



TAKE BACK YOUR TIME

OCTOBER 24 WWW.TIMEDAY.ORG

NEWSLETTER - Spring 2010

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

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PLEASE SUPPORT US - DONATE BY CLICKING HERE:

NOTICE: CHANGE OF ADDRESS.

Take Back Your Time has a new mailbox address:

Take Back Your Time
c/o John de Graaf
PO Box 9596
Seattle, WA 98109

Letter from the Executive Director- John de Graaf

Dear Friends:

It's been a busy time since the last newsletter, and more and more, I feel like a case study in all we criticize. But events continue to confirm our mission and some great things are happening. I'm excited by the fact that we now have up on YouTube some of the great talks from our vacation summit. This is thanks to our super volunteer, Alyssa Johnson, and you can find the link below. I've just returned from three wonderful speaking trips. The first was a trip to Washington DC, where board member Anmarie Widener, economist Dave Batker and I addressed the National Council on Science and the Environment conference, leading a panel on the subject FROM MATERIAL AFFLUENCE TO TIME AFFLUENCE: REDUCING WORK-TIME AS A PATH TO SUSTAINABILITY. The same day I attended the release of STATE OF THE WORLD, 2010, the annual book from Worldwatch (<http://www.worldwatch.org/sow10>), which includes my chapter *Reducing Work-Time as a Path to Sustainability* and another from Juliet Schor on *Sustainable Work Hours for All*. Board members Michael Maniates and Cecile Andrews also have chapters in the new book.

SOUTHERN TOUR

The second trip was a two-week sojourn through Georgia, Florida and South Carolina, where I spoke at the University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, Central Florida Community College, Rollins College, Furman University, Clemson University and the University of South Carolina. At several schools my visit was sponsored by the Recreation Departments. At the University of Georgia, students received red Frisbees emblazoned with TAKE BACK YOUR TIME and our Web site, and encouraging them to consider studying in the Recreation, Leisure and Tourism Department.

At South Carolina, my visit was co-sponsored by the Schools of Business and Public Health and I had the honor of being introduced by their deans and by the university president. I think my message about the value of shorter work-time for health and for business productivity was very well received. At Furman University, I met with Jeanette Watkins, founder of People for a Shorter Workweek. An excerpt from her blog is below. At Clemson, I was interviewed for the South Carolina State Public Radio Network—click on <http://yourday.clemson.edu/?q=node/604> and scroll down to Thursday to hear the interview.

SHARED WORK IN CONGRESS

On the political front, some good things are happening. Dean Baker's idea about using unemployment funds to support shorter hours rather than layoffs is getting some traction, and even some big-time conservative support. You can read about this in our *Shorter Work-Time in the Media* section below. It's very heartening. Dean Baker and I hope to address these issues in a panel at the America's Future Now conference in June in Washington D.C.

GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS

One great connection for Take Back Your Time is with the international campaign around Gross National Happiness, an idea that originated in the tiny Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan. Seattle's City Council has gotten interested in the idea and in April, Michael Pennock from Victoria, BC, will address the council to kick start an effort to assess happiness here. Alyssa Johnson recently interviewed Pennock—the interview is below.

MORE LEISURE TIME ADVOCATED ON COLBERT REPORT

A couple of night ago, Annie Leonard, creator of the marvelous STORY OF STUFF video on the Web (www.storyofstuff.org) was interviewed by Steven Colbert on his COLBERT REPORT. She spoke very strongly about how our emphasis on consumerism results in over-work and greater time stress. You can watch the interview at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/03/10/annie-leonard-on-colbert_n_493069.html Annie is currently on a book tour and will be in Seattle on March 24. Check to see when she'll be in your town!

In December, I had a chance to debate the issue of holiday time in the *Economist* magazine's online debate—you can read about it below.

UPCOMING TALKS

I'll be taking the Take Back Your Time message to several universities in Pennsylvania and New York in April. Here's the schedule:

April 5 University of Pittsburgh

April 6-7 Allegheny College
April 8-9 Pennsylvania State University
April 14 Cornell University
April 15 Ithaca College
April 16 State University of New York—Cortland

If you're in the area, come by and say hi!

FUNDING

Of course, I hate to mention this, but Take Back Your Time remains desperately low on funds. Right now, I'm just a volunteer and all our resources go to the Web and for expenses. At this point we are solely dependant on you, our members, for support. If you like what we're doing, let us know by donating now!



If you don't like what we're doing, tell us what we can do to improve. It takes resources to do this work and I believe we are really making progress—you'll see that as you read the rest of this newsletter.

Happy reading!

John

New From Take Back Your Time: Vacation Summit Videos on YouTube! – Alyssa Johnson

Take Back Your Time now has a [YouTube channel](http://www.youtube.com/takebackyourtime) (www.youtube.com/takebackyourtime)!

Thanks to the great video footage provided by Todd Boyle, nearly all the lectures from the Vacation Matters Summit are available.

To access the videos, go to www.youtube.com/takebackyourtime. On the right side of the page there are "playlists" of the talks that have been posted so far. Because posted videos have to be less than 10 minutes long, the playlists are the easiest way to collect the clips in chronological order.

So far, I have posted the full Vacation Summit talks of Joe Robinson, Sarah Speck, Arnold Pallay, Peter Fraenkel, and Suzy Ross. Coming up next: Cecile Andrews and Mara Adelman.

More will follow with time! Stay tuned!

The Decaf Coffee Party – Cecile Andrews

Announcing: The Decaf Coffee Party: Slowing down and Taking Back Our Time with congenial conversation.

The new "Coffee Party" <http://www.coffeepartyusa.com/> has made a real splash, getting coverage by major news organizations and holding more than 350 events on its opening day, March 13. Let's build on this with a Decaf Party! Just as with the Coffee Party, we would focus on people coming together for civil conversation, but our focus would also

be on taking back our time. In our Decaf conversations we would talk about ways to slow down, analyze the way our culture robs us of our time, and explore policies that we need — policies such as vacations and shorter work hours.

Some of you know —through my work with Simplicity Circles —that I've long felt that small group conversation is an effective tool to bring about progressive change. Linguist George Lakoff contends that you can't just give people facts; you need to evoke empathy and responsibility. Bringing people together for congenial, convivial conversation is one way to do this.

Further, in their new book *Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives*, authors Cristakis and Fowler show that social networks (non-internet!) are highly influential. In essence, we are influenced by the people around us. By creating progressive social networks, we can enhance this kind of change.

I've obtained the url for decafcoffeeparty.com, but I need advice from those who know better on how to proceed: Should it be a blog or website? What do we do with Facebook? Any advice would be very welcome! You can reach me at cecile@cecileandrews.com.

Cecile Andrews, author of Less Is More, Slow Is Beautiful, and Circle of Simplicity, is a member of the TAKE BACK YOUR TIME Board of Directors

<http://www.cecileandrews.com>

The Benefits of Shorter Hours – Jeanette Watkins

The following is an excerpt from shortworkweek.blogspot.com, the blog maintained by **People for a Shorter Workweek**.

A SHORTER WORK WEEK INSTEAD OF LAYOFFS

By Jeanette Watkins

A friend of mine in Greenville, South Carolina, told me that a half dozen or so plant employees were to be laid off from her company. It was a sad day at the plant. In order to avoid the layoff, the office folks worked it out so that everyone now has two Fridays off per month. My friend was used to working 40 hours per week all of her working life. At first, she thought about the money she would lose, but after the first Friday off, she LOVED it and now she can't wait until her next Friday off. She loves the shorter workweek and doesn't really want to go back to the 40 hour workweek. She called her sister (who is now retired) and told her she would love to have a shorter workweek every week, as it is so wonderful! Instead of workers being laid off, this company worked it out so that everyone in the office shares the work, and all of the office staff works a shorter workweek. They love those Fridays off and the money isn't as important as time off. The 40-hour workweek is very hectic. Thanks to the economic downturn, some people are discovering how great a shorter workweek is.

"The Happiness Index" – Interview with Michael Pennock

A recent survey shows that residents of Victoria, British Columbia scored lowest in "Time Balance" among nine measures of life satisfaction. Michael Pennock of the Vancouver Island Health Authority was the lead author of the survey, which can be found at:

<http://www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca/web/node/353>

You can take the survey yourself there.

The results show Victoria residents' responses are "reflecting high levels of stress, time demands, and concerns about maintaining a balanced lifestyle". While 76% of Victoria's citizens were satisfied with their overall quality of life, only 46% felt the same about their time balance. When asked what would increase their life satisfaction, having more

time to spend with friends and family was the second highest reported answer. The #1 answer, having less stress (tied with having greater financial security), is also related to time, since the leading source of stress reported was time pressure.

A summary of the Victoria results can be found at:

http://www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca/web/files/Happiness_Summary_%20report_for%20web.pdf

Michael Pennock, who originally developed the survey in cooperation with the government of Bhutan's campaign for "Gross National Happiness" answered some questions for us:

Were you surprised that the lowest score on your survey came in the category of Time Balance?

Not terribly surprised. We have problem in Greater Victoria with escalating housing prices which necessitate two-incomes and as much overtime as possible for many families. Unfortunately, there are a lot of over-extended and stressed-out people trying to balance job requirements and the responsibilities of family-life. I expect the over-extension was also contributory to the financial stresses that were identified.

Have you noticed any aspects of our culture that seem to have a large influence on Time Balance?

I think that North American culture, in general, mitigates against time balance. Let me count the ways—our glorification of affluence, our pursuit of excellence and perfection, the marketing notion that "we can have it all", our valuing of workaholic lifestyles, our obsession with economic productivity... and so it goes.

What is the potential for reduced work time to improve a population's overall life satisfaction?

Huge. One of the things I really like about the Bhutanese framework of Gross National Happiness, upon which our survey is based, is the notion that employment is viewed within a broader lens of time-balance. In other words, we need to be productive across a number of the components of our life in order to be happy- jobs, family, friends, community, arts and culture, the environment and so on. Our lives become out of balance when we focus too much on any one of these. For many people, jobs take precedence, and everything else gets organized around the work-day, in the little bit of space that is left.

To what extent do you think that time balance is a factor in the lower life satisfaction reported by groups such as low-income earners and single parents?

Employed single-parents always stand out as the most challenged of groups with respect to time-balance and there is no question that their life-satisfaction suffers as a result. It takes very little imagination to figure out why that is true. Unemployed single-parents report some of the lowest life-satisfaction scores of all groups but the reasons are different- poverty, social isolation, limited community involvement and so forth. Certainly low-income wage-earners, particularly those with children, can face dramatic time-balance issues related to overtime and multiple job-holding. The detrimental impacts on life-satisfaction are often exacerbated by challenges to many of the other contributors- economic security, social supports, participation in community life and family life among others. The long hours that are worked in attempting to gain economic security limit their ability to spend time with family and friends, develop hobby-related skills, participate in the community, and enjoy the natural environment. In this sense, their time balance problems have more severe consequences than the time-balance problems of more affluent persons, because low-income wage earners have less opportunity to benefit from "the fruits of their labour" through nourishing the other contributors to life-satisfaction.

[Michael Pennock will be talking about these issues to the Seattle City Council on April 19th. He will also speak at a public forum that evening to discuss the possibilities of conducting the survey in Seattle and making Seattle a "Gross National Happiness City." To be alerted as to time and place of the forum, email John de Graaf at \[jodg@comcast.net\]\(mailto:jodg@comcast.net\). Table of Contents](#)

TAKE BACK YOUR TIME SEMINAR AT TEXAS A & M

Texas A&M University in College Station, TX will be conducting a Take Back Your Time seminar for university students on April 7, 2010. The seminar has been developed as an assignment for an undergraduate seminar led by Dr. Rudy Dunlap in the Department of Recreation, Parks & Tourism Sciences. The workshop is designed to educate students on the importance of work/life balance and the disappearance of time for leisure in contemporary society. For additional information regarding this program, please contact Dr. Dunlap (rdunlap@aq.tamu.edu).

Thanks to student Michelle Guerra for this information.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR EVENTS! WE REALLY WANT TO KNOW AND TO HELP YOU PUBLICIZE THEM!

The Economist Magazine Debate – European Holiday Time

This December, The prestigious *Economist* magazine invited Take Back Your Time's director John de Graaf to argue against this motion in its regular monthly debate:

"This House believes that Europeans would be better off with fewer holidays and higher incomes."

John's opponent was a prominent economist, Dr. Robert Gordon of Northwestern University.

Thousands of readers voted on line and nearly three hundred left comments on the Web site. Joe Robinson of the Take Back Your Time board was called on as an "expert witness" to the debate.

At the end of the debate, John was declared the winner, receiving an overwhelming 79% of readers' votes! Europeans especially defended their vacation time and were outraged by Dr. Gordon's suggestion that they should trade their holiday time for more money. Even Americans were much more likely to agree with the European model of long vacations than with the United States' focus on income.

You can read the full debate, including opening statements, rebuttals, closing statements, expert commentary and reader responses at: <http://www.economist.com/debate/overview/160>

Time Issues in the Media

Economists Push for Federal Job-Sharing Program

Work-Sharing Bill debated in Congress: "Proposal Would Prevent Layoffs by Helping Employers Reduce Worker Hours"

The Washington Independent – Mike Lillis – February 24, 2010

Nice Work if You Can Share It

Dean Baker on Work-Sharing Schemes: "If Congress is serious about addressing unemployment, it will act on bills that aim to strengthen work-sharing programmes"

Guardian.co.uk – Dean Baker – March 1, 2010

Shorter Working Week Soon Inevitable, Forecasts NEF

Britain's New Economics Foundation (NEF) encourages 21-hour Work Week: "A shorter working week is set to become the new norm, according to a report out this week from NEF, the UK's leading independent think tank."

NEF – February 13, 2010

[Roaring Out of Recession](#)

Harvard Business Review says companies that reduce hours rather than laying off workers do better after recessions

Harvard Business Review – Ranjay Gulati, Nitin Nohria, and Frank Wohlgezogen – March 2010

[What's Wrong with a 30-Hour Work Week?](#)

MRZine – Don Fitz – December 16, 2009

[Are Shorter Work Hours Good for the Environment? A Comparison of U.S. and European Energy Consumption](#)

MRZine – Summary of 2006 Study by Rosnick & Weisbrot for CEPR – [Full PDF](#)

[Flexible Working 'good for heart and soul'](#)

BBC News - February 17, 2010

[Shalom Center - Freeing Our Time](#)

A February snowstorm in Philadelphia caused a "citywide Shabbat" and inspired the Shalom Center to revisit the idea of Free Time. Read their 2001 statement "[Free Time for a Free People](#)". Go [here](#) to browse through other Shalom Center articles on free time.

Take Back Your Time Supports Telecommuting Bill

Activist Nicole Golubov has asked TAKE BACK YOUR TIME to support the Telecommuter Tax Fairness Act, which has bi-partisan Congressional support. After discussion, our board agreed. We encourage you to add your support to the bill. Here is the letter of request we received:

Dear Mr. de Graaf:

I am writing to urge Take Back Your Time to endorse the Telecommuter Tax Fairness Act (H.R. 2600) - Federal legislation that would eliminate a steep tax barrier to telecommuting. This measure is necessary to assure that workers across the country can use telework to improve both their work/life balance and the environment.

The Tax Penalty for Telecommuting

The Telecommuter Tax Fairness Act would abolish a penalty tax that currently threatens Americans nationwide who work for out-of-state employers and want or need the flexibility to telecommute.

Under a state rule known as the "convenience of the employer" rule, when an employee lives in one state and chooses to telecommute some or most of the time to an employer in a different state, the employer's state may tax the employee on 100% of his income - including both the income he earns when he travels to the employer's state and the income he earns when he works from home. Because telecommuters' home states can also tax the income earned at home, many telecommuters are double taxed on that income.

Even when states grant their resident telecommuters a credit for taxes they pay the employer's state on their home state income, telecommuters are at risk. When the tax rate in the employer's state is higher than the tax rate in the home state, telecommuters must pay the higher rate on their home state income.

The Harm to Employees

The risk of double or excessive taxation can make interstate telework unaffordable for many Americans. The people thwarted from using this workplace flexibility include, for example:

- Employees striving to meet competing work and dependent care obligations;
- Workers who are struggling financially and need to reduce commuting and dependent care costs;
- Older Americans for whom daily commuting has become too strenuous but who cannot afford to retire;
- People who have lost their jobs, cannot sell their homes to relocate and need to broaden the geographic scope of their job searches;
- Military spouses who are frequently forced to relocate and cannot, without telework, build or sustain a career;
- Disabled Americans with limited mobility for whom telework is the only means of generating an income;
- Americans who want to reduce their carbon footprint by relying less on cars and mass transit and more on the Internet for travel.

The telework tax also harms children and other dependents who lose valuable time with their caregivers when the caregivers are forced, needlessly, to idle on clogged roads or sluggish trains as they commute to and from work.

The Harm to Employers

Employers also suffer because of the telecommuter tax. Telework can help employers reduce real estate, energy and other overhead costs. In an ailing economy, such savings can help them avoid layoffs and even expand. Telework can help businesses increase productivity and sustain operations during and after an emergency - like a terrorist threat, severe flu outbreak or damaging storm.

By making telework too costly for many employees, the telecommuter tax frustrates businesses trying to grow a distributed workforce and reap these benefits.

The payroll burdens the telecommuter tax imposes can also overwhelm employers. Indeed, *The New York Times* reported on a small business that was planning to leave New York because addressing the state's claims under the convenience of the employer rule proved too onerous. See David S. Joachim, "[Telecommuters Cry 'Ouch' to the Tax Gods.](#)" *The New York Times*, Special Section on Small Business, Feb. 20, 2008..

The Solution

The Telecommuter Tax Fairness Act would cure these problems, prohibiting states from taxing the income nonresidents earn when they work from home.

The Telecommuter Tax Fairness Act would cost the Federal government nothing, and it has bi-partisan support. The bill was introduced in the House by Representatives Jim Himes (D-CT) and Frank Wolf (R-VA). Other co-sponsors include:

Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)

Hank Johnson (D-GA)

John Sarbanes (D-MD)

Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD)

Gerald Connolly (D-VA)

Glenn Nye (D-VA)

Tom Perriello (D-VA)

Robert Wittman (R-VA)

Albio Sires (D-NJ)

Leonard Lance (R-NJ)

James McGovern (D-MA)

Melissa Bean (D-IL)

Mark Kirk (R-IL)

Raul Grijalva (D-AZ)

Dennis Moore (D-KS)

Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA)

Scott Murphy (D-NY)

Outside of Congress, the bill has been endorsed by a diverse group of stakeholders, including the lework Coalition (www.TelCoa.org), the Association for Commuter Transportation (www.actweb.org), the National Taxpayers Union (www.ntu.org), the American Homeowners Grassroots Alliance (www.americanhomeowners.org) and the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council (www.sbecouncil.org).

Similarly, according to Workplace Flexibility 2010, a public policy initiative at Georgetown Law, the "federal government should adopt policies that prevent states from taxing the portion of income ... a nonresident employee earns while working out of state because of lework, thus preventing the potential for double taxation." See Workplace Flexibility 2010, "Public Policy Platform on Flexible Work Arrangements," released May 13, 2009, available at <http://www.law.georgetown.edu/workplaceflexibility2010/definition/FWAPublicPolicyPlatform.cfm>, , pp. 23-24.

Calls for federal action to remove the tax impediment to interstate telework appear frequently in both the legal and non-legal press. *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *USA Today* and *The Hill* are among the many publications that have published commentary and/or letters to the editor urging a federal remedy for the telecommuter tax. See, e.g., "[Taxing Telecommuters.](#)" *The New York Times*, NY/Region Section, Aug. 6, 2006; "[Pajama Life.](#)" *The New York Times*, Jun. 29, 2008; "Reintroduction of the Telecommuter Tax Fairness Act in the Obama Era," *State Tax Notes*, Jun. 22, 2009, a copy of which is attached; "[Telework Bill to Remove a Roadblock.](#)" behindthegreen.org, Jun. 9, 2009 and "[The Telecommuting Option](#)" (Letter to the Editor), *The New York Times* online edition, Jan. 11, 2009. See also Representative Roscoe Bartlett, "[OPEC would benefit from ongoing failure by lawmakers to act.](#)" *The Hill*, Feb. 22, 2010; "[Ending Unfair Telecommuter Taxes.](#)" *WebWorkerDaily.com*, Dec. 18, 2009; "[Tax Issue An Obstacle to H1N1 'Telework' Plans](#)" (Letter to the Editor), *Investment News*, Dec. 13, 2009; "[At One's Inconvenience](#)" (Letter to the Editor), *The Washington Times*, Oct. 6, 2009; "[Ban the Telecommuter Tax.](#)" undress4success.com, Sept. 29, 2009; "Taxing Teleworkers" (Letter to the Editor), *Federal Times*, Sept. 21, 2009, a copy of which is attached; "[Why You Need to Know About the Telecommuter Tax Fairness Act.](#)" workshifting.com, Aug. 27, 2009; "[Swine Flu and Telecommuting](#)" (Letter to the Editor), *The National Law Journal*, May 25, 2009; "[Helping telecommuters will benefit middle class](#)" (Letter to the Editor), *USA Today*, Feb. 4, 2009; "[Telework's Benefits in a Troubled Economy ... and Thereafter.](#)" *Workspan Weekly*, Jan. 20, 2009 and "[Two-Timing Telecommute Taxes.](#)" newgeography.com, Nov. 9, 2008.

I am a lawyer who writes extensively on the legal consequences of telecommuting. I am the author of *The Law of Telecommuting* (ALI-ABA 2001 with 2004 Supplement), *Telecommuting for Lawyers* (ABA 1998) and numerous articles on telework. I am also an Advisory Board member of the Telework Coalition (www.TelCoa.org), an advocacy group headquartered in Washington, D.C. The Telework Coalition and I have been actively promoting passage of the Telecommuter Tax Fairness Act since the bill's infancy.

I urge Take Back Your Time to make enactment of the Telecommuter Tax Fairness Act part of its agenda. Doing so would help assure that the greatest number of workers can take advantage of the work/life balance, economic and environmental benefits telework offers.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this legislation with you and to work with your organization to promote its passage.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

Nicole son Goluboff

Common Security Clubs

The Institute for Policy Studies in Boston has developed a model for community organizing called "Common Security Clubs". TBYT supports their goal of coming together to create a sane economy, for people and for the earth. Read on to learn about Common Security Clubs and the resources available to start one in your community.

COMMON SECURITY CLUBS

By Andree Zaleska

Is it possible to reinvigorate our communities in the midst of a global financial crisis? Of course.

Fear and isolation often prevent us from seeing ways to make our economy work for everyone. But there are alternatives. People are creating communities of support and mutual aid around the pain and fear of this moment, and in doing so they are quietly building a new economy.

One example of this sort of community organizing is the [Common Security Club](#), a simple model which combines mutual aid, a support group, and a venue for social action. Common Security Clubs are springing up around the country. In churches, unions and workplaces, unassuming groups of 20-25 people meet to share their troubles, try to make sense of this moment in our economic history, and plan action together. A network of religious and community organizers has developed a number of free tools to help start-up clubs, including a five-session curriculum.

The program covers the origins of the economic crisis and how to take social action towards a more just economy. It also encourages mutual aid among members, such as skill-swaps, potlucks and cooperative child-care, in many cases the norm for our grandparents' generation.

The strength of the approach seems to lie largely in simply facing common problems together, listening to one another, and the relief of breaking down barriers through open discussion about finances.

One group in suburban Washington describes themselves as a "Reality Club," determined to keep reminding each other that there's no going back to the old self-protective economy based on phantom wealth. In one Boston club, members are taking turns bringing in their household budgets for "makeovers": sharing their financial quandaries to the group and receiving its collective wisdom on ways to either cut costs or enhance income. Other groups have formed "Get Out of Debt Club," to reduce expenses, and have created bartering networks and skill banks –exchanges of work and skills without money changing hands.

Common Security Clubs are also a place for people to get organized to assert people power over the economy. Groups organize meetings with their congressional representatives, fight cuts in local services, and agree to keep their spending dollars local. Many group members find themselves inspired to engage politically again, after years of discouragement.

While the pundits rant, the politicians flounder and the CEOs make out like bandits, life in the real economy goes on with a reassuring tenacity. We can remember what the good life was, in simpler times, and we can recreate it from the bottom up.

Andrée Zaleska helps coordinate common security clubs in the Northeast. For more information, visit www.commonsecurityclub.org.

I Believe in the 40-Hour Week

By Crystal Alberthal

Crystal Alberthal is a student in Tim Jones' [WHAT'S THE ECONOMY FOR, ANYWAY?](#) class at the University of Washington, Bothell. She wrote this essay for a class assignment.

I believe in 40 hour work weeks. When I was 24 years old I was fortunate enough to land a job at a respected institution – it is ten years later and I'm still here. To be quite honest, I haven't stayed because I'm giddy about my job, or because I contribute in any way to making a difference in people's lives or the environment, or because I make a load of money – none of that is true. In fact, I make very little money and I do little in the way of contributing to "the greater good." I do, however, consider personal time to be priceless and it does contribute to the greater good of my own well-being and that of my family. So, I work 40 hours a week and no more.

Why is a maximum 40 hour work week important to me? I leave work at 4:30pm and get to go home and play with my daughter every night. I don't work weekends and I never take my work home. In fact, I very rarely talk about work at home. Some people have said I lack motivation to move forward in my career and be "successful," but I disagree. My definition of "successful" is just different than theirs. My success is measured by how many sunny afternoons I spend hiking through the woods with my daughter, or how many family trips to the zoo we can fit into one month, or counting how many new tomatoes are growing in our garden, or how many rainy walks we get to take stompin' through mud puddles. Or as my daughter calls them, "muddles!"

My motivation to move forward doesn't have a salary attached and I could care less if I ever have CEO, CFO or Dr. attached to my name. That's not where my happiness lies. Sure, I like the things that money can help me achieve - I love owning my own home, I enjoy traveling and buying new color crayons for my daughter. But in the end, sitting at my desk for 40 hours a week is already 40 hours too many! The money rewarded for anymore than 40 hours invested is just not worth it to me. I'm only going to sit at my desk for as many hours as I absolutely have to. My smile widens and my step gets lighter the closer I get to walking out the office door.

Working no more than 40 hour work weeks gives me time to really invest in the more important aspects of my life: time with my family, social gatherings with friends, civic engagements and volunteering to help clean up my local park. My passions will never make me money but to be honest, I don't mind. My 40 hour work week affords me all the necessities I need, and then some. I sometimes imagine what our world would look like if it was against the law to work over 40 hours a week and just the thought makes me hear a great big communal "sigh" of relief. Imagine if we all had time to take evening walks with our families in the rain and stomp through "muddles." How fun would that be!

Your Letters

From someone who doesn't see eye to eye with us:

Subject: Are you for real?

For the first five minutes I spent on your site I thought it was all a lark...You know, like the "bonsai kitten" website. Are you aware that millions of people are out of work? The idea of taking back your day to those people is getting back to work, to earn some money, then enjoy the type of life you preach. Think about it: aren't you putting the cart before the horse? Wait--I get it now! Your site is geared toward the CEOs and Hedge Fund Manager types. For a minute there I thought you were severely out of touch with reality Silly me! (sarcasm intended). Yeah, tough life taking business calls

pool-side in the cabana. Just the thought makes me want to check my blood pressure, then schedule a massage to loosen up my stress-furrowed brow. Seriously, your website is an over-the-top insult to people's intelligence. Please tell me you didn't get the idea for your website from that stupid book "The Four Hour Work Week"?

Our quick answer:

Dear Reader: You might want to take a closer look. We advocate work-sharing so the people you talk about can get back to work. We fight for vacation time for the low-income workers who never get any, not the CEOs who have as much as they like. We have been around far longer than the book you mention. We advocate for greater equality and for public policies that extend the right to time to all Americans, not just the wealthy and powerful. You may think you're terribly clever, but anyone who has spent any real time on our site knows better.

Poem from SlowDownNow.org

This poem appears on the Web site SlowDownNow.org

Forty Hours

***Forty hours is long enough
for toil and strain and strife.
It's really all too rough,
this so-called working life.***

***All work can make you such a bore,
so put your feet up and relax,
and don't feel guilty if you ignore
e-mail, phone, and fax.***