

# THE 5-HOUR WEEK

by

Darwin Dante

Translated from German by John C. Carroll

It is foolish, under present living and working conditions, to work more than is necessary!

To spend 50-60 hours a week chasing after money when 5 hours a week would provide enough for one to live borders on insanity. 5 hours of work a week would be enough to provide the exact same standard of living that was common at the start of the 1990s in Germany. And yet we work, at wages blessed by the christian- and social-democratic trade unions, for 40 hours a week without any apparent point to or benefit from these extra 35 hours.

Since I am personally no longer willing to consign my life to the wasteful regimen of the 40-hour-week, I am writing this book in the hope that the education of the public will result in aid and assistance for my own difficulties. Only through cooperative action and general insight into the conditions of commodity relations can the crime of the 40-hour-week and the attendant environmental degradation be placed in check. And only with these two elements is it possible to achieve a lasting reduction of the work week to 5 hours—a development that would not only result in a substantial improvement in the quality of life for the population at large, but also for myself!

## ***“BUT PEOPLE AREN’T READY FOR A FIVE-HOUR-WEEK!”***

In a world where human egocentrism is decried as the origin of all evil it would be foolish to believe that people would choose a 40-hour-week over a 5-hour-week. Would people voluntarily work 40 hours a week if they began to recognize the advantages of a 5-hour-week?

For my part, I place the greatest trust in the egocentrism of human beings as long as the population at large becomes more aware of their vested interest in the **common good** and begin to act accordingly!

All that we need to do in order to make the 5-hour-week a reality is to consider how best we can inform our friends and colleagues about this possible future society. In this way this utopia can be realized more quickly and peacefully than we have ever dared to dream.

With regards to the form of this text, I would only like to comment that I have intentionally written this pamphlet in non-academic language, explaining economic concepts and ideas in common, everyday terms. The goal has been to produce a piece of writing that can be understood by people of all classes; academia should no longer be allowed to barricade itself in its ivory towers through the use of incomprehensible language. Their work should be formulated in a way that makes their writings accessible to the normal person on the street, to whom they should answer for their actions and words.

## **SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THE BOOK “*THE FIVE-HOUR-WEEK*”**

The source material available to me is not ideal for a precise measurement of the necessary amount of labor. For a complete accounting of necessary labor we would have to reorder the

available employment statistics according to economic branch and profession. Although I have access to the statistical tables from the German Department of Labor, I have decided not to use them, since they are not available to all readers. My intent is to construct my arguments and statements in such a way that they can be checked and tested by readers at all times, using only numbers from the “Statistical Yearbook 1988,” which is available to the general public. The Statistical Yearbooks contain all the statistics commissioned by the Federal Government, and are available in all public libraries in the German Republic, whether to lend or to order.

The statistics to which I have access reveal considerable differences (sometimes as great as 5%), which means that only a general and inexact calculation of future work time is possible. Nevertheless, their significance is enough to provide us with an approximate picture of the amount actual, productive and necessary labor time, which in the end may reveal a difference of +/- 2 hours.

### ***WHY USE NUMBERS FROM 1988?***

There are a several reasons for this.

For one, the period around the year 1990 will likely be remembered as the high point of 50 happy years of Western European history. General luxury characterized the standard of living in the Federal Republic of Germany and even the lower-paid classes enjoyed a quality of life that was considerably higher than now (2004).

Poverty, hunger, street-children and homelessness were practically unknown. By contrast, these things have become an ever more common sight in Germany’s large cities. We can all observe with increasing frequency how the homeless search through dumpsters for something edible.

Now, it was during these 50 happy years in Western Europe that the myth of capitalism’s superiority over socialism was born. Today we live in a new era: we are experiencing the collapse of the ‘social peace,’ and with it this very myth. This is a time for thought and re-orientation, one in which even the statistical source material for such a simple and sensible accounting as this one has worsened.

In 1990 the general affluence of the populace could not be questioned. Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this is anything but the case! In 1990, with the social contract of the postwar decades still intact, full-time workers could count on working 40 hours a week, part-time workers 20 hours a week, which allowed for a very simple calculation of necessary labor time. At present the work week has climbed in many cases to 60 or 80 hours a week, whether as part of a labor agreement, as in the case of security firms, or as a result of taking on a second job, because the first does not pay adequately. Due to the massive layoffs in the banking, insurance and tech industries, many people now work 60 hours a week out of fear that they will lose their position, although they only claim 40 hours pay from their employers.

It is also unclear how these layoffs and the German government’s proposed “reform” Agenda 2010 will affect the standard of living, so an evaluation based on the available numbers would require an analysis of the labor needed to *improve* the living conditions of the population. This task would be excessively difficult, broad and in many cases much harder to understand.

Moreover, in 1988 Germany was considered one of the chief exporting nations in world, one whose products were found on streets and in businesses across the globe. It can be assumed then that the amounts of imported goods represented an even balance to the amount of work performed in Germany to produce those exported items. This allows us leave aside the issues surrounding import/export exchanges, which would not be possible at present due to the large-scale relocation of production to other countries.

For these reasons I continue to use the statistics from 1988, despite the fact that an analysis based on newer data would surely yield more precise results, and that this choice closes to me the argumentative options presented by recent progress in the automation of production. As a further consequence of this decision, from this point on **“today” in this text will always refer to the year 1988.**

## **1. THE WILLFUL WASTE OF OVERPRODUCTION**

As we all know, Germany is one of the wealthiest countries on Earth. Real poverty and misery have been unknown here for some thirty years and our children only experience these things through history books. Our affluence has been so lasting that we no longer know what hunger is or can even imagine what this means for a person.

We possess such productive capacity that for the first time in Europe’s history surplus goods are produced only to destroy them. We experience this absurd practice again and again, as our surplus production is destroyed so that the circulation of capital and commodities in our consumer society continues and our carefully constructed social order doesn’t collapse. We experience at regular intervals how wines, fruit harvest, dairy products and meats are destroyed and disposed of by farmers because the surplus in production threatens to push down prices and thereby their livelihoods.

In the realm of industrial production things look about the same. In the course of my own career I have seen software manuals and disks destroyed because they could no longer be sold in the intended price-class. Even personal computers have been scrapped for similar reasons.

This means that even high-quality industrial products are manufactured in such numbers that they have to be curtailed by artificial means in order to preserve price-stability, market dominance and, in general, the continued functioning of the free market.

### **1.1 OVERPRODUCTION CRISIS—A DEFINITION**

If we cast a glance at the automotive industry things do not seem much different. We are always hearing about short-time work. Supposedly hours have to be shortened because there aren’t enough orders coming in—the surplus of cars is so great that production has to be reduced to prevent further overproduction. By shortening working hours international automotive companies carry out an artificial tightening of supply, stabilizing prices and steering the international market.

I believe that our overproduction results in such a massive surplus of goods, that state and capital are forced to resort to an artificial reduction in the supply of goods. If they fail to do this, this surplus will disrupt the cycle of monetary-commodity exchange through sinking

prices and spell the end of our market-oriented society. The means for this artificial tightening of supply are the destruction of already-produced goods and the removal of workers from the production process. Short-time work is nothing more than a method employed to remove laborers from the production process and cause the total amount of produced goods to sink!

This is reflected in our present society. The Federal Labor Agency in Nuremberg estimated in 1987 that, year for year, the average number of short-timed workers rested at 277,967 employees. The statistic for 1983 was even higher—675,102 short-timed workers. And in which sectors was this phenomena recorded? In the manufacturing sector, of course!

## **1.2 UNEMPLOYMENT AS A MEANS OF REDUCING SUPPLY**

This brings us to the unavoidable conclusion that unemployment is nothing more than a consequence of this overproduction, which political leaders have accepted as a way to protect our market economy from the destabilizing effects of surplus production. The unemployed are people removed from production to artificially reduce the overall supply of goods. It's not just coincidence that 72% of unemployed men, who in the prevailing traditional view of society remain family bread-winners, come from the manufacturing sector!

Our society finds itself not in a crisis of scarcity, in which people are being driven “mad from hunger and misery,” but one of overproduction, where the fruits of their labor have to be destroyed to prevent the collapse of the monetary and market system!

## **1.3 AN EXPERIMENT REGARDING OVERPRODUCTION**

Good advice is hard to come by in this situation.

What solutions does the present-day political and economic “elite” offer us? Do they have an answer to this problem or have they themselves never made this connection?

Now, I don't know how you would respond to our “experts,” but I will propose a solution. Let us begin with a thinking exercise, an experiment, which will show us one way out of the “free market crisis.”

Let's imagine that we take this gigantic army of the unemployed, which at present is condemned to thumb-twiddling by market forces, and bring it back into the production process, thereby cranking up the production of goods (through the construction of new industrial facilities, automated assembly-lines, etc.) to the point where we come to a point of total overproduction. All the short-timed workers, the jobless, the retired who long for some kind of meaningful activity are reintegrated into productive tasks. And now, we don't destroy goods, but throw them on the market! What do you think would happen?

I don't know what you're thinking at the moment, but most of the people to whom I pose this question would answer with the following:

Impossible! This is fully absurd! With these surpluses prices would hit rock bottom. The items produced in the factories would become worthless. The factory owners wouldn't be able to sell anything because they wouldn't get any money for the products. They would be unable

to pay their employees and would have to lay them off. The result would be poverty, misery and hunger, because there would be too much of everything! Despite the overflow of goods no one would be able to purchase them because the resulting mass unemployment would leave everyone penniless.

Correct! These are the narrow bounds of the market economy, where even reason brings us no further. You have recognized the intrinsic contradiction in our economic system. In spite of a sudden, massive surplus in all possible things the resulting situation would prove a human catastrophe because no one would have the money necessary to purchase the goods produced. The fruits of our labor would gather dust while humanity starved; the onset of overproduction would spell the end of humanity!

Now, a quick question: if we ever achieved this level of overproduction, where substantially more goods were placed on the market than could ever be used, couldn't every individual provide for his own needs without neglecting or infringing upon anyone else's? And wouldn't money be revealed as being what it truly is?

## UNNECESSARY

And not just money, but the property-based economy and trade. You now surely believe that this is impossible. First this monstrous theory with its premeditated overproduction that would only destroy our beautiful financial system and now this foolish bit about abolishing money. Idiocy, right?

Now, you may be right. But do you want to deny yourself the work- and time-saving advantages that would result from the abolition of money? Do you want to voluntarily give up a 5-hour work week? I just don't believe you! I for one certainly don't intend to forgo it. I don't want to **sacrifice** my life any longer to current ruling market ideology, with all its senselessness and disadvantages for my life. I am writing this pamphlet for this reason, to tell you about and arouse you to the fact that **everything that is economically possible is doable!**

If we divide all the labor necessary for the production and distribution of all goods across the entire population I estimate a 5-hour work-week—and all that without having to make any sacrifices in our standard of living! Just by ridding ourselves of all the work associated with money and the monetary system and concentrating on production and distribution we can make a 5-hour-week possible.

You're still not convinced. I can understand your scepticism—my thesis flies in the face of our normal way of thinking—but I will show you that a 5-hour-week is possible!

But first, let's take a step back and cast another glance upon the madness of the free-market ideology and our own belief in its validity.

I want to emphasize that belief in the market system is a belief based on misinformation, because any person capable of reason would recognize the contradictions in this economic system after only a few minutes of consideration. Nevertheless, these objections are often pushed aside and dismissed as trivial because the adopted patterns of thought and behavior are centered on this economic regime--and because everyone else acts accordingly, it's considered correct. No one dares to challenge the 'golden calf' of money. An attack on the

institution of money is comparable to blasphemy in the middle ages, and anyone who dares stands a good chance of landing in an insane asylum.

#### **1.4 POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE CRISIS OF OVERPRODUCTION**

So now we come to the crisis that has the whole world shaking in its boots. We have come to overproduction! Instead of looking forward to a carefree life of luxury we fear for our jobs and our survival. Overproduction sends prices rocketing into the basement. Factory owners can't profit from their products and go bankrupt, laying us off in the process. The result is that we become unemployed and can't afford the goods we produced despite the low prices because we are no longer paid.

The crisis of the market economy and overproduction are one and the same!

The capitalists declare bankruptcy and we starve because of it. Before being laid off we carefully pack away all the products we have made in the company warehouses and lock the gates behind us to prevent anyone from pilfering the items. Farmers let the harvest rot in the field while waiting for the market to recover and lend their foodstuffs some value again. And so everyone will go home and calmly watch, empty stomachs and all, as the goods they have produced rust and rot away because their no longer 'worth' anything.

These are the inalterable laws of market economics. This example shows that we are part of the most absurd system of all time! This is the insanity of our market-oriented mode of thought, which reaches its peak in the conscious destruction of our products! Let me ask you, why should goods be 'worth' less just because they no longer have monetary value?

After a hard days work on a warm summer evening there is nothing I enjoy more than a nice, cool beer—and one that costs no money is worth just as much to me as one that I had to pay for. Or would you turn that free drink away on the grounds that it costs no money and is therefore worthless?

The same applies to a loaf of bread that costs no money. Or do you think that a freshly-baked loaf of bread that costs nothing should be turned away because without any monetary cost it becomes 'worthless'? The same is true for cars, washing machines, clothing, televisions and the other things that humans produce.

Who came up with this foolish idea that things that cost no money are worthless? And most importantly, how did we ever come to adopt these ideas as our own? The market economy and free trade were without a doubt necessary for the development of our society. With them came the division of labor and the development of new technology, which would have been unthinkable otherwise.

However, technology has now progressed and been refined to the point where these old laws of 'supply and demand' have been completely unhinged. Today only a fraction of the population is occupied in the production of the goods that we require for a life of comfort and luxury, revealing that the regulation of prices by the forces of supply and demand are outmoded and useless. Retaining this market system would only hinder the intellectual and material progress of humanity because we have been capable of fulfilling our material wants and needs for some time now.

What's holding us back? Are we perhaps slaves to our own capitalistic thinking? Our ancestors invented money and the market system because these things brought with them practical advantages. They also developed technologies that have since made commerce and trade superfluous and restraining. Today we have to ask ourselves: if the monetary system hinders more than it helps, why don't we get rid of it? Who benefits from the free market? And does the free market serve the people, or people the market? Will humanity take the next step in its social evolution and break free of the narrow confines of its market-oriented mode of thought?

I believe so. I have great faith in human beings' ability to recognize practical advantages for themselves, as long as they are clearly and concretely presented to them. It is for this very reason that human beings will not starve in the face of an economic crisis brought on by overproduction—they will be able to take the goods they produced under their control and utilize and distribute them through democratic self-organization. Production, too, will continue under their control because the new socio-economic circumstances brought on by overproduction will yield direct benefits to all.

Who would raise their voice against this? Just look. Production continues as before. Nothing will change in terms of the amount of goods produced. Quite to the contrary. Everyone will receive more than they need. Our work will continue quite normally except that suddenly 12.1% more of our population will be participating in the process of production. The self-sufficiency of our society will also remain unthreatened because the same international exchanges that now take place between countries and regions will continue, just under new management. There is no reasonable reason to break off international exchange and each of us surely recognizes that we stand only to gain from continuing to exchange goods and services with other lands and regions. What is there to prevent us from carrying out this reorganization of our society? Nothing fundamental will change with regards to the present-day conditions that make this change possible. Only money will disappear as an unnecessary example of make-work in this new social order.

## 1.5 THE TRUE AIM OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Let's turn back to the role of unemployment in present-day society. In the Federal Republic of Germany (1989) there is a high standard of living, such that everyone makes ends meet and no one starves. So it is a matter of indifference whether or not the 12.1% of the population that is unemployed twiddles its thumbs or contributes to the productive process and brings about a state of overproduction. In terms of the FRG's standard of living this would change almost nothing, other than leading to the situation described above.

Today, everyone in the FRG (1990) has adequate living space, although the number of living quarters have not climbed and are actually being made scarce through artificial means, which could lead to a shortage in the future. Moreover, the unemployed receive enough money from welfare services to live a normal life (1990). That is to say, there is a communal pot for such social welfare programs that we all pay into. This money is then used to pay the unemployed, who are not allowed to participate in the production process so that those of us with jobs can hold on to them. The final result is that the unemployed don't just get enough money to live, **they are actually being specifically paid not to do anything! It is their task to not do anything so that overproduction never occurs!** This and nothing else is the true point of the

unemployed, who can't be provided with anything in the labor market. They are the sacrificial lambs with whose help we prevent the collapse of our market system. In the name of money and the free market they are sacrificed for the comfort of those with jobs.

Social insurance is nothing more than an alibi with which we distort the actual situation and, upon closer examination, doesn't even bring any real advantages. No one can say that there is not enough money available, not even that is true! For those of us with jobs this system only produces more work, since we don't actually receive anything in return for our contribution to the welfare system. So why shouldn't we change these unsatisfactory conditions? A reasonable change, like the one I have begun to describe can only be of advantage to us!

## **2. NECESSARY PRODUCTIVE LABOR**

### **2.1 THE AMOUNT OF NECESSARY LABOR (18.6 hours)**

How can we determine the economic equivalent of wage labor mathematically? Working with the numbers from the "Statistical Yearbook" of 1988 we will calculate the amount of labor necessary to maintain our luxurious living standard. Included in 'necessary labor' are contributions to social programs as well as productive and distributive tasks.

Only with overproduction and the complete satisfaction of all needs can money and market exchange be eliminated, which are in turn prerequisites for the greatest shift in human social evolution that has yet to be experienced. Only in this way can humanity's release from the prison of property be made possible—without any material shortage market commerce and property become obsolete!

The result is as follows: all tasks which are in any way, shape or form connected to money or commerce disappear. All of the professions associated with money-management become superfluous and are eliminated because they don't benefit society. **Dieser "Wasserkopf" wird nur von denen miternährt, die Güter herstellen, von denen wir alle leben.**

Before moving on to my central arguments, however, I would like to define two terms that should ease further examination. Counted in the category "**requisite productive labor**" is the amount of work carried out in the agricultural, construction, manufacturing, mining, water and energy management sectors. In other words, all the labor necessary for the production, maintenance and replacement of consumer goods.

Under the heading "**necessary labor**" falls the amount of work carried out in the traffic, information, sanitation, medical and veterinary services, which is added to the amount of requisite productive labor.

The measure of necessary labor reflects the average amount of labor necessary for the maintenance of our present-day standard of living, without the sacrifice of any of our luxuries. However, the amount of necessary labor remains dependent on the prevailing ideological consciousness in a particular culture. For example, in a consumer-capitalist society product life is artificially shortened, which increases profit but is also the source of additional amounts of "make-work."

For the purpose of calculation I'll now introduce a few more figures that should ease the process. In 1988 the population of the Federal Republic of Germany numbered some 61.5 million people.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 29.5 million of these are capable of working.<sup>2</sup> In the following pages I will calculate, step-by-step, the number of people needed to carry out the necessary labor that is at present achieved with a 40-hour-week.

[Let's take another glance at the three main economic categories:]

**SOCIAL SERVICES: Health, Sanitation, Hygiene, Veterinary services, etc.**

**PRODUCTION: Agriculture and Forestry, Animal Husbandry and Fishing, Energy and Water services, Mining, Manufacturing, Construction. Also included in these branches are all technicians, engineers and other workers necessary for organisational tasks.**

**DISTRIBUTION: Transportation and Information services.**

Taking the employment numbers in these branches from the Statistical Yearbook I arrive at a figure of 13.7 million people who carry out the necessary productive tasks in a 40-hour work week. [If we divide this labor time among all of those who can work (29.5 million)] we arrive at an average work week of:

$$\frac{13.7 \text{ million} \times 40 \text{ hours}}{29.5 \text{ million}} = 18.6 \text{ hours}$$

## **2.1 NECESSARY LABOR AFTER EXTENDING PRODUCT LIFE**

The disappearance of money will spur on another significant change. The consumer society, with all its negative features, including the artificially shortened lifespan of consumer goods, will fade away. The consequences of present-day consumer habits will make them unattractive, especially since many goods are short-lived by design and are the source of unnecessary make-work.

This doesn't mean that with the end of consumer society the individual will consume less and live less luxuriously, but that the lifespan of durable goods will be raised and thereby reduce the total number of goods consumed. A number of benefits will result from this increase in product life: while still meeting the material needs of the population, fewer goods will be produced and considerably less resource material needed, reducing both the amount of labor necessary and the environmental damage that comes from obtaining raw materials.

An immediate shift in production to emphasize longevity in all goods will visibly reduce workloads without any material sacrifice on our part. This is not possible in a consumption-oriented economy, because extended product life would threaten financial circulation. Only in an economy without money, commerce or any other variety of property-based exchange does

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<sup>1</sup> Statistisches Jahrbuch 1993, ISBN 3-8246-0360-8, pg. 50.

<sup>2</sup> 5-Stunden sind genug („5 hours are enough“), Volume I, statistic on pg. IV.

extending product life become a communal interest, because there is no longer anything to be gained from the short-lived nature of [present-day] goods.

#### EXAMPLES OF ITEMS WHOSE USE-LIFE CAN BE EXTENDED:

##### **-Lightbulbs**

The product life of this household necessity can be extended to that of a human being.

##### **-Glass**

Using slower cooling processes, glass items can be made shatter-proof.

##### **-Automobiles**

A rust-proof steel-plated car-frame will last at least 200 years!

With regards to extending product life, I estimate that the average product can last some seven times longer. The above-mentioned car-frame made from steel rusts as little as a kitchen sink and therefore 'lives forever.' Because of this extended product life fewer goods have to be produced!

#### THIS MEANS:

##### **-Fewer Factories**

##### **-Lower Consumption of Natural Resources**

##### **-Less Work**

Furthermore, the targeted use of hybrid technology can exponentially increase the use-life of some products, combustion engines, for example, which can last 150 years as a result of this process. If we use hydrogen as our fuel then we can install environmentally friendly engines in our cars or in our powerplants for electrical power. [In this example,] the hydrogen itself could be produced by wind and solar plants located in the deserts of the world—offering us a virtually limitless source of energy.

Calculating accordingly and using the "Statistical Yearbook," I estimate that 9.1 million people could accomplish the necessary amount of work. The resulting work week:

$$\frac{9.1 \text{ million} \times 40 \text{ hours}}{29.5 \text{ million}} = 12.4 \text{ hours}$$

This would not only mean that we'd work less, but that we'd be on our way to resolving our environmental problems! And that with the improved work conditions of a 12.4 hour work week—just by orienting production to longer product life.

## **2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND[RESTRUCTURING]**

At this point you can probably recognize what I meant in the foreword when I wrote that a majority of today's pollution is a result of the enormous amounts of makework that we fulfill. But both of these can be eliminated by making one change in our social order. Consider for a

moment that some 6/7 of our present-day resource consumption and 6/7 of the extensive land used by industry is superfluous, provided that the benefits of extending product life are translated into a shortening of work hours. No one would be adversely affected by this reduction in working hours. The labor power freed up could be reintegrated into [other sections] of production, so that the time-saving benefits could be extended across the whole population. And no one would have to fret over their job or survival, as in today's economy.

These are benefits for people and the environment that could never be achieved within consumer capitalism. Within the context of our economy environmental protections are costly hassles that our society rejects, since no one is willing to sacrifice their own limited time, money and property for such long-term projects. These two interests—more environmental protection and less work—first become compatible within the framework of a money- and property-free economy. This means that the free market and environmental protection are opposing poles and that the corporate profit motive (a product of capitalism) fosters human behavior that leads to the destruction of the environment! All too often is something wantonly destroyed that is desperately needed elsewhere, and all as a result of [the pursuit of profit].

And why? Prices have to be held stable and surpluses destroyed or there's no money to be made. Commerce and property-based commodity production only hinder efforts to protect the environment and reduce our quality of life! Under these conditions we will never be able to realize even a fraction of the environmental possibilities that are open to us if we discard the market system. For only then does long product use-life become of central interest to all members of society. Environmental improvements will result merely from the fact that no person will want to produce for the garbage heap, as is common under consumer capitalism.

And now we begin the next step in our calculations. If we assume that the members of a masterless society are able to satisfy their own needs and that the average work-week is reduced to ¼ of the current level, then the "rush-hour" basically disappears. Almost everyone will work where he lives and not have to undertake long commutes in order to get a better-paying job.

Not only will long commutes to work disappear, but also the tourism industry. For with such a cut in working hours people will be able to travel, live and work where they like!

All in all, the elimination of the daily rush-hour and the tourism industry will have several consequences:

- less fuel consumption**
- fewer factories**
- fewer streets**, and as an attendant result,
- less work**

whereby, under these conditions, only a 10-hour work-week will be necessary!

According to my long list of time- and work-saving improvements it's clear that a huge amount of present-day energy consumption will disappear. Indeed, it's the energy industry's turn for consideration. For the large amount of energy that is currently wasted will be saved,

which, as you have probably already guessed, leads to yet another reduction in the amount of necessary work.

Long-lasting products, reduced fuel and energy consumption, fewer streets, fewer factories and the spread of energy-saving technologies will all result in less work in the field of energy production.

In total, again using numbers from the “Statistical Yearbook,” this means that 7.2 million people, working a 40 hour week, fulfill all necessary tasks. Spreading this amount of work among all 29.5 million people able to work results in the following number of work hours per week:

$$\frac{7.2 \text{ million} \times 40 \text{ hours}}{29.5 \text{ million}} = 9.8 \text{ hours/week}$$

## 2.4 INTEGRATION OF ALL WHO ARE WILLING TO WORK

We should take into account that in the old Federal Republic of Germany only some 30 million people were considered fit to work out of a population of 61.5 million. [Yet] most of those considered unfit for the workplace (the disabled and retired) would probably be glad to work 10 hours a week to give them something constructive to do. Including these individuals, we have then a working population of 41.8 million people. That is 2/3 of the population of the old FRG that would then be working only 6.9 hours a week!

$$\frac{7.2 \text{ million} \times 40 \text{ hours}}{41.8 \text{ million}} = 6.9 \text{ hours}$$

## 2.5 FULL AUTOMIZATION

A 6.9 hour week! Revolutionary, right? Imagine now that I don't demand Sunday as a day off from work, like the DGB.<sup>3</sup> No, in light of my considerations there would likely be only one workday per week! What a difference from the slogan of the DGB: **“On Sunday dad belongs with the family.”** But this calculation brings with it the end of the manipulation of the popular consciousness—let's demand what we deserve!

### ONE WORKDAY A WEEK

We find ourselves at a point in history where, for the first time, humanity is capable of applying its knowledge and technology to the construction of ‘intelligent’ machines. The mass-production of these machines is already underway, and the name that we know them by is “computers.”

Computers have already taken over a large number of simple “thinking tasks,” such that even engineers find themselves threatened by workplace rationalization because computer programmes have been developed that perform the routine, systematic tasks of the engineering

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<sup>3</sup> Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund: Social-democratic Trade Union; the largest in Germany

profession. However, we are not talking about simple, routinely repeated and schematic thought functions. An example:

On fully automated assembly lines programs were required that could learn from their own mistakes and independently alter their production techniques to optimize their performance. This learning capability was essential because the precision of an assembly robot's parts and the mechanical calibration of the production line could never be satisfactorily exact. To resolve the problems stemming from these discrepancies a computer program was needed that was capable of far more than simple, rigid calculation. So programs capable of learning were required to automate larger, more convoluted production processes. This in turn opened up the possibility of creating universal robots that could 'learn on the job,' eliminating both the need for specialized and costly automatons as well as new software.

Digital computers have thus not only replaced the large numbers of mathematicians that were once employed in banks, but have become far more advanced and are now able to take over more difficult tasks within production. Their learning ability is of course still very limited in scope when compared to the human mind, but it is only a question of time before artificial intelligence on par with a dog or even a person is developed.

In 1990 the state of technology is such that workers stand on assembly lines and train robots for their tasks by guiding each of their movements. These robots are "lead by the hand" through their tasks, which they learn and then carry out.

Artificial intelligence is not the only research taking place in the field of computers, however. Computers are learning to see, touch and speak independently. The development of highly integrated data storage units makes it possible for computers to retain all the background information necessary to interpret an image or understand a spoken sentence. It won't be long before machines stand before us that are just as perceptive as we are.

Let's now include the possibilities of automation in our accounting of the work week: automatic assembly lines, satellite-guided vehicles and ships, etc. This would mean that, according to the numbers from the Statistical Yearbook, 5.1 million people, working 40 hours a week, could perform all necessary work. This results in an average work week of:

$$\frac{5.1 \text{ million} \times 40 \text{ hours}}{41.8 \text{ million}} = 4.9 \text{ hours/week}$$

### **3. A SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION**

#### **3.1 SOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN AN EDUCATED SOCIETY**

Can you imagine a five-hour week that doesn't bring forth fundamental changes in our society?

Along with finance and the property-based economy the competitive struggle and the attendant distrust between people would disappear, since each individual could avail himself of the collectively produced goods. With the introduction of the five-hour week we will once again have time for each other and social bonds—not jealousy, deception and property—will

govern our lives together. Work will lose its coercive character. Or do you feel that five hours a week (60 minutes a day) is too straining?

Even if you don't agree with my last calculation and we assume a seven-hour work week, that's still just 1.4 hours per day! Name me a person who would call a seven-hour week a burden or even consider it "work!" People would more likely regard this "work" as a sensible interruption of their life of leisure.

Humanity, both in its nature and its relation to its environment, will be transformed because it will have time for consideration and observation. Humanity will have in plenty the one thing that it doesn't possess today: TIME.

### **3.2 LAND OF THE LEISURELY RENAISSANCEMEN**

Free time itself will change people, for a person who finds peace and time for themselves becomes curious and open-minded. He will turn to things that draw his attention and awaken his curiosity. He will eagerly examine the unknown and new because he now has the time to refine his understanding and mature in his worldview. He will independently seek out activities for himself that offer joy and satisfaction, all while expanding his understanding of the world around him. People will seek out tasks and roles that fill their physical and intellectual capabilities. And why?

Humans are beings that find nothing more intolerable than boredom!

Observe yourself how anxy and imbalanced you become when you have nothing to do and you become truly bored. We will all begin behaving like little children sitting on chairs, fussing and kicking our legs. You too begin considering what you could be doing or think about taking up something that you've always wanted to do, but couldn't because of work.

You see, this is how humans act when there is no social barrier to their pursuit of their interests and desires. Our natural need for activity will compel us to this behaviour.

AND YET ANOTHER FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE WILL TAKE PLACE:

**The more people pursue their own tendencies and interests, the more knowledge they will gain and the more they will educate themselves.**

As you surely know from your own experience, any pursuit is only interesting as long as its newness and has not been replaced by monotony and repetition. Thus, if you pursue your chief field of interest it is inevitable that you will eventually exhaust its potential and in turn pursue new interests which have been opened to you. You have surely witnessed this process among your acquaintances and know that a person's level of knowledge increases as his interests change. What this means for the society that I have described is that the average person will become a 'renaissance man.'

Even if these people don't actually "carry around the knowledge of the whole universe with them," their level of education will nevertheless be much higher than today. Their knowledge and understanding will reach the level of the present-day image of the renaissance man! And this change will be inextricably linked to the five-hour week.

### **3.3 SOCIAL WELFARE AS A CONSCIOUS SOCIAL BOND**

Let's return to the premise of my thesis, work and changing social behaviour.

Through the reduction of work-time each of us will have considerably more time, more time for our families and friends. Those important to us will have a greater part in our lives because we no longer lack the time to spend with them and will be able to follow our interests and activities. This in turn brings about a deeper connection that will strengthen the social bond between individuals. The five-hour week will have numerous consequences for our social structure:

- 1. Our circle of acquaintances and friends will be far larger**
- 2. Each one of us will be more willing to work on the behalf of others, especially those belonging to our own social circle.**

The family and other social bonds will win back their value and qualities of affection and caring, as was common in pre-industrial communities. Our attitude to social service will change, replacing the present-day concept of wage labor, which is carried out without any consideration of its human consequences. By and large we will take over the tasks of social services because the recipient is a person who is important to us. This is the situation in 70% of caretaking cases today: those in need of care are attended by their family, of which they are a valued member. Placement in assisted living or senior communities occurs only in those cases where the financial situation makes necessary, the person in question desires it or the familial connection has somehow been broken.

I believe that our social behavior would change so radically with the introduction of a five-hour-week that such senior homes would disappear completely because people would be unwilling to hand over their loved ones to complete strangers. The idea of family members being maintained and administered in such facilities will come to seem repulsive and inhumane!

The overwhelming majority of 'coercive' caretaking will fall away as soon as people once again have time to take over these tasks and the competition, isolation and greed of the property-based economy are abolished.

### **3.4 THE SHIFT IN OUR CONCEPT OF WORK**

Our very understanding of work will be fully altered, because a five-hour-week will not be looked upon as work. When the amount of work performed sinks to this level it loses its coercive and burdensome qualities, resulting in a radical change in our relation to it.

With such a small amount of necessary labor we will go gladly to our places of work, just as we do today when the workplace atmosphere is orderly and the tasks fulfilling and sensible.

This shift in our conception of work is not just thinkable, it would be the realistic consequence of this fundamental change in our material and social circumstances.

A society where people can satisfy all their material needs at all times and at their discretion, where money, wage labor and the pressure of economic competition disappear and the work week is reduced to five hours: this society would naturally bring with it a number of psycho-social changes in human behavior and thought.

I want to emphasize this issue, since it represents the deepest and most fundamental shift for humanity, and with it begins the greatest social-evolutionary leap. Envy and distrust will become totally foreign concepts because the causes for these feelings (material need and competition) will have been removed. Instead, communities will come into being that resemble a large family, in which people support and help one another. People will begin to live their lives according to the principal of voluntary mutual aid. They will attend to each others welfare because this offers the greatest social advantage and is the best insurance against the unforeseeable. Human beings will become ever more peaceable, open and ready to help.

### 3.5 ***THE ACTIVITY WE CALLED WORK***

The present-day concept of work will be forgotten because we will view our purposeful and voluntarily chosen activities very differently—a voluntary occupation that is not wage-labor won't be seen as a compulsory burden!

I see in this a major cultural change approaching us. We will begin to pursue occupations that are fulfilling and will consequently “work” willingly, as a consequence of our own desires. Why?

When humans pursue creative activities in their free time a portion of the necessary amount of production is completed, without intention. If we all take up the occupations we wish we will simultaneously be completing necessary tasks for the maintenance of society, since most of these activities have at least some wider benefit. Furthermore, human beings naturally have a great variety of interests, such that the whole spektrum of necessary activities can be covered without redundancy. What we presently term ‘work’ will disappear.

Furthermore, cultural activities don't need to be mentioned under the category of *necessary labor*, because these will become *lived culture*. In a leisure-society cultural education and participation in cultural activities will become normal parts of our everyday lives as we satisfy our curiosity about other people, their lives and worldviews. All cultural events and activities of value carry some sort of message that is meant to challenge our intellect and sharpen our consciousness, and it is here that our earlier considerations about work, money and society find expression in cultural form.

The concept of retirement will also disappear along with work, as each individual pursues his own interests. In fulfilling the ‘occupation’ or ‘hobby’ that is most rewarding, each individual

will make his contribution to the greater good and each will be provided for, eliminating the need for retirement plans and the like.

No one will work more than he wants, and if one wishes to do nothing at all he may. It won't be long before he undertakes something out of pure boredom.

### **3.6 *BLURRING THE BORDERS BETWEEN HANDICRAFT AND SCIENCE***

Finally I would like to put forth another example of the cultural shift that would take place in our society. By giving free rein to our interests and desires the division between our actual occupation and science will disappear. Almost every person goes through different phases of education and training during his or her life. In the future education could be turned into a process of professional maturation. For example, a technical student would not only plan and construct production sites and automated assembly-lines, he would also repair and maintain them! This student's understanding of the process of production would be greatly enlarged through his direct observation and participation, which in turn would stimulate his efforts to refine and improve these operational sequences. After all, nothing sharpens the mind of an engineering student more than the correction of his errors at the work-site itself. In this way the student would gain the most experience and knowledge possible.

And in the end there is very little that moves the human heart to the same degree as standing before his own creation, a work that he has achieved through the application of his own abilities and powers.

Moving from this example it is also clear that even our relationship to industrial production will take on a new character. Industrial facilities will attain a cultural status as creative works on par with other works of art, places where our skills and abilities are given free rein. They will be both practical and cultural institutes of education in which we will be free to pursue our technical education.

Even our consumptive habits will undergo radical change. People will pursue physical and intellectual improvement and self-realization through education and study. Consumption will cease to be a point in and of itself, discarded in favor of the fulfillment that learning offers our bodies and minds.

We will find that at the end of this process the amount of necessary work hours will reach ZERO, because the concept of 'work' as we understand it today will disappear completely as people pursue their interests and simultaneously carry out the tasks necessary for the maintenance of society.

## **4. *DAWN OF A NEW AGE***

The society I have just depicted surely appears utopian to most readers, but it is no fantasy, rather a description of what is possible with our technology in this day and age. The only thing that separates us from this world is the collective will necessary to make these musings reality. A lack of information on the subject is the cause of this state of affairs and this pamphlet represents the first step in overcoming the obstacles before us.

## ***WHY SHOULD THE PARADISE I DESCRIBE BE IMPOSSIBLE?***

While the major social ideologies of the present fail to provide answers to the pressing questions of our time the idea that I have just presented offers a clear and comprehensible solution. Why should we not take it up and put it into practice if it's the only practicable response available to us?

Perhaps you think this wouldn't work in the Federal Republic of Germany because we can't produce enough food for ourselves. Now this is true and in 1985-1986 the FRG only covered about 79% of its food consumption. However, we produce manufactured goods that are exported in exchange for food from other countries. Why should this exchange cease with the introduction of a new social order?

It seems more likely that the people of other countries, seeing the advantages of this form of social organization, would carry out the same changes. The whole of Europe could be operating under this model within a short span of time, and with this would come self-sufficiency!

An evening out of the amount of work performed on a global scale will follow this. Let's stop viewing "developing countries" as competitors on the world market, but instead provide them with our technical knowledge and assist them in building a socially and environmentally self-sustaining industry. This will in turn eliminate the need for us to produce goods for export and thereby reduce our working hours. Just imagine the possibilities for a world in which the productive powers of the populations of "developing countries" have been magnified by the implementation of the most modern technology!

## ***SO WHY DO WE WORK 40 HOURS A WEEK INSTEAD OF 5?***

The explanation is quite simple. The price of every ware is determined by supply and demand, and human labor is at present nothing more than another ware. **Labor power** is available worldwide in abundance, which has as its consequence falling wages. In contrast, the price of food and manufactured goods is kept high through state-administered destruction of surpluses or the scaling back of production, as in the case of the agricultural policy of the EU. A further cause lies in efforts of private enterprises to maximise the returns on their investments, which is achieved by setting large profit margins. Production has to cover not only material and labor, but also the indirect costs of rents, banks, taxes, etc., and then still yield a profit for the firm. If this goal is not achieved, the company simply shuts down production. The immediate upshot of this is unemployment or short-work, which is essentially the same as reducing supply. As a result the price for food, housing and most industrial goods is maintained at a high level.

The **cause of low wages and poverty** for even those working full-time jobs lies in the fact that the employed have to pay the generally rising costs of living with sinking wages and consequently have to work longer hours. Labor power cannot be taken off the market as easily or in the same manner and for this reason wages sink lower and more quickly than those products necessary for survival.

This means that our own industriousness becomes our own enemy: the longer and harder we work, the less we receive and in the end we become impoverished because we collectively work too much!

### ***WHO HAS AN INTEREST IN MAINTAINING LONGER WORKING HOURS?***

For private companies the human resource is a commodity, a factor in production that is handled like any other raw material. Their aim is to keep the price of this resource low by ensuring a high level of supply. Long work hours are the result of low wages, which in turn contribute to unemployment and thereby the oversupply of labor. Appeals to corporations and the private sector for help in overcoming the issue of unemployment are nothing more than pipe-dreams.

The campaigns of defamation that accompany political parties' efforts to coerce the unemployed to work through cuts in welfare represent the highest and most hypocritical betrayal of the people. The "Agenda 2010" in Germany, for example, will cause wages to sink to 65% of their current value, because those drawing unemployment benefits for more than 6 months will be forced to accept jobs at this rate of pay or face being cut off from all support. And who can afford that? At the current level of unemployment the struggle for the few available jobs makes its presence felt!

### ***WHY IS THIS HAPPENING TODAY?***

The aim of national governments is to gain a regional advantage through lower wages. Enticed by the prospect of higher profits, corporations would then provide further investment and full employment. In reality, however, workers in other countries are then forced to fight for their jobs and their wages sink as well. The individual struggle for employment is raised to one of national dimensions in which people are divided into "industrious and parasitic" categories. The point is to conceal the conflict between the propertied and disenfranchised classes, and multinational corporations utilize national (and perhaps even religious) tensions to do so. The result of such competition between nations is an even faster decline in the price of human labor. Not only are the peoples of the world turned against one another on the international stage, they become ever more impoverished and miserable at the same time. This dire scenario benefits only one group: those with wealth.

### ***WHAT CAN WE DO TO DEFEND OURSELVES?***

No one alone has a chance of defending themselves against this. Turning to the ruling political parties, whose senior members are often on the boards of executives at many large corporations, makes little sense—these parties have already sold us out. There's a reason for the way that politicians and businessmen hide behind their financial policies, which serve only to make us work longer for less money—we have to pull our collective belts so that they can enjoy their profits!

First and foremost we have to do away with arguments based on financial policies of the finance and business sectors, which always leave us playing the fool. This only serves to limit our thinking to logic of the monetary and financial system in which we find ourselves. In this way our thought processes would be manipulated to the point that we could no longer conceive of solutions that lie outside the current economic system. Our calculation of a 5-hour-week shows, however, that there is an option outside the present-day dogma of capitalism. It shows what can be achieved with the productive capabilities available to us today and that guaranteed material welfare for everyone is no longer a utopian idea. But most of all it shows that we'd be better off without the elite caste of functionaries and bigwigs. And there is nothing that this class fears more than that the general population will recognize this, and therefore it tries to suppress with all possible means any attempt to present an alternative to their dogmas.

***THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO:  
ATTACK, ATTACK, ATTACK!***

The ruling class is on the defensive. In an increasing number of countries the capitalist system is no longer capable of covering the basic needs of human beings. To respond with defensive calls "against"-this and to "stop"-that would be a major strategic error, one that would only ensure the survival of state and capital. Precisely because these arguments lack proof that they are 'financially viable' they are rejected by the general populace and a mass-movement fails to materialize.

There is no solution to be found in the logic of finance and business! This is where we attack, breaking with the reasoning of capital and confronting it with a new way of thinking—and an accompanying mathematical proof. We will campaign with all the advantages of this social transformation and throw capitalism overboard. We will begin the campaign for a five-hour week!

We will show people what will remain of work after this social revolution and detail the social developments that will arise from it. We will fight for the realization of our idea by describing what it will look like and holding high our mathematically calculated demand for a five-hour week. Humanity should know what we are fighting for! But we must not forget that it will be a tough struggle, one in which we will win no friends among the capitalist camp.

This is why we call upon you to join and aid us, with letters and articles in the press, by organizing lectures, presentations and open discussions, in flyers, pamphlets and conversations with your friends and acquaintances. Furthermore, we propose that you organise yourselves outside the ruling political parties in democratic, grass-roots associations or anarcho-syndicalist unions like [Germany's Free Workers' Union] (FAU). We are ready and willing to support you in any way possible, wherever you may be.

Our efforts are directed first and foremost towards the youth, who are sent from the schoolbench and the apprenticeship directly into unemployment—a generation that has been economically disenfranchised before it's even fully come into its own. We also direct our call towards the 15% of the population that is unemployed and the 10% of working people who can hardly feed their families despite their long, hard hours on the job. These are the people

that we want to reach, so that they can better understand the causes of their plight and organize themselves in the fight against it.

You can reach us at: <http://www.5-Stunden-Woche.de>

Thank you for reading!

## **Umschlag Rückseite The Path into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Why is global capitalism incapable of providing the millions of unemployed with work?

From a social perspective, enormous wealth is simply running through our fingers, since many people are forced into unemployment by the mechanisms of capitalism. In 1995 a conference of 500 top managers, politicians and economists came to the conclusion that at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century only one-fifth of the world's population would be necessary for the production of goods and services (Hans-Peter Martin, EU-Parliamentarian, Harald Schumann, *Spiegel*-Editor, *Die Globalisierungsfall* ISBN: 3-499-60450-7, page 12). According to this there is a fortune in goods and services that is left unrealized due to unemployment—general prosperity is hindered by capitalism!

Property-based economies and commodity-oriented trade turn labor surpluses into the curse of the unemployed, for supply and demand govern the price of every ware. Since labor cannot simply be removed from the market like other commodities merciless competition and a decline in the price of human labor follows. Wage-dumping, the enlargement of corporate profits, the struggles for control of market sections and the pressures that entails, the concentration of capital and the organization of a reserve army of the unemployed—these belong to the consequences of this situation just as much as the cuts in social spending. This is capitalism, which brings about the concentration of ever greater amounts of property in ever fewer hands, leaving the general populace with ever less. However, the greatest portion of this wealth goes to waste in the form of unemployment and useless production.