

40-Hour, 5-Day Week Requested For Oregon State Employees

It will be surprising to many to realize how long we have been moving toward a 40-hour, 5-day work week. The very fact that we have the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act with its provision for a 40-hour week indicates that years of agitation and experimentation preceded its passage. One of the chief developments of the industrial age has been the gradual shortening of hours of labor.

As early as 1845, Sarah Bagley of the Female Reform Association, petitioned the Massachusetts Legislature to limit factory hours to 10 a day. The 10-hour day was the first to be written into State laws. Then with increasing mechanization and speed of production, it was gradually supplanted by a 9-hour day and by the latter part of the nineteenth century the 8-hour day and 48-hour week had become the accepted standard. This was followed by a Saturday half holiday—the 44 and 41-hour week. By 1926 the 40-hour, 5-day week had begun to take root, as shown by a survey of the Bureau of Labor Statistics and by other sources. In October, 1926, Henry Ford created considerable controversy by adopted the 5-day week in his manufacturing departments. Said Mr. Ford in 1929, "It has now been sufficiently demonstrated to us that the five-day week for men brings better results than the six-day week." And the movement was on its way, with the blessings of Mr. Ford, the labor unions and various industrial experts. During the depression, the 5-day week was established to give employment to more workers or to make up for drastic cuts in wages. Since then, wages have traveled back up from depression depths but the 5-day week has become enough of a general standard to be retained.

Some are still requesting justification for the shortening of working hours—and valid reasons are plentiful. First,

shorter hours afford the desirable and necessary leisure time for the pursuit of personal development and creative avocations. The late President Roosevelt in a report to Congress in 1942, stated that "Any new declaration of personal rights, any translation of freedom into modern terms . . . must include: The right to rest, recreation, and adventure; the opportunity to enjoy life and to take part in an advancing civilization." He concluded that this right merits a place beside the right to work, education and equality before the law.

Second, it is stated by many efficiency experts that production does not decrease with the elimination of Saturday morning working time. Persons who have surveyed the situation in industrial plants make these points. (1) The tendency of workers is to produce less on a Saturday morning than on a week day morning because of fatigue, interest in personal week-end activities and resentment at having to work when similar employees are free. (2) Employees will work harder and devise more efficient methods to get the work done in five days in order to merit the sixth day off. (3) More efficient machines and methods make increased production possible in shorter time. After a study of industrial plants, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has concluded that "the 40-hour week and the 8-hour day yield the highest output."

Third, it provides those with financial burdens an opportunity to obtain additional wages which their chosen occupation may not provide in their regular salary. An all day Saturday job may bring in the additional money which will enable a man or woman to continue the work he or she prefers.

Fourth, shorter hours are of benefit to health and safety. The person who does hard physical work is often worn-out and unable to support himself in