption of a standard four-day/thirty-two hour workweek is acceptable as overtime would be paid for all hours in excess of eight per day or thirty-two per week. The increased wages are a key point of dispute in most union-management discussions of shortened or varied workweeks. The wage and productivity argument will be discussed below.

The AFL-CIO resolution, "The Eight-Hour Day," claimed that a ten percent reduction in pay would result from allowing contractors to pay forty hours straight time for a four-day/forty-hour workweek. Currently, employers would have to pay thirty-two hours straight time and eight hours at time-and-one-half for a four-day/forty-hour workweek. This economic

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
argument lies at the base of the AFL-CIO position against re­
vision of the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act and the Con­
tract Work Hours and Safety Act. The AFL-CIO contended that
the reduced labor costs would not result in decreased prices
to the government but only increased profits to ownership.

The resolution also claimed that the eight-hour day
was one of labor's main achievements during the first half of
the twentieth century. The suggested increase of the work­
day to ten hours is considered a step backward by organized
labor. The strength of labor's feeling on this issue is
typified by the statement in "The Eight-Hour Day" resolution,
"This social reform came literally through the blood, sweat,
and tears of an army of brave and dedicated Americans."8

On September 7 through 9, 1971, the Employment Stan­
dards Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor held
hearings on the four-day/forty-hour workweek. Mr. Rudolph
Oswald, economist in the Department of Research, AFL-CIO,
Washington, D.C., claimed that the four-day/forty-hour work­
week was an employer ploy. Mr. Oswald summarized the AFL-CIO
position by stating,

Organized labor has been the pioneer and the driving
force in the reduction of working hours. We support
the shorter workweek and shorter workday. We support
labor-management efforts to reschedule working hours,
through collective bargaining. We welcome genuine
labor-management efforts to achieve a four-day work­
week. But we are adamantly opposed to stretching out
the workday and nullifying the eight-hour standard.9

8 Ibid.
9 Oswald, "Statement on the Four-Day Forty-Hour Work­
Mr. Oswald supported his arguments for maintenance of the present five-day/forty-hour workweek by the conclusions of the President's Commission on the Status of Women in 1963 and the Task Force on Labor Standards of the Citizen's Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The former concluded,

The normal workday and workweek at this moment in history should be not more than eight hours a day and forty hours a week. The best way to discourage excessive hours for all workers is by broad and effective minimum wage coverage, both Federal and State, providing overtime of at least time and a half the regular rate for all hours in excess of eight a day or forty a week.

Mr. Oswald pointed out that fatigue was also a factor in the AFL-CIO's position against the four-day/forty-hour workweek. Industrial fatigue often became a problem after more than eight hours of work. Fatigue was not limited to heavy work as it was also dependent on the intensity of work (sustained application, concentration, special skill, or mental effort). The intensity of work led to fatigue as quickly as heavy labor.\(^{11}\)

The ten-hour day could easily be a twelve-hour day when one considers the added time of lunch periods, breaks, and travel time. This added non-work time does contribute to a worker's fatigue. The advantage of not having to travel to work on the fifth day is diminished by the length of the four working days. The travel time may increase during the winter months as it may be in hours of darkness. Night driving is a

\(^{10}\)Ibid., pp. 6-7.
\(^{11}\)Ibid., p. 5.
definite disadvantage when one considers overall time and safety.

Mr. Oswald predicted that moves toward a shortened workweek would be more toward a reduction of hours rather than the four-day workweek. Total yearly working hours will not only be reduced through shortened workweeks, but also longer vacations, additional holidays, and lifetime hours would be reduced by earlier retirement. Currently auto workers receive a combination of holidays and the Monday holiday law gives them at least one long weekend in nine out of twelve months. Other unions have gained time off during holiday seasons such as Christmas, New Year’s, and Thanksgiving. These holiday vacations are now coordinated with children’s school vacations to allow families to be together. ¹²

The AFL-CIO felt that the Secretary of Labor should not rescind the overtime pay requirements of the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act and the Contract Work Hours and Safety Act. The provision that the President may suspend the wage overtime requirements was not felt to be in the public interest at this time. Since the four-day/forty-hour workweek affected only two-hundredths of one percent of the labor force, Mr. Oswald did not feel that it was of wide concern. The AFL-CIO saw no need to yield on the Contract Work Hours and Safety Act as none of the following suspension criteria were met: (1) such cause is in the public interest, (2) injustice or

undue hardship, and (3) serious impairment of the conduct of government business. Mr. Oswald also noted that the suspension of the overtime provisions would be totally ineffective in nine states which have their own state laws requiring similar overtime payments.\textsuperscript{13}

In the March 15, 1972 issue of the \textit{Federal Register}, the Labor Department's Employment Standards Administration announced their decision on the four-day/forty-hour workweek. The decision stated that the Department would make no change in or any waiver from the present standards of overtime pay. The decision supports the position of organized labor and effectively most of the opportunities for large firms to adopt the four-day/forty-hour workweek unless the firms are willing to sustain increased labor costs.

The text of the Employment Standards decision follows:\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{DEPARTMENT OF LABOR}

\textit{Employment Standards Administration}

\textsc{FOUR-DAY FORTY-HOUR WORKWEEK}

Results of the Public Hearing on Possible Recommendation of Adoption by Government Contractors

This notice is issued for the purpose of informing interested parties of the results of the public hearing held on September 7-9, 1971, by the Department of Labor, pursuant to a notice published in the Federal Register on July 22, 1971, concerning the possible adoption of 4 10-hour day, 40-hour workweek without payment of time and one-half overtime.

\textsuperscript{13}Oswald, "Statement on the Four-Day Forty-Hour Workweek," p. 2.

compensation for workdays exceeding 8 hours by contractors subject to the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act or the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act.

Careful analysis and evaluation of the full written and oral record of these hearings show that no persuasive or conclusive evidence has been presented or may be adduced to establish that and administrative change in or waiver from the present daily overtime standards of the above statutes would be in the public interest at the present time.

Consequently, the Department of Labor does not find a basis to recommend any administrative action leading to modification in the daily overtime provisions of the statutes, nor does it propose to grant individual waivers or exemptions at this time.

Signed at Washington, D.C., this 8th day of March 1972.

Horace E. Menasco
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Employment Standards/
Administrator, Employment
Standard Administration.

As a result of this decision, organized labor can justifiably continue their demand for premium pay on rescheduled workweeks.

The AFL-CIO position included the goal of reduction from forty hours to thirty-five hours of the standard week in the Fair Labor Standards Act. Furthermore, the premium pay standard should be increased to double time from time and one-half. The AFL-CIO claimed that the present standard has lost its deterrent effect.\(^\text{15}\) Achievement of the thirty-five hour workweek, and eventually the thirty-two hour workweek, could be accomplished gradually. The long-range goal would be the four-day/thirty-two-hour workweek.\(^\text{16}\) Furthermore, the

\(^\text{15}\) "Labor News Conference."

\(^\text{16}\) Oswald, "The Union View of the Rearranged Workweek," p. 5.
AFL-CIO felt that Congress should enact laws to insure benefits such as wages, health care, overtime provisions because these benefits should be a right of all employees. In addition, the achievement of these goals through legislation would be less costly than piecemeal collective bargaining.\footnote{\text{17}}

With a shortened workweek, organized labor contends that (1) wages can be maintained, (2) unemployment can be decreased, and (3) productivity can be increased. The three points are deeply related and affect each proportionately.

Organized labor's opinion is that shorter hours will increase the purchasing power of the economy and therefore the number of jobs. The argument assumes that employers will want to produce on, say, a thirty-five hour schedule as much as they did on a forty-hour schedule. Therefore, the firms will hire more employees to maintain this level of production. Once this assumption is granted, one can trace the cycle of increased employment, increased purchasing power of the economy, increased demand for goods, increased production, and finally even more employment. The counter argument is the question whether the employers will want to maintain the same level of production. Levels of production are not fixed and are dependent on such factors as consumer demand, competition, and plant capacity. Labor cannot be assured that these factors will work in a favorable manner. Secondly, demand cannot be actually increased as the pay is still at the forty-hour rate. The employee may have more time for leisure, but

\footnote{\text{17}}\text{"Labor News Conference."}
no additional funds to spend. Therefore, demand would remain constant.\textsuperscript{18} Labor also makes the claim that the increased costs could be taken out of management's profit margins. However, in many cases the profit margins may be minimal. Reduction of the profit margin would make capital more difficult to attract and cause a contraction throughout the firm and industry. A contraction of the economy would be detrimental to organized labor and all of their objectives and goals.

With the continuance of the overtime premium requirements of federal legislation, workers would receive increased pay on a shortened workweek standard if the firm operated a forty-hour schedule. If the penalty was raised to double time, the AFL-CIO feels that the employers would then be more apt to hire additional employees and decrease unemployment. Once the additional hiring began the spiral of improved economic conditions would take hold.\textsuperscript{19}

Management counters the wage argument by pointing out that maintenance of take-home pay is equivalent to a pay increase; that a pay increase will increase the firm's labor costs and total unit costs; and the firm can either maintain or increase prices. If the firm maintains the same price levels, as in the case of a highly competitive industry, the wage increase must be absorbed by (1) reducing the number of workers or (2) increasing the productivity. In neither case


\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 13.
are more workers hired. If the firm raises prices to offset the wage increase costs, demand would decrease. A downward cycle of decreased demand, decreased sales, decreased production, and decreased employment takes hold. Labor’s goal of increased employment can be stymied in this manner.20

Mr. Rudolph Oswald, AFL-CIO economist, remains optimistic as he predicted that in ten years the expected productivity gains would allow the workweek to be reduced to less than thirty hours while maintaining current income levels.21 President I. W. Abel of the United Steelworkers of America also agreed that the shorter workweeks were achieved without inflation and can be done again if the will to do it is there.22

An editorial in the July 1971 issue of Dun's counters the inflation and productivity argument of organized labor. The editorial stated,

Although the forty-hour week was instituted through legislative mandate, it would not have been economically feasible without the 3.2 percent average annual increase in productivity that has characterized the U.S. economy in the twentieth century to date. In fact, these compounded productivity gains were so fantastic that they not only shortened the workweek, but at the same time raised real wages.

Currently there is a flatness in business capital spending plans, and the last two years have had virtually no productivity gains.23 Another source reported that productivity

---

20 Ibid., p. 23.
21 "Labor News Conference."
gains average less than one percent in 1969 and 1970, far less than the average three percent annual gain since World War II.\textsuperscript{24}

A survey of Dun's Presidents' Panel presented the concern with productivity of leading top executives. They agreed that companies would require some sort of guarantee from the unions that productivity in four ten-hour days would have to be at least as great as in five eight-hour days and at no higher cost to industry. Chairman Willard P. Rockwell, Jr., of North American Rockwell Corporation, stated, "As a general proposition, if a company were in a position to grant a four-day week, it should insist upon, as a minimum prerequisite, the identical productivity and efficiency at no increase in cost, as it had prior to the four-day schedule." President Wendell Sell of Hoffman Electronics Corporation, stated,

\begin{quote}
Before industry can truly grant labor a four-day week, the present law should be changed. If this is accomplished, then industry should ask for a total revision in policies related to holidays, vacation, sick leave, and other wage-related benefit plans. Industry must have complete freedom without penalty to establish various shifts during a workweek.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

Chairman Rodney Gott of AMP, Inc., made the point that lower productivity would not be eliminated but only moved to Thursday.\textsuperscript{26}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{24}Shaffer, "Four-Day Week," pp. 622-23.
\textsuperscript{25}"Can the Four-Day Week Work?" \textit{Dun's}, July, 1971, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{26}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 40.
\end{footnotes}
Organized labor is also accused of confusing the long-term trend in industry toward shorter hours with arbitrary attempts to deal with unemployment by cutting the workweek. Increased productivity has allowed a gradual decrease in the workweek. However, the decrease has been partially dependent on substantial investment per employee in plant and equipment. The achievement of a twenty-five hour workweek by the New York City Electrical Workers in 1962, is claimed to be an example of simple hours reduction and resulting increased costs. In addition, the firms that could not afford forty hours' wages for less than forty hours work may be forced out of business. The widespread closing of these more cost-sensitive firms would only cause more unemployment; thereby, defeating labor's goals of more employment.27

The United Automobile Workers' Position

The position of the United Automobile Workers' Union is more flexible than the position of the AFL-CIO. Generally, their attitudes are along the same lines as the AFL-CIO; however, the UAW is more seriously considering the four-day/forty-hour workweek as evidenced by their efforts in 1971. During 1971, the United Automobile Workers and Chrysler entered exploratory talks about the implementation of the four-day/forty-hour workweek on a trial basis at one of the plants. The leading negotiators were UAW Vice President Douglas A. Fraser and Chrysler's Director of Industrial Relations,

William F. Bavinger. The UAW's attitudes, thinking, and demands; and Chrysler Corporation's views, counter arguments, and concerns were presented in these negotiations. The negotiations were the first set of discussions concerning the four-day/forty-hour workweek between a major United States Corporation and a major union. Their experience may set the tone for future negotiations between major corporations and unions. Therefore, they must be considered a major event in the history of the four-day/forty-hour workweek whether they succeeded or failed.

The negotiations concerning the four-day/forty-hour workweek were initiated when the union agreed to drop its demand that Chrysler Corporation deduct from employees' checks for a dental plan in return for an arrangement to study the revised workweek. The company agreed to enter a joint study of the possibility of such a workweek with the union in January 1971.

Observers noted that the United Automobile Workers had a history of innovation including the cost-of-living escalator in 1948, pensions in 1950, and health care in 1961.

University of Michigan economist, William Haber, observed that the question facing management and labor was whether they wanted to take their increased productivity out in higher living standards or more leisure. Professor Haber felt that, "We've apparently, over a long time, made a decision to do both—to get higher living standards. But also to get more leisure."

John Leary, Chrysler's Vice President for Administration, admitted to being quite interested in exploring the subject as it was a possible solution to Chrysler's chronic absenteeism problem.

Mr. Fraser's immediate comment was, "We think it offers some exciting possibilities." 29

Skeptical observers of the Detroit labor scene questioned the motives of the UAW-Chrysler bargainers. One industry observer scoffed, "It's just frosting on the cake--more for public consumption than implementation. It's designed to make the union troops think their leaders have won something new for them." 30

A Chrysler official said the company was going into the exploratory talks "...ice cold." He explained the company and union were seeking facts and that Chrysler was attracted by any idea that might reduce absenteeism, which approaches twenty percent in the industry on Mondays and the day after each payday. 31

Even though union and management had their reasons, sometimes different, both entered the talks with optimism and hope that some problems could be solved that were beneficial to both sides.

In May 1971, Mr. Bavinger discussed some implications of a four-day/forty-hour workweek. He admitted that he would

29 Ibid.
30 "Four-Day Week: How Practical Is It?" Industry Week, February 1, 1971, p. 11.
31 Ibid.
have to talk to Chrysler's manufacturing managers to determine how difficult a switch would be. Mr. Bavinger said that he did not know how the change would affect Chrysler's vendors and shippers of parts. In regard to absenteeism and productivity, he said,

If the plan has the effect of cutting down absenteeism and turnover, it certainly will improve quality and perhaps productivity. Also, if you have four ten-hour days, it is conceivable that you could increase production if you needed to because you could work more days.

The normal absenteeism rate is about six percent at Chrysler except for the first shift Monday, the second shift Friday, and the previously mentioned exceptions.32

Leonard Woodcock, President of the United Automobile Workers, commented that the four-day idea "...offers some exciting possibilities" in reference to the absenteeism problem. Mr. Woodcock saw a new benefit when he indicated that the four-day/forty-hour workweek was preferable to a five-day/less than eight-hour workweek. He explained,

With, say, thirty hours of work spread over a five-day period, younger workers might be inclined to take a second full-time job. But if they are fully employed for forty hours, I don't think that this would happen, especially since two of the days off would be weekend days.33

This viewpoint of the UAW is significantly different from the AFL-CIO viewpoint that the four-day/forty-hour workweek

is totally unacceptable. The comments of Mr. Woodcock by no means insure the adoption of the plan, but do exhibit more consideration for implementation under the proper circumstances.

Mr. Fraser felt that the increasing number of youth in the national workforce would be instrumental in innovations such as the four-day/forty-hour workweek. The younger workers will look for personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement in cultural and recreational activities away from the workplace. "This will lead to a greater effort to increase the amount of time available for cultural and recreational activities. This can be achieved by a direct reduction in total work hours, or by rearranging the same number of weekly work hours in such a way as to better utilize existing non-working hours," Fraser commented. The employees of a trial plant would have to give two-thirds approval before the experiment began. A second vote to continue the experiment would take place between thirty and forty-five days after the inception (also requiring two-thirds approval).

In reference to achievement of a four-day/less than eight-hour day, Mr. Fraser said the union's ultimate goal was still a shorter workweek in hours as well as days. This position parallels policies of the AFL-CIO. Mr. Fraser conceded, this would have to take place gradually because of the initial cost to the company. My plan would phase in the shorter workweek. Maybe the company would

---

give the shorter workweek once every fifth week first off, and then make it every fourth week and so on until the plan was implemented.

Mr. Fraser did not indicate over what length of time this gradual implementation would occur.35

In November 1971, Mr. Fraser reported that the feasibility study by Chrysler Corporation and the United Automobile Workers was still underway. He admitted there were problems of implementation in auto production by having some plants on flexible workweeks and others on conventional schedules. He also felt that Chrysler could benefit from attracting new people with the schedule since larger salaries are no longer enticing enough. Mr. Fraser hoped for experiments in job enrichment, but noted that not much could be done to enrich the jobs of the assembly line workers beyond offering them flexible schedules and options to take time off from work.36

On December 8, 1971, Mr. Fraser announced concern over the failure of the talks to produce any significant results. He announced that the December 13, 1971 meeting of the UAW-Chrysler Joint Study Committee on the Four-Day Work Week would be a "last chance" meeting. Fraser was dismayed that no definite commitment had been made by Chrysler and that the experimental phase had not begun. Mr. Fraser felt that continued discussions without visible progress would be


36"The Flexible Week is Fast Becoming a Permanent Fixture," Iron Age, November 11, 1971, p. 27.
misleading to the UAW members and the general public. If no experiment was agreed upon at the upcoming meeting, the topic would be postponed until the contract negotiations of 1973.\textsuperscript{37}

The December 13, 1971 meeting of the UAW-Chrysler Joint Study Committee on the Four-Day Work Week produced no agreement. Mr. Fraser made the following statement after the meeting:

\begin{quote}
We've been meeting with the company since shortly after nine o'clock and it has become evident to us that they are not interested in going forward with the experiment for a four-day week. We think this is regrettable. We think auto workers too often do not have the opportunity to make decisions as to what their work would be like. We thought the four-day experiment, if we could have worked it out, would have given the auto workers an opportunity to make a decision, to a degree at least, as to how they wanted to work in a shop. It would have given them an opportunity to change their life style somewhat. Unfortunately, we can't force the company to engage in this experiment. It became clear to us today they're not interested any longer and so we have terminated the discussions.\textsuperscript{38}
\end{quote}

During the ensuing press conference, Mr. Fraser expressed his opinion that the alleged obstacles claimed by Chrysler could be overcome by careful planning. Other stumbling blocks were the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Law and the problem of three-shift operations in some plants.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{37}UAW Public Relations and Publications Department, \textit{Four-Day Work Week Study Committee to Hold 'Last Chance' Meeting} (Detroit, Michigan: United Automobile Workers, December 8, 1971), pp. 1-2.


\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., pp. 1, 6.
William F. Bavinger said he was convinced, as a result of an in-depth study, that not even a pilot program would be feasible. Chrysler initiated the decision to terminate the discussions and the UAW went along reluctantly.

Mr. Bavinger conceded it was an exciting idea. "It became apparent at an early date that plants with three-shift operations could not be included in any four-day week program and this would effectively eliminate more than 52,000 persons, or more than half of Chrysler's 100,000 employees, from such a schedule." He agreed with the union that the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act, which requires time and a half after eight hours a day on government work was an obstacle. Chrysler Corporation could not meet the UAW's demands that work scheduled for a fifth day would have to be compensated at time and one-half, plus the same premium pay for the two hours extra each day of the four-day schedule.

Mr. Fraser of the UAW, felt that the UAW Convention in 1973 would be more concerned with a shorter workweek rather than a four-day/forty-hour workweek. He also felt that his support came from the younger workers who wanted more leisure and the older workers who wanted to increase their security. Mr. Fraser has also remarked that pressure for the recall of

---


the four-day workweek among union members might grow if un-
employment worsens.  

Despite the termination of the talks in December 1971, members of the United Automobile Workers remained interested in the four-day workweek. Frank Runnels, Four Day Work Week Chairman and President of UAW Local 22, announced in Spring 1972 that a four-day/thirty-six hour workweek proposal will be presented for labor support in the 1973 negotiations. The proposal includes a stipulation that pay would be maintained at the forty-hour level. Mr. Runnels is also very careful not to cause division within the union with those who are not favorably inclined to this version of the shortened work-
week. His Four-Day Work Week Committee literature included the following statement:

Our purpose is to unite, not to divide...We want to set the records straight from the beginning...we are going to victory hand in hand in the spirit of brotherly love and solidarity, and we will not indulge in any tactics that will have a dividing effect on this union.

Mr. Runnels' four-day/thirty-six hour workweek calls for four nine-hour workdays with full pay for forty hours, time and one-half on the fifth day, double time on Saturday, and triple time on Sunday. The most popular plan for places with three shift operations is for the worker to accumulate

---


43 Frank Runnels, "Four Day Work Week Chairman Speaks Out," (Detroit, Michigan: Speech presented at Cadillac Local 22 UAW Meeting.)

44 Ibid.
four hours a week credit while working forty hours. Then every nine weeks he would get one full week off with pay.\textsuperscript{45} This plan in actuality is more an increased vacation plan rather than a shorter workweek. The plan also does not conflict with the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act's provisions on overtime premium pay.

On February 4, 1972, United Automobile Workers Vice President Ken Bannon suggested that Ford Motor Company and the union launch discussions aimed at achieving a shorter work year, by way of a shorter workweek or other means, and eliminating the monotony of the assembly line. Mr. Bannon did acknowledge that "in any study of a reduced workweek that recognition must be given to the need for full utilization of the equipment, facilities, etc., in which Ford Motor Company has a tremendous investment and that maximum utilization of the equipment and facilities determine the company's profitability."\textsuperscript{46} He also stated that he considered reduced work hours a social responsibility of the corporation. More leisure time for employees and a higher rate of employment have national social consequences.

James M. Riche, Chairman of General Motors, thought that plants on a three-shift schedule would be hard hit if a four-day/forty-hour workweek were adopted. He ruled out its

\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., p. 3.

implementation with the comment, "I think it would be rather unfortunate if we moved in that direction. It would preclude the possibility of using facilities for the third-shift operation. That would be a very expensive burden for the industry and the economy to assume."  

The four-day/forty-hour workweek was agreed upon in a one year contract negotiated between UAW Local 724 and the Lundberg Screw Products Company. The agreement set ten-hour work days for four days a week, with some workers on a Monday through Thursday schedule and others on a Tuesday to Friday plan. The last two hours of any day are paid at time and one-half rate, providing a total of forty hours is worked in that week. Local 724 is the only UAW local on such a rearranged workweek.  

The United Steelworkers of America Position

President I. W. Abel, of the United Steelworkers of America, clearly stated the union's position in his "Keynote Address" to the Eighth Constitutional Convention of the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO. Mr. Abel stated, "that we--the entire labor movement--begin immediately to strengthen our economic foundation in a substantial way by demanding a shorter workweek."  He considered a workweek of four days

47 "Why the Work Week Pattern is Changing," p. 108.
as a reasonable and attainable goal—and imperative to avoid future economic disaster. The goal of a four-day/thirty-two hour workweek could be obtained by either collective bargaining or Congressional amendment of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

His speech to the convention listed the following benefits to organized labor:

A shorter workweek is the best way to underpin our economy. It would require an equitable sharing of the available work, help protect the purchasing power of wage-earners and thus help insure continued prosperity regardless of any economy downturn.

Those now unemployed could find jobs and return to the mainstream of American life. Our population explosion will also require a matching increase in job opportunities.

A reduction in the workweek would permit a worker more leisure and time for family life.

Health and fatigue, which are becoming more of a factor in industry, would become less a problem.

Productivity among workers on a shorter workweek is bound to increase because there would be less time lost, less work will be spoiled due to fatigue and monotony on the job, there would be a lower turnover, the quality of products would improve and industrial accident rates should come down.\(^50\)

Mr. Abel felt the goal of a four-day workweek without a reduction in pay can be reached in four years (i.e., 1973). His statements reflect the attitudes of the parent AFL-CIO as he is against more than eight hours a day. The Steelworkers will probably seek an intermediate length workweek such as the five-day/thirty-five hour workweek before seeking

\(^{50}\)Ibid., p. 11.
the four-day/thirty-two hour workweek. Mr. Abel predicted objections of management and government will be that unemployment is low and that inflation is a definite risk. He said these were familiar arguments from the first industrial revolution, the reduction of the standard workweek to sixty hours at the start of the twentieth century, and the reduction of the standard workweek to forty hours in the 1930's. Also, he claimed that there were no dire consequences such as rapid inflation or decreased profitability from these reductions. Wary of an increase above eight hours per day, Mr. Abel has commented, "The way some of these 'benefactors' maneuver, we have to be careful they don't offer us a two-day week—with two twenty-four hour days, of course."

In the United Steelworkers of America Wage and Policy Statement, adopted in November 1970, the union set contract guidelines for 1971-72. The statement included:

It's now widely accepted that a shorter workweek without reduction in pay is the answer to many of the economic problems of our two nations. We assert that it is now time for the adoption of this program.

It's past time that we started to move in that direction. We have had no reduction in the workweek since the 1930's and the work force has been growing tremendously since then. If we are to achieve full employment, we must share available work opportunities. I think that government and industry can afford to do it.

51 Ibid., p. 10.
In reference to the four-day/forty-hour workweek,

Mr. Abel stated:

The four-day/forty-hour approach is completely wrong. This is not what we're talking about—getting just more leisure days in one bunch. We're talking about less hours of work, fewer days of work, not just less days and more hours. We've gotten away from the ten and twelve-hour day of many years ago, and I don't think labor is going back to it.55

Observers noted that the United Steelworkers settlement with the National Can Corporation in February 1971 did not include a reduction of hours. Usually, union breakthroughs have occurred in negotiations with the can industry. Therefore, demands for a thirty-two hour workweek will not be strongly pursued in the immediate future. Mr. Abel admits the issue is not dead and explained,

You just don't reduce the workweek or the workday by a snap of the finger. You have to maybe pattern it to suit a certain kind of operation and, of course, condition people for the change in work schedules, and this isn't at all simple.56

He preferred cooperative studies by government, industry, and labor on the topic, hoping that the studies would lead to federal legislation. He reasoned, "I think it will come much better that way than with each industry trying to institute its own method.57

Raymond W. Pasnick, United Steelworkers' Public Relations Director, expanded on the union position for a report of the American Management Association. Mr. Pasnick said the union sought, (1) to achieve a shorter workweek with no loss

55Ibid. 56Ibid. 57Ibid.
of earnings, (2) to improve the mandatory work schedule of employees without an accompanying loss of income, and (3) to spread available work. Mr. Pasnick emphasized, "We do not believe that this basic objective can be attained by merely rejuggling the existing five-day/forty-hour week into four ten-hour days or by otherwise compressing the standard forty-hour week into fewer days while lengthening the daily hours of work."^58

Mr. Pasnick stated that the United Steelworkers are in agreement with consensus position of organized labor.

Organized labor will generally resist any attempt to tamper with existing overtime pay arrangements which require premium pay for any hours worked beyond eight per day or forty per week. Unions fought, sacrificed, and even bled for contractual eight-hour days with time and a half, or better, after eight hours. To give up this contractual benefit would be a giant step backward for labor.

The trade unions have established the eight-hour day under applicable laws, such as the Walsh-Healey Act, covering government contracts, and under many state laws. To permit these legislative gains to be wiped out so that some companies might install the four-day, ten-hour work schedule, might easily destroy statutory protection for workers elsewhere who'd wind up with five days--some of them quite long--and no overtime pay."^59

In Fall 1970, the McConway and Torley Company in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania offered a four-day workweek to the Steelworkers Union. The company's original plan consisted of nine and one-half hour days, of which one-half hour was


^59Ibid.
for lunch. Overtime would be paid for the last hour each day. The plan totaled thirty-eight hours in the plant, thirty-six hours at work, and forty hours of pay. The Steelworkers' local voted against the plan. Donald Y. Clem, President of McConway and Torley Company, commented,

The international union representative was for the plan but was not present when I talked to the workers in the union hall about it. The workers felt there had to be a hooker in it and voted it down. It might still be appropriate for us. We average ten percent absenteeism, and fifteen percent on Mondays.

At a later time, Mr. Clem blamed local union leaders for failing to present the plan adequately to the workers and stated, "It was a matter of communications. Since then there has been a lot of interest."

The Positions of Other Major Unions

The American Federation of Government Employees

John F. Griner, National President of the American Federation of Government Employees, presented his organization's position at Employment Standards Administration of the Department of Labor's hearings on September 7 through 9, 1971. He immediately stated that the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) was in accord with the opposition expressed by the AFL-CIO. The National Executive Council of

the AFGE, that met April 12 through 16, 1971, passed a unanimous resolution supporting a four-day workweek with each day consisting of eight hours with no loss of pay. Mr. Griner's statement at the hearing quoted Mr. Oswald's AFL-CIO position paper extensively. The AFGE also reiterated that the four-day/forty-hour workweek was more a management proposal rather than a labor proposal. Considering that many workers work less than forty hours, a return to a forty-hour workweek would be a backslide for labor.

At the same hearings, Nicholas Nolan, Vice President of Local 1923 Social Security Administration Employees, presented a different view from the parent organization stating that sixty-two percent of the employees in Baltimore would like a chance to try the four-day week. The union did begin negotiations with management on the idea. Social Security executives agreed to initiate a new workweek on a trial basis if the union can get the federal work rules amended. Mr. Nolan claimed he has the help of the AFGE national union. It seems that Mr. Nolan's position is contrary to that of the national union and that chance of implementation is virtually nil. The local union leaders did concede that for cost reasons it would require a change in the overtime rules for Government employees.

---


64 Ibid., p. 4.

International Association of Machinists

Joseph Cointin, a regional official of the International Association of Machinists in St. Louis, discussed the union's position in the April 8, 1971 issue of the union newspaper The Machinist and their position was subsequently published by U.S. News & World Report. The fundamental position was that unions should work for a four-day/thirty-two hour workweek with no reduction of pay and "not a breakbacking compression of four days into forty hours." His view echoed the traditional labor viewpoint that the eight-hour day was at the heart of union accomplishments and that the four-day/forty-hour workweek "can only wreak havoc in the universal eight-hour day that unions so long fought for." He considered overtime essential to many persons in the work force. Furthermore, he stated, "Management hoped to make a higher profit off their labor" by saving the expense of opening the plant for the fifth day and by "cutting overtime costs to the bone." 66

Machinists Local 79 at the Health Tecna Corporation, Kent, Washington, experimented with a four-day/forty-hour workweek but dropped the plan as the workers found the ten-hour shifts so tiring that efficiency dropped. Ed Bernoski, business agent of Local 79, reported that errors increased and that production decreased. He added that the union would not be adverse to trying the four-day/forty-hour workweek

again under a different operation, but noted that efficiency dropped during the final two or three hours of the shifts, especially during hot weather. 67

International Brotherhood of Teamsters

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters support the federal legislation requirements of premium pay for more than eight hours per day or forty hours per week. The national union forced a Teamster's local to return to the standard workweek at Intercontinental Steel Corporation, Birmingham, Michigan. The revised schedule violated the national contract. The key violation was that premium pay was not being paid on the four-day/forty-hour workweek schedule. The local workers were satisfied with the new schedule but yielded to the national union's directive. 68

Office and Professional Employees International Union

Howard Coughlin, President of the Office and Professional Employees International Union, presented his organization's position in an opening address to their 1971 triennial convention. He stated that the union desired a four-day/thirty-two hour workweek on a six-day operation of the firm with each worker receiving three consecutive days off.

Mr. Coughlin called the four-day workweek "inevitable because the alternatives are too grim," and that without it, "we will never win the battle against unemployment."^69^ The necessity of the four-day workweek is attributed to increasing unemployment due to advancing technology and rising discontent among white collar workers with their job conditions. His call for the four-day/thirty-two hour workweek seemed to rule out any possibility of accepting the four-day/forty-hour workweek or any similar schedule.

Retail Clerks International Association

The Retail Clerks International Association last met in convention in 1967. At that time the four-day/forty-hour workweek was not under serious discussion in the United States. Donald E. Carter, Director of the Education and Research Department of the Retail Clerks International Association, has recently studied the four-day/forty-hour workweek and called particular attention to some of the following dangers:

Considering travel time to and from work, break time and a lunch hour, the worker's absolute minimum portal-to-portal traveling time will be twelve hours.

As a rule, the retail and factory workers stand and walk on cement floors which have very little resilience. We can tell you from personal experience as a retail worker and as a factory worker that the third or fourth days of such length (to which you must add travel time) produces extreme fatigue.

The adoption of a ten hour day will inevitably result in an increased number of automobile accidents, personal injuries, and deaths.

We also anticipate an increase in the number of physical and mental breakdowns suffered by such workers which will increase the cost of health and welfare and further aggravate the already critical hospital bed shortage.

Mr. Carter also stated that the union agrees with the AFL-CIO resolution which brands the ten-hour day as completely unacceptable. 70

United Mine Workers of America

Joseph P. Brennan, Director of Research and Marketing Department, United Mine Workers of America explained that the union was interested in the four-day workweek, but did not believe that a four-day/forty-hour workweek is feasible in the industry because of the peculiar circumstances surrounding underground mining, especially those factors affecting health and safety. The goal of the United Mine Workers was to establish a six-hour day in the coal industry. Currently, the basic workday in the bituminous coal industry is eight hours, portal-to-portal for underground mines, seven hours per day in the anthracite coal industry and seven hours and fifteen minutes per day in surface mining. 71


CHAPTER IV

UNIONIZED FOUR-DAY/FOURTY-HOUR FIRMS

In January 1972, The Bureau of National Affairs and the American Society for Personnel Administration conducted a nationwide survey of seventy-one companies on a shorter or more flexible workweek. The survey reported only eighteen percent of the firms were unionized. In the companies with union representation, at least seventy-five percent of the employee workforce belonged to the union.¹

The small number of unionized four-day/forty-hour firms can be attributed to the fact that only small privately owned companies find the revised schedule feasible. The adoption of the unique schedule is often possible only because of the nature of the manufacturing processes involved or the service rendered. The four-day/forty-hour workweek also becomes more difficult to implement as the size of the firm, number of departments, number of processes, and number of total employees increase. The typical small private firm often operates without an employee union.

Mr. Kenneth E. Wheeler, President of Wheeler Management Associates Inc., has made several feasibility studies

of the four-day/forty-hour workweek for interested firms. He has recommended that all companies with unionized employees must carefully review the union contract for necessary revisions or renegotiations. He advised the firm to obtain the assistance of a labor attorney in the early planning stages. Furthermore, he advised the management to review all contract references and provisions relating to hours and days of work, pay rates, number of sick days and vacation days, short-term military leave pay, jury duty pay, bereavement pay, overtime pay, special incentive pay plans, and all other elements relating to terms and conditions of employment.  

The following sections present a sample of firms with union employees who have adopted a four-day/forty-hour workweek or very similar schedule. One of the firms, Bridgford Packing Company, has discontinued the operation as they felt the plan was no longer needed due to a decrease in sales.

Armour and Company

Armour and Company has only one out of about one hundred plants and distribution centers on the four-day/forty-hour workweek. The schedule is in effect at the food-freezing plant in Fairmont, Minnesota. The four-day/forty-hour workweek was initiated February 1, 1971. The Teamsters Local 487 approved the workweek with a three-to-one ratio of approval. The contract was for a duration of three years and provided

---

for an increase of thirty cents an hour each year. Information received from the firm did not mention the payment of premium wages and the liberal wage increase per hour tends to rule out overtime pay for the employees.

**Bridgford Packing Company**

The Bridgford Packing Company initiated a four-day workweek in 1962 in order to achieve maximum utilization of plant and equipment. The employees would work four ten-hour days and then be off four days. On each cycle there were two crews so that the firm would be operating for all but three hours per day. Saturdays and Sundays were included in the working schedule. The schedule consisted of ten hours of which eight hours were at straight pay and two hours at time and one-half pay. Each employee drew eleven hours pay for ten hours work. No one worked holidays. If the employee was scheduled for the holiday, he was given the day off with pay. If the employee was already off, he was given an extra day's pay. The revised schedule with four crews manning the plant is known as the "4 X 4" plan. Howard Woodard, Secretary of Butchers Union, Local 551, stated his organization's reaction, "Everybody I've talked to around here is really enthusiastic about the "4 X 4" plan, and we think that it's a step in the right direction--more productivity, better utilization of the Company's plant, and more leisure for employees."

---

1Letter from H. W. Bridgford, Vice President Bridgford Packing Company, Annaheim, California, April, 1972.
Kyanize Paints, Incorporated

Kyanize Paints, Inc., of Everett, Massachusetts adopted a four-day/thirty-six hour workweek on a trial basis from March 6 through April 1, 1969. On April 2, 1969, the new schedule became permanent. Union approval for the trial period was seventy-eight percent and for the permanent adoption the percentage increased to ninety percent. The employees work nine hours per day and have a thirty minute lunch break without compensation. Coffee breaks were eliminated; however, employees may drink coffee while working. The employees work eight hours at straight time and one hour at time and one-half. The average Kyanize employee gets three weeks vacation plus ten paid holidays. With adoption of the four-day workweek, the average employee works 186 days per year and has 179 leisure days.\(^4\)

Management of Kyanize, when negotiating the union contract in 1968, looked at requirements for startup time, wash periods, coffee breaks, and shutdown time—and figured it could get as much production in four nine-hour days as in five eight-hour ones.\(^5\) Bud MacDougall, plants manager, reported it took about a week of run-on meetings to win over the union committee. He continued that the rumors were flying around the factory and the workers were uncertain. "We thought

\(^4\) Letter from Kyanize Paints, Inc., Everett, Massachusetts, April, 1972.

we knew what we were doing, but felt that if they were uncertain, and we were too, we'd go on trial for three months," admitted Mr. MacDougall.  

From March 1969 to January 1971, Kyanize Paints reported an increase in production of seven percent.  

American Lacquer and Solvents Company

American Lacquer and Solvents Company of Florida adopted four-day/thirty-six hour workweek in May, 1970. Initial consideration began when management read of Kyanize's experiences and noted similar possibilities. James C. Osten, Executive Vice President, considered the four-day workweek a means of getting a better contract with the union. Management took the initiative and offered the new workweek. The wage rates were revised so that the workers got the same pay for thirty-six hours as they had received for forty hours, plus an increase for the first and second years. Either the union or management could discontinue the four-day/thirty-six hour workweek at the end of the first year. The regular workday consists now of nine working hours, one-half hour unpaid lunch, and no organized coffee break. Time and one-half is paid for all hours over eight per day and forty per week. Everyone works Monday through Thursday except a skeleton shipping crew that works Tuesday through Friday. Management

---


gained from the union more enforceable rules and regulations, a limit on absenteeism, and a simplified system of job classification which permits movement of employees to any job.8

Samsonite Corporation

The Samsonite Corporation proposed a four-day/thirty-eight hour workweek to the employees of the Murfreesboro, Tennessee plant. The four-day/thirty-eight hour workweek consisted of nine and one-half hours per day with time and one-half for all hours over eight per day. The total pay would be equivalent to forty-one hours. H. Thomas Stroup, Vice President and General Manager, said the program would apply to both factory and office workers. The employees would be allowed to participate in the decision to close on Monday or Friday.9

Thornley B. Wood, Vice President - Human Resources of the Denver office, felt, "Initially, the union was suspicious. They were looking for the hooker."10 The union leaders remained neutral and the employees vote for an experimental period was ninety-three percent approval. In summary, Mr. Wood drew the following tentative conclusions: the employees are "highly enthusiastic"; no serious negatives have


10"Interest In The Four-Day Week Grows," p. 12.
developed; turnover, absenteeism, lateness, and the number of accidents have all dropped; unit costs have also declined, although employees receive forty-one hours pay for thirty-eight hours work.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.
The four-day/forty-hour workweek is in effect at only relatively small firms. The small firms will continue to be the leader in the movement as they are the most adaptable to the four-day/forty-hour workweek or some similar schedule such as four-day/thirty-eight hours or four-day/thirty-six hours. Mr. Kenneth E. Wheeler, Management consultant, has observed that small businesses that have planned the change from the start, with care and forethought, have received handsome dividends.¹

The 4-Day Tire Store chain in California only operates on Thursday through Sunday, ten hours per day. The chain is an instance of the firm and the employees having a four-day/forty-hour schedule. The 4-Day Tire Stores have found that (1) customers do most of their shopping Thursday through Sunday, (2) the forty hours of Thursday to Sunday operation are most productive, and (3) the employees are more rested. The chain has received much free publicity from their name which represents their working schedule.²

The Rex Paper Box Company, Braintree, Massachusetts, reaped the dividend of less turnover of employees. As the work force stabilized, waste decreased. The firm estimates savings of $25,000 a year because the experienced worker wastes less raw materials in production.\(^3\)

Large firms and major corporations consider the four-day/forty-hour workweek loaded with too many obstacles to overcome. Most large firms consider the problems that would ensue are not outweighed by the advantages.

Steel producers have claimed the four-day/forty-hour workweek is unsuitable for their continuous seven-day operations. They can find no feasible method of integrating the ten-hour shifts. Furthermore, production processes generate large amounts of heat and noise. If a ten-hour shift was implemented, U.S. Department of Labor health and safety standards would have to be tightened. A level of noise and heat acceptable on an eight-hour basis may not be acceptable on a ten-hour basis.\(^4\)

Chrysler's study of the four-day/forty-hour workweek concluded that the obstacles were too great. Chiefly, labor costs would be too high; the Walsh-Healey Act stipulated time and one-half pay for all hours over eight per day.

Chrysler also cited the costs of (1) increased storage facilities, (2) modification of receiving docks, (3) increased

\(^3\)Wall Street Journal, October 15, 1970.

handling equipment, and (4) increased inventory. The scheduling of plant maintenance and supplier company shipments would be very time-consuming and possibly unworkable. The increased costs and scheduling problems result from compressing all operations into the shorter four-day period.

Most other major firms agree that the main obstacles are (1) integration of ten-hour shifts, (2) absence of key personnel, and (3) customer dissatisfaction.

The integration of ten-hour shifts has not been achieved by any firm on a twenty-four per day operating schedule. If the ten-hour shifts ran consecutively, the employees would have to report at a different time each day. Lateness and absenteeism would increase markedly if the reporting time continually varied. A four-day/forty-hour firm could have two ten-hour shifts and a four-hour shutdown per day. However, the costs of startup and shutdown would have to be small. In industries such as steel production and automobile production, the costs would be prohibitive. Steel production has several processes such as converting raw materials to molten iron, transporting the iron to the furnaces, refining the steel, and pouring the steel into ingot mould. Startups and shutdowns would require a difficult and costly sequential order.

The other alternative to the ten-hour shift problem is the overlapping of shifts. The overlap of shifts is an advantage in certain service-type operations. Hospitals

5"Short Workweek Has Short Life At Chrysler," p. 18.
benefit from the overlap of shifts. The overlaps are scheduled during busy segments of the day. Hospital staffs can more thoroughly brief oncoming personnel during the overlap, therefore, improving patient care. Police departments schedule overlap during peak traffic periods and high crime rate periods. The force is better able to provide complete and quick service.

The absence of key personnel is a source of complaint by customers who want immediate handling of their problems by specific men. Customers expect immediate resolution of difficulties as they are on a five-day schedule and do not expect a day’s delay. The resulting ill will can cause the loss of customers and sales. The four-day/forty-hour workweek may be fine for a particular firm, but the firm must remember it lives in a five-day business world.

Customer dissatisfaction may result even if key personnel are available. The necessary support personnel may be off and cannot support management directives requiring immediate attention. A basic operation such as deliveries to and from the firm have to be scheduled carefully by five-day customers. The four-day/forty-hour firms can provide routine services but their capabilities are limited by the four-day schedule.

Organized labor hopes to achieve a shortened workweek easily within this decade. Raymond W. Pasnick, Public
Relations Director of the United Steelworkers, has expressed labor's goal in an AMA research report.6

We do expect the existing five-day, forty-hour week to be reduced by amending applicable federal legislation, such as the Walsh-Healey Act, within a relatively short time—perhaps the next three to five years. Additionally, we anticipate unions generally will pursue this objective as a matter of necessity in collective bargaining sessions within the next few years. A genuine reduction in the standard workweek will come from pressures generated by a combination of legislative action and collective bargaining.7

Kenneth E. Wheeler, one of the reports' authors, feels the demand for a shortened workweek will increase if the economy slows down or if unemployment increases, or both. He sees the change as occurring first in industries with high turnover and difficulty in recruiting. Mr. Wheeler does see a domino effect once a few giants have taken the plunge.8

Organized labor could conceivably accept a four-day/forty-hour workweek with premium pay for all hours in excess of eight per day and forty per week in firms where health and safety problems were at a minimum. Even in these cases, the four-day/forty-hour workweek would only be accepted as a stepping stone to the four-day/thirty-two hour workweek. It is more likely that organized labor will achieve a five-day/thirty-five hour workweek as its stepping stone to a four-day/thirty-two hour workweek.

---

7 Ibid., p. 39.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PERIODICALS

"And Now - The Four-Day Week."  Dun's, June, 1971, p. 93.


Cathey, Paul J.  "Try 4/40, You'll Like It - Or Will You?"  Iron Age, December 23, 1971, p. 35.


"Chrysler Shifts Gears; 4-Day Week Talks End."  UAW Solidarity, January, 1972, p. 12.


Evening News (Newark), April 24, 1972.


"Firm Drops 4-Day Week, Workers Find It Tiring." Indiana Teamster, December, 1971, p. 5.


"The Flexible Week Is Fast Becoming A Permanent Fixture." Iron Age, November 11, 1971, p. 27.


"Interest In Four-Day Week Grows." *Industry Week*, June 21, 1971, pp. 11-12.


"The Spreading Four-Day Week." Newsweek, August 23, 1971, pp. 63-64.


"Thank God It's Thursday?" Time, February 1, 1971, p. 71.


OTHER SOURCES

Abel, I. W. "Keynote Address." Atlantic City, New Jersey, (Speech at 8th Constitutional Convention, IUD, AFL-CIO)


Greenbaum, Marcia L. "The Shorter Workweek." Ithaca, N. Y., 1963 (Bulletin of the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, No. 51.)


Csten, James C. "Four-Day Week." Boston, Massachusetts, October 27, 1970 (Speech presented to Manufacturing Management Forum, National Paint, Varnish, and Lacquer Association.)


Runnels, Frank. "Four Day Work Week Chairman Speaks Out." Detroit, Michigan, 1972, (Speech presented at Cadillac Local 22 UAW Meeting.)


-----. *Four-Day Work Week Study Committee To Hold 'Last Chance' Meeting.* Detroit, Michigan: United Automobile Workers, December 8, 1971.

Vris, Thomas. "New Work Week Schedule: Some Implications for Management." Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, (Speech presented at University of Pittsburgh, Graduate School of Business Conference on "The Four-Day Work Week: Fad or Future?")


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.