



TAKE BACK YOUR TIME

OCTOBER 24 WWW.TIMEDAY.ORG

NEWSLETTER -- VOL. 5, ISSUE 1

The modern world has had far too little understanding of the art of keeping young. Its notion of progress has been to pile one thing on top of another without caring if each thing was crushed in turn. People forget that the human soul can enjoy a thing most when there is time to think about it and be thankful for it. And by crowding things together, they lost the sense of surprise; and surprise is the secret of joy.

-- G. K. Chesterton

We begin 2007 with a look at how a more relaxed lifestyle can also be a more earth-friendly way of life. What a great idea to contemplate as we make resolutions for the coming year. -- K.S.

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OUR NEW ED GETS TO WORK

Friends of Take Back Your Time --

I don't know about you, but I did not need to make any extra resolutions this New Year -- because January 1st was my first official day as the new Executive Director of Take Back Your Time. There is a lot of good work to be done. All made easier because Gretchen Burger put in a tremendous amount of energy to take this organization from its inception to where it is today. Fortunately, Gretchen will continue on as a member of the Board.

My goal for the coming year is to build on the power and credibility that has already been earned on the national stage. We need your help!

In the next few months, we will be sending out questionnaires asking for your input. We need to hear from you. We need to know how you see the organization. How do you "Take Back Your Time" in your own life? How are you helping us to promote the cause? Are there sister organizations that we should be partnering with? Is your town, county or state

legislator considering a positive policy action? Would your workplace be interested in learning about the benefits promoted by Take Back Your Time?

If you are willing to share a little more about how you came to be involved with Take Back Your Time, who you are and your vision for our shared future, then TBYT will be able to be an even more effective organization. Although we will ask you where you live, we will not share that information.

Thank you, in advance, for helping me realize my dreams for Take Back Your Time. With your insights and involvement, this organization will be unstoppable.

Sincerely yours,

Lisa Stuebing
Seattle

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TAKE BACK YOUR TIME TO LAUNCH VACATION CAMPAIGN

By John de Graaf, National Coordinator

Buoyed by a more receptive new political environment, TAKE BACK YOUR TIME members have been working to support new policy initiatives like the Healthy Families Act (guaranteeing paid sick days) and Paid Family Leave. Here in Washington State, where I live, it seems highly likely that we will pass a paid family leave bill, similar to the one in California, during this legislative session. But these issues have champions who have spent more time and effort focusing on them than we have. Yet, despite the fact that the U.S. is the only industrial nation without a national paid vacation policy, and studies show workers are seeing their vacation time steadily eroded (a Conference Board study showed that 40% of U.S. workers didn't even take a week off last year), no campaign to win paid vacation time for America's workers has appeared on the national scene since Joe Robinson's Work to Leave effort several years ago.

The appeal of Robinson's idea was clear -- 50,000 people signed a petition he drafted asking for a paid vacation law. But the idea never got out of Congressional committees. With the new Congress we may have a much bigger chance. My conversations with many TBYT Board members make it clear that this is a campaign where TBYT can actually take the lead and make substantial progress. Joe Robinson's research makes it clear that lack of vacation severely hurts Americans' health, family bonding and even workplace productivity. Moreover, as Cecile Andrews points out, a vacation campaign is really about values -- do we want to slow down a little and enjoy life, make time for friends, family, art and nature, or simply keeping producing more and more stuff faster and faster? As such, a vacation campaign is both practical and visionary. And we can find many allies in the travel industry, parks and recreation professionals, health professions, environmental organizations, unions, family organizations and others who will join us in this campaign. Even many enlightened businesses, such as Price Waterhouse Cooper, are seeing clearly why America's stinginess about vacations makes no sense at all. I believe we can also find political leaders who will come forward to champion this initiative.

FEEDBACK REQUESTED

We want your feedback on this. How much vacation time should we ask for? How much should be paid? Should we also ask for the right to some unpaid time off without penalty, as Jerome Segal has suggested? How should we frame the campaign? What points would you put up front? Do you know stories about people who suffer from lack of vacation time? Do you? Does your family? Do you know people and organizations we should look to for support? Are you willing to volunteer time to help build this campaign? Do you know other supporting resources, good books, etc.? Please send any and all ideas to me at jodg@comcast.net In the next issue of this newsletter we'll explore the issue and the ideas in depth. This will be the first big signature campaign for TAKE BACK YOUR TIME. It has already been endorsed by the Adventure Travel Trade Association, http://www.adventuretravel.biz/release110106_wtl.asp. Thanks go to Board member Joe Robinson for all his work on this issue.

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MORE TIME, LESS CARBON:

THE FOUR-DAY WORKWEEK (AND THE TAKE BACK YOUR TIME AGENDA) AS PEOPLE- -- AND EARTH-FRIENDLY-- WAYS TO ORGANIZE OUR LIVES

By Gregory Wright

While we take back our time for ourselves and our families, we can also reduce the carbon dioxide we produce and help save our planet from the ravages of the climate change our carbon is causing.

An excellent way to do this is to allow as many workers as possible to hold a full-time job, and earn a full-time paycheck and full-time benefits, *in four days of work per week instead of five.*

AA Four-Day Workweek will enable workers to reduce the amount of time they spend commuting to and from their jobs by 20 percent -- one-fifth! And the amount of energy devoted to this commuting--it almost always is fossil fuel energy -- will also be reduced by one-fifth. Any region or country where job commuting is auto-intensive and long-distance (the U.S., and especially the U.S. Sunbelt) will realize especially great reductions in energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. As the prevalence of "extreme commuters" -- commuters who drive more than 90 minutes (it used to be an hour) to, and from, work -- steadily increases, and as highly polluting stop-and-go traffic on urban roadways does the same thing, the personal, environmental, and social benefits of the wide scale adoption of Four-Day Workweeks will also increase.

Reducing the number of hours that define the standard full-time American workweek would make it easier for the U.S. to widely adopt the Four-Day Workweek. The current forty-hour week, officially adopted in 1940, necessitates ten-hour days on a four-day schedule -- too long for many people, and intolerable for anyone who must devote significant time to commuting. Promotion of the Four-Day Workweek needs to be accompanied by promotion of a shorter officially defined full-time workweek, and of a process to get there -- perhaps a phased decade-long transition to a 32-hour workweek of four eight-hour days or a 34-hour workweek of four eight-and-a-half-hour days, or at least a 36-hour workweek of four nine-hour days. (The definition of overtime as beginning after eight hours of work will need to be taken to nine hours to secure the support of the business community for a Four-Day Workweek.) Also, the four days of this shortened workweek need not be consecutive, and should not be for anyone who'd like to break them into two groups of two days, or of one day and three days.

Europeans are already on to the many benefits of shorter workweeks. The Center for Economic and Policy Research (www.cepr.net), a nonpartisan Washington think tank studying economic and social issues affecting people's lives, observed in a December report that the people of "Old Europe" each consume about half as much energy as the average American, largely due to European patterns of work, and that if Europe -- for some crazy irrational reason -- decided to switch to the U.S. model and work as many hours per capita as Americans, it would increase its energy use by nearly one-third! In the years ahead, the rapidly developing economies of the rest of the world are going to adopt the American or the European work-life model. It will be much better for all of us and for this planet if they adopt the Euro model -- and that preferred future will become more likely if we Americans adopt it too!

Conrad Schmidt's book, *Workers of the World, Relax!*, also advances the idea that shorter hours are needed to cut greenhouse gas emissions and global warming.

Other benefits of a widespread Four-Day Workweek include less cost for fuel and car repairs and auto insurance, less congested roadways (and road rage) for everyone, and better physical health as well as reduced CO2 emissions and a mitigation of the hellish world our carbon dependence is rapidly creating.

TBYT should advocate for the expansion of the Four-Day Workweek and, in parallel, a redefined shorter "full-time" workweek that will grease the skids of Four-Day Workweeking--while also lending support to the many "holding actions" that unfortunately are needed to prevent its shortsighted cancellation where it already exists. Mechanics working for American Airlines at San Francisco Airport, members of the Transportation Workers Union, recently approached TBYT for help in making their case for retention of the Four-Day Workweek, which they enjoy on a "4/10" schedule of four ten-hour days, instead of reverting to the "5/8" schedule desired by the employer; their long commutes make longer workdays -- with one less commute a week -- much more preferred. That's how useful the one-fifth reduction in commuting is to long-distance commuters, even if the four-day schedule is 4/10 (instead of the more humane 4/9 or the preferred 4/8).

Following another attack on the Four-Day Workweek, Larry Langford, former county commission president in Jefferson County, Alabama, defended the four-day schedule for most county workers that he initiated in 2005 from its cancellation by his successor in 2006, stating: "the four-day workweek gave us better control of our employees and it helped the gas situation." Langford continued, "Secondly, our employees were given time with their families; a happy employee and a content employee are more prone to give you their maximum while they're at work because they have more time to spend with their families while they're off."

Even when business supports it, the Four-Day Workweek can be a tough sell. In California, Four-Day Workweek legislation was sponsored by the California Chamber of Commerce in 2006. Despite testimony highlighting the need for this bill, the California Employment Committee rejected it.

New Mexico commuters might fare better. Four-Day Workweeks -- likely starting with state workers --are being considered by Gov. Bill Richardson as part of New Mexico's suite of policy components for reducing the state's CO2 emissions (TBYT advocacy by this writer helped add this proposal to the state's Climate Change Advisory Group's purview).

Coconut Creek, Florida city employees, as well as most of the city's residents, have been "overwhelmingly in favor" of a Four-Day Workweek a year after the switch to the four-day schedule in October 2005, according to City Manager John P. Kelly. Kelly said the switch helps employees reduce gas costs and eases traffic. City Hall is open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Thursday; the former schedule was 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday. "It's really consolidating it," Kelly said. "The morale has skyrocketed and ... there has been a 33 percent savings in some months in sick leave usage."

A recent "advanced search" on Google for "Four-Day Workweeks" turned up 570 matches and for "Four-Day Work Weeks" found 979 matches -- not a great number of matches for this potentially very important topic. There's a policy research and advocacy need to fill here.

The Four-Day Workweek can be a significant contributor to reduced fossil fuel use and global warming emissions reductions -- along with the whole suite of time-for-our-lives and work-life flexibility goals of Take Back Your Time's Agenda for Time to Care. Enabling as many of America's employees as possible to earn their livings in four days instead of five days of full-time work is one of the hundreds of specific different measures that America and the developed world will need to undertake, robustly and soon, if the 21st century's greatest Buckminster Fuller famously suggested that society should "do more with less." More time to lead better -- and more variegated, productive, and satisfying -- lives while leaving less carbon pollution in our wake each day is a useful extension of that idea. Or, if you like, "*more time, less carbon*" -- which I propose be the coming year's official theme of Take Back Your Time as we approach the 2008 U.S. presidential election year.

Going easier on people and on the environment in the way we do society's work is one of the best things we can do for both of them. So let's lighten up... and (help the Earth) chill out!

Greg Wright is a Take Back Your Time board member, social inventor and environmental advocate. His proposal for making the Four-Day Workweek a specific focus of TBYT advocacy began during the 2005 TBYT Conference in Seattle and first hit the Net with a proposal on SEIU's Since Sliced Bread website, "Four-Day, 36-Hour Workweek: Work reduced by 10%, but Commuting reduced by 20%: www.SinceSlicedBread.com/node/2796.

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MOVERS AND SHAKERS

CENTER FOR ECONOMIC AND POLICY RESEARCH

The above article mentions a December, 2006 study by Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR). This study found a correlation between long work hours (U.S. model) and higher carbon emissions, compared to the European model (less work hours). Dr. Mark Weisbrot, Co-Director of CEPR, spoke with TBYT editor, Kelley Smith, about this recent study of U.S. and European patterns of work time. The study is available at the Center's website, www.cepr.net

SMITH: How did you become interested in the issue of hours of work?

WEISBROT: CEPR has done a great deal of research over several years about work time issues. We have generally begun with claims made in the press by representatives of the business community. We have often developed studies that examine those claims. developed studies that examine those claims.

SMITH: What sparked your interest in a connection with ecology and work hours?

WEISBROT: I first presented the idea in 2005, and gained interest from several members of the environmental community including Carl Pope, Executive Director of the Sierra Club. This demonstrated to me that the environmentalists had a stake in this question.

SMITH: Could you summarize the key findings for us?

WEISBROT: There is a simple, intuitive reasoning behind the results of this study. When a society experiences productivity growth, as most societies do over time, the society has a choice. The gains can be taken in the form of increased consumption, or in the form of reduced work hours, or possibly some combination of the two.

SMITH: Your study finds a correlation between long work hours and increased carbon emissions. Is that mostly in the form of fuel for transportation?

WEISBROT: No, not at all. The increased carbon emissions of a society following the U.S. model are primarily caused by higher consumption of goods. The manufacture and transportation of goods uses a great deal of energy. The energy use resulting from consumption of goods is much greater than the energy for transportation.

SMITH: If it's true that Europe would emit more carbon as a result of adopting longer work hours, can we say conclusively, based on your study, that the reverse is true? Would the U.S. emit less carbon as a result of a reduction in work hours?

WEISBROT: Yes, the results are applicable both ways.

SMITH: Thank you for taking time to share your ideas with our readers.

WEISBROT: My pleasure. I think it's great that there is this coincidence of interest between those who care about environmentalism and those who care about more personal time. We will be going forward with other studies in the future that may be of interest to your readers. I hope your readers will take a look at our website, www.cepr.net.

PEOPLE FOR A SHORTER WORKWEEK

People for a Shorter Workweek (PSW) promotes a workweek of less than 40 hours with at least 3 days off. PSW currently has a blog (rather than a regular web site) that lists important links as well as helpful information about the shorter workweek, job sharing, healthcare benefits, a simple lifestyle, going car-free, the importance of leisure and other topics! We also highlight companies that offer a shorter workweek in the USA.

You can reach us via our blog, www.shorterworkweek.blogspot.com or email at moreleisure@yahoo.com. PSW also has an extensive booklist that is available. Email us for more information or call 419.831.1038. PSW supports Take Back Your Time and the Work to Live vacation campaign.

Jeanette Watkins

President and Founder
People for a Shorter Workweek

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IN THE NEWS

January 25, 2007

The Communicator Awards is an international awards program founded by communications professionals to recognize excellence in the communications field. Two of the 2006 Bioneers radio series won an Award of Distinction designated

"for projects that exceed industry standards in quality and excellence." The series also won both the Crystal Award of Excellence and Award of Distinction in 2005.

The first show, **Time is Not Money: Waking from the Workaholic American Dream**, asks: What are the most precious resources on Earth? Oil? Gold? Water? Is time our real gold? Author Vicki Robin faced a life-threatening illness and awakened to the true value of time. John De Graaf, producer of the film and book *Affluenza: The All Consuming Epidemic*, charts how U.S. residents spend time very differently from Europeans. Together they examine what would the alternative to overwork and the workaholic American dream look like.

January 21, 2007

AREA DISTRICTS MULLING FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK IMPACT ON PARENTS, STUDENTS, STAFF AMONG CONSIDERATIONS, by Russ Keen, *Aberdeen American News*, Aberdeen, SD

Schools in northeast South Dakota might switch to a four-day school week. Four-day week for students would give teachers a full day for preparation and training, and give students a day for extracurricular activities. School officials are examining how the four-day week might affect students, families, and teachers.

January 17, 2007

NEW QUEST IN BRITISH POLITICS: PUBLIC HAPPINESS, by Mark Rice-Oxley, *The Christian Science Monitor*
Efforts to measure happiness, or subjective well-being (SWB), are more sophisticated than ever. Politicians in Great Britain are starting to take the idea seriously, and are considering incorporating the measures of SWB into policy making. Read the article at www.csmonitor.com/2007/0117/p01s02-woeu.html.

January 11, 2007

WORK FAMILY: REASONS TO HOLD OUT HOPE FOR BALANCING WORK, HOME, by Sue Shellenbarger, *The Wall Street Journal*

Shellenbarger reports, "The national mood on work-life issues is among the grimmest I've seen in 15 years writing this column." But, she manages to find three trends that hold hope for positive changes. First, informal flexibility -- rigid plans, touted in the 90's such as job-sharing are not in vogue. Second, for those who care for elderly family members, in-home monitoring devices can help alert someone who is at work if a loved one needs assistance. And finally, some firms are embracing telecommuting as a way of accommodating the needs of workers and keeping the business running efficiently.

January 3, 2007

WAL-MART SEEKS NEW FLEXIBILITY IN WORKER SHIFTS, by Kris Maher, *The Wall Street Journal*

Nation's largest private employer is implementing a scheduling system that will move employees from a predictable work schedule to a system based on the number of customers in stores at any given time. The system integrates various data to predict how many workers will be needed at any given hour. This is a new attempt to cut cost and attain new efficiencies. But at what cost to employees who will have even less predictable schedules, creating potential havoc to their family time?

December 20, 2006

ECON-ATROCITY: THE HIGH COST OF THE HOLIDAYS by Helen Scharber, Staff Economist, Center for Popular Economics

Americans spent hundreds of billions over the holidays. Is all this spending making us happy or contributing to stress? Check out Scharber's article at: popular-economics.blogspot.com.

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YOUR LETTERS

From Villa Park, IL

While going through the letters people had written, I know that the issue of stress becomes especially acute around the holiday season. Why not launch a campaign to get the U.S. to adopt Boxing Day? For those who do not know, in Britain and many of its former commonwealth nations, including Canada and Australia, this is the day after Christmas, which is another official holiday in these countries. In fact all through Europe this is a day off under different names, while here in the U.S. it is right back to business as usual. This would give most people an extra day to recover from the rigors of preparing for the celebration of Christmas.

From Chilton, WI

I will genuinely be taking back my time (retirement is here). As are so many baby boomers, I will be seeking some employment - but I need to keep the beliefs and goals of your organization in front of me...because I can get into my work more than is healthy for me. Thank you all that you do. And I look forward to continue supporting your efforts!

From Laurel, MD

I recently reduced my work hours from 32 to 28 hours per week. I told my boss I needed that extra hour a day... to go work out or something. When she granted my request (am now a 7/8 employee, still qualify for full benefits, health insurance, 401-k, profit share, Annual Leave, Sick Leave, Holiday Pay)... I immediately went out and joined Curves! I decided to make my health MORE of a priority and WORK/MONEY less of a priority.

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THE EDITORS PAGE

By Kelley Smith

WE HAVE SO MUCH IN COMMON: ENVIRONMENTALISTS AND TAKE BACK YOUR TIME ARE NATURAL ALLIES

My want-to-read list grows faster than I can manage. The most recent book I added is *Heat: How to Stop the Planet from Burning* by George Monbiot. A review of the book caught my attention, and it underscored, for me, the similarity of the dilemmas faced by environmentalists and TBYT'ers. Monbiot makes a very astute observation about human nature. He tells us that Al Gore's documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, is almost always met with great enthusiasm. It appears that most audiences are in agreement with Gore. They want action now to stop global warming. They want their elected representatives to solve the problem! How is it then, that we continue to elect people who, in fact, do not do much about global warming? Monbiot's answer is that we *know/em> what stopping global warming would really mean -- completely changing our way of life. No dry cleaning, no take-out food in convenient Styrofoam containers, no automatic clothes dryers, no throw-away juice bottles, plastic silverware, disposable dozen-blade razors.... Of course, to environmentalists, this future sounds like paradise! But how many people are really willing to wash all their own dishes, launder all their own clothes, give up a car, and all the rest?*

*AAs I thought about Monbiot's words, another book came to mind, Arlie Russell Hochschild's 1997 book, *The Time Bind*. Her description of the "time famine" was not so very different. Everyone "needed more time" then and still does! Hochschild examined schedules and lifestyles of individuals who worked for a company that attempted to implement family-friendly work schedules. Hochschild found that most employees who tried alternative work schedules soon returned to their old schedules. Hochschild concluded that it is just easier to go to work in an office where someone else is paid to clean up, than to spend more time at home with belligerent teenagers or cranky toddlers. (This is my paraphrase of her conclusion and not her exact words.) Almost everyone can blame the government for not mandating family leave or criticize big business (both of which I enjoy, how about you?). But how many people are willing to forego the immediate gratification of a paycheck and opt for the long-term goal of a richer family life, accompanied by a leaner paycheck?*

It would be unfair to say we are all victims of our own selfishness. An environmentalist cannot give up a car unless the community provides public transportation. Likewise, employees cannot reduce work hours unless employers change workplace policies. Still, some soul searching is in order. Saying "I would if I could but I can't." can begin to have a hollow ring to it.

And that brings us to that uncomfortable place where the personal meets the political. Following one's convictions always begins with "me". Then, sooner or later, we find we cannot live according to our convictions unless we find a community of like-minded friends. That is why a phrase like "More Time, Less Carbon" sounds so good!

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