

14 Charles Lane
New York, NY 10014

March 10, 1978

TO LOCAL AND BRANCH ORGANIZERS AND TRADE UNION DIRECTORS

Dear Comrades,

This letter and the enclosed items should be discussed in your executive committees, with all union fractions, and with union comrades who aren't yet organized into fractions:

1. Letter of November 14, 1977, to all unions on the founding meeting of the "All Unions' Movement to Shorten the Work Week."
2. Application for unions wishing to support this movement and to send a representative(s) to the April 11, 1978, conference at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Dearborn, Michigan.
3. Copy of an article by Frank Lovell from the December 2, 1977, Militant.

We welcome the renewed interest in the unions in the shorter workweek with no cut in pay, one of the key demands in our Transitional Program. In the course of the 1978 election campaigns, our candidates for public office will have many opportunities to make statements on the shorter workweek issue, pointing to the continuing high unemployment.

Our comrades in unions will want to look for ways to discuss this issue and the April 11 conference in their shops and unions. Many union locals will want to send delegates to the conference. If any SWP members or close friends of our movement are selected for such delegations please notify us.

The Militant plans to run several articles on this issue prior to April 11 and would welcome any local information or news stories about conference-building activities or other signs of interest in the shorter workweek. Direct such material to Shelley Kramer.

Comradely,



Joel Britton
SWP National Office



FRANK EDWARDS
FRANK ROSS
HANK OBIN
WENDELL WOODRUFF
BILL ANDREWS
RALPH BLOHA

Herbert M...
DR. ARK...
MARION...



4300 Michigan Ave. -
Detroit, Mich. 48210
(313) 897-8850

November 14, 1977

Dear Brother:

On October 25, 1977, we had a Founders' Meeting at Local 22, UAW, to found and plan the "All Unions' Movement to Shorten the Work Week." Our original goal was to get fifty Local Union Representatives from as many International Unions as possible, to this Founders' Meeting. We exceeded that goal. There were Local Union Leaders from twelve different International Unions, from thirteen states representing over two hundred thousand members.

At that meeting, we elected the Officers and set up a twenty-one member Steering Committee to lead the "All Unions' Movement to Shorten the Work Week." Fifteen members of the Steering Committee were elected that day, and six have been left open so that we might have geographical representation from the many areas and unions that make up the labor movement in this country.

It was a unanimous vote at the Founders' Meeting to call an "All Unions' Conference to Shorten the Work Week" on April 11, 1978, at the Hyatt Regency, in Dearborn, Michigan. UAW International President, Douglas Fraser, and other International Presidents will be speakers at that Conference.

We have had many Local Unions who have said they want to be listed as Founders', but could not be present at the October Founders' Meeting. We have made provisions for those Locals who fit into this category. We are enclosing a form for you to fill out, sign and return to us, that will make you a Founder of this important movement.

We feel this movement is going to have great historical significance because there have been many people from many different unions working to shorten the work week. But this is the first effort that has been made to bring in the Local Leaderships' from all Unions into one force to reduce the work week, thereby creating enough jobs for the millions who are unemployed in this country.

continued

We know that many leaders shy away from movements because they are sometimes tainted with inter-union politics and many times some in the movements use them as a soapbox to take political potshots at their International Unions. We want it clearly understood that this is not that type of movement. Because if we are to ever achieve a shorter work week, we must have cooperation between the International Union Leaders, the Local Union Leaders, and the Local Union Memberships. So this movement is not to divide unions, but to unite them. We are going to be calling on every International Union President for their participation and support. We need your support and the support of your Local Union to make this movement a success. Everyone can help by sending us the names, addresses and phone numbers of Local Unions in your area. We need these names and addresses as soon as possible (see the enclosed cards).

As we said before, there is an enclosed form we would like for you to read, as it sets forth the principles of the "All Unions' Movement to Shorten the Work Week." We would like for you to become a Founder of this movement by signing the form and returning it by December 15, 1977 at the very latest (because December 15th is the deadline for the Conference Call to be at the printers).

At the Founders' Meeting, there was a resolution passed for all locals to become Founders to donate one hundred dollars or more. This donation is to go towards the expenses of organizing the movement. We have put on a full-time organizer to begin organizing for the April Conference. His name is Dick Niebur. He is a retired Vice-President of the United Electrical Workers Union.

So please give this matter your immediate attention. On the letterhead we are listing one person, and the Local Union number, as Founders. That person is usually the President. However, if the Local Union chooses for it to be someone else, you should so designate.

Fraternally,



Frank Runnels, President
Cadillac Local 22, UAW and
President "All Unions' Movement
to Shorten the Work Week"

FR:opeiu42/cth
Encl.

P.S. Please find enclosed a copy of our Local Union newspaper covering the Founders' Meeting.

FOUNDERS' APPLICATION
FORM sww1

TO THE "ALL UNIONS' MOVEMENT TO SHORTEN THE WORK WEEK"

We want to be a Founder of the "All Unions' Movement to Shorten the Work Week." We understand that this movement is a movement to unite all of labor to reduce the work week down to where everyone who desires to work may have a job. We also understand that many times in the past, when people tried to reduce the work week, some were calling for thirty hours, some called for thirty-two hours, some called for thirty-five hours and they became so divided arguing over the number of hours that they were not effective.

We further understand the "All Unions' Movement to Shorten the Work Week" is asking for every union in the United States and Canada to commit themselves to the concept of shortening the work week, but are leaving the number of hours open so that every union may have the flexibility at the bargaining table they need to meet their own set of circumstances.

We also understand that some leaders shy away from movements because they are sometimes tainted with inter-union politics. And many in the movements use them as a soapbox to take political potshots at their International Unions. We understand this Movement is not to divide unions, but to unite them, and we will not let inter-union politics become involved in the Movement.

So in actuality, anyone who believes in the shorter hour concept can be a part of the "All Unions Movement to Shorten the Work Week", without fear that someone is going to dictate to them what the program in their union ought to be.

Yes, we would like to be a Founder of the "All Unions Movement to Shorten the Work Week." Please list the following representatives from our Local Union on the Conference Call and letterhead.

Name: _____ Position Held _____

Local Name & Number _____ # of Members _____

Address _____

City & State _____ Phone Number _____

Also please find enclosed our check in the amount of \$ _____, which is made payable to the "All Unions Committee to Shorten the Work Week."

Signed: _____

Title: _____

(Reprinted from the December 2, 1977 issue of the Militant, titled "Labor meeting urges shorter workweek.")

By Frank Lovell

Mass unemployment is a blight on society and a growing threat to the union movement. Yet with more than 10 million persons presently out of work, neither the government nor most union officials pay much serious attention to this problem.

The highly publicized "debate" over the Humphrey-Hawkins bill in Congress is a typical effort by politicians in the Democratic and Republican parties to create the impression of "seeking a solution" without looking.

The real solution to unemployment was highlighted by a conference this fall of secondary union officials who hope to revive the movement for a shorter workweek with no cut in pay.

This gathering was held October 25 in Detroit at the United Auto Workers Local 22 hall. It was attended mostly by local union presidents. They came from several states and about a dozen international unions, including the Mine Workers, Meat Cutters, Longshoremens, United Electrical Workers, Steelworkers, and Machinists.

The conference set up an "All Unions Committee to Shorten the Workweek," headed by Local 22 President Frank Runnels. It plans a national conference next April in Detroit and hopes to win broad support in the union movement for its goal.

In his welcoming remarks to the conference, Runnels observed that since 1955 the number of production workers has increased only 3 percent, but those workers produce 225 percent more.

"We have a constant erosion of jobs through automation and productivity," Runnels said, "and when you have something eroding you must take positive steps to prevent that erosion.

"But instead of taking the steps that are necessary to create new jobs, there has been a wall built around all the jobs in our nation, and a sign hung on that wall that says, 'Forty hours or starve.' And that's exactly what a big percentage of our population is doing—starving."

"It's a fact of life," Runnels said, "that we are not going to effectively combat unemployment until we commit ourselves to reduce the workweek in this country."

And he emphasized, "When I talk about shorter hours, I'm talking about shorter hours with no reduction in pay."

Henry Foner, president of the joint board of the Fur, Leather & Machine Workers Union, spoke on the "Background of the struggle for a shorter workweek."

His talk was based on research by Prof. Philip Foner about workers' struggles for the ten-hour day and the eight-hour day. He described how these gains were won against determined opposition by the employing class.

He also told how the six-hour day, thirty-hour week, was almost enacted. And how it was lost.

On April 4, 1933, the U.S. Senate passed the thirty-hour bill, introduced by Sen. Hugo Black of Alabama. "However," said Foner, "Roosevelt opposed the bill and joined with big business in fighting it in the House."

If nothing more than this study comes from the Detroit gathering, it will still be a gain. It should be published and widely distributed to union members and unemployed workers.

The committee for a shorter workweek is more ambitious and hopes to do other things. Runnels called for a fight on two fronts, "the collective bargaining front and the legislative-political front."

"I'm talking about a campaign for shorter hours that will take this demand into every legislative chamber in the country," he said, "... and on to Congress and the White House."

There was no indication at the conference that any of those present were preparing to break with the Democratic Party. They talked about ways to pressure the capitalist politicians for a shorter-workweek law.

But this is different from the craven practice of top union officials who throw money into the campaign coffers of political "friends" in the vain hope that some favors will be returned.

At least Runnels and his committee are advancing a serious demand and trying to rally mass support behind it. Runnels says he wants "a legislative-political movement that will elect men and women to public office who know the hell of high inflation and the terror of mass layoffs."

How much of this is pure rhetoric remains to be seen. The fact is that the kind of public officials Runnels says he wants are not to be found in the Republican and Democratic parties. They will have to come from the ranks of the working class and be elected by a labor party based on the unions.

The "All Unions Committee to Shorten the Workweek" has picked the right target to shoot for, and it deserves support on that account.

And they should rally in every way possible the millions of workers—employed and unemployed together—to demand and demonstrate as their predecessors in every previous generation have done since the carpenters in Boston and Philadelphia "turned out" in 1827 for shorter hours.