

REAL ECONOMIC CONVERSION: CONVERTING PRODUCTIVITY TO LEISURE

Our society has an inherent contradiction: It continues to increase productivity, yet it does not allow for the resulting reduction in need for labor.

This productivity can benefit everyone if it is used to increase leisure for everyone. This leisure can take many forms, including shorter working hours, more vacation time, family leave and/or long-term sabbaticals.

This one issue is key to a great many issues:

UNEMPLOYMENT. With each person working less, more people are needed to perform the same work.

HUNGER AND HOMELESSNESS. These are directly attributable to unemployment.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. Correlates strongly with unemployment.

DRUG USE. People will not resort to drug use to escape the stress of overwork or of unemployment. Drug dealing is currently a major "jobs program". See **CRIME**.

CRIME. Much crime is attributable to unemployment or to drug use. Crime is the default "jobs program". Also, the criminal justice system is a vital "jobs program" soaking up people as either prisoners, wardens or law enforcement officials.

TRANSPORTATION & ENERGY USE. We have so little free time that we resort to very energy-intensive transportation and recreation.

TRANSPORTATION #2. Unproductive transportation modes are used because they "provide jobs". E.g. trucking and automobile subsidies vs railroads.

MILITARISM. The military has always been sold as a jobs program. Without fear of unemployment, jobs can be cut.

COVERT OPERATIONS. These exist largely to create the disinformation and paranoia to justify militarism.

HEALTH CARE #1. A big obstacle to having more workers working fewer hours is the extra "overhead" of health care. Universal health care would separate employment from health care.

HEALTH CARE #2. Many of our health issues are related to poverty, crime, drug use and stress. All of these would be reduced. With more time, bicycling and walking can replace some motor transport, improving health.

EDUCATION #1. With sabbaticals and/or shorter hours, we can all participate in lifelong education.

EDUCATION #2. High unemployment creates despair; people do not feel a long-term investment in education will pay off. Low unemployment gives people hope.

DEMOCRACY #1. People would have more time to participate in democratic processes.

DEMOCRACY #2. People who are unemployed are alienated from the system and feel no hope in democratic participation. People who are gainfully employed have a stake in the system and feel a part of it.

EMPOWERMENT. When people care about an issue, they will find the ways and means to fight for it. People will empower themselves through the process of demanding that productivity be converted to leisure. That empowerment will transfer to other issues.

GENDER EQUALITY. Each parent can have the opportunity to work and to spend time with children.

CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT. Again, parents can spend time with their children.

EQUALITY. The ultimate issue for equality is allocation of time. Money, an abstraction, buys just one reality ultimately: Time. Either time for services or time to make goods. We all need time to work and we all need time to enjoy the fruits of our work. Equal distribution of time in these categories goes far to ensuring equality in wealth & power.

QUALITY OF LIFE. In our fast-paced society we have too little time to reflect, to think, to create or just to rest or to have fun. We can gain time for what really matters to us.

Many of these issues will not happen on their own, but at least the opportunity is available. E.g. we cannot depend upon militarism and covert operations diminishing without special effort to make it so. But without these changes too many ordinary working people have a stake in militarism by virtue of direct or indirect effects on their employment.

For too long we activists for social change have worked against one policy or another. It is time we work for something we can believe in. Something that will make a real difference in the lives of ordinary people. And something which ties together a variety of issues that we already care about ourselves.

We can start by demanding of government that the current "full-time" workweek of 40 hours be reduced to 35 hours and that there be mandated vacation times of at least five weeks per year. This would bring us in line with European standards. Further reductions could come later.

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