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SHORTER WORKDAY, HIGHER LABOR PRODUCTIVITY

By I. Sychev

-USSR-

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SHORTER WORKDAY, HIGHER LABOR PRODUCTIVITY

- USSR -

Following is the translation of an article by I. Sychev in Partiynaya Zhizn' (Party Activities), Moscow, October 1960, No 20, pages 24-29.⁷

The struggle to shorten the work day has always been one of the program tasks of the Communist Party. As early as the first years of Soviet authority the great Lenin indicated that the socialist state should increase labor productivity and achieve " . . . the possibility of decreasing the work day to seven, to six hours per day, and even less." Noting the great successes achieved in the development of industry and agriculture the Twenty-first Party Congress emphasized in its resolutions that now all conditions are present for the Soviet people to live even better in the near future, with a more complete satisfaction of material and spiritual needs. The Congress stipulated a 1960 transition of bench and office workers to the 7-hour work day, and for workers of leading professions in the coal and mining industry engaged in underground operations--to a six hour work day. We must mention that the transition of enterprises to a shortened work day and adjustment of wages in connection with this is a great and complex matter. It cannot be resolved by simple administrative order; it requires careful review of previous norms of output and rates, the technical basis for these, a change in the wage structure, and shift schedule. In shortening the work day it is necessary not only not to allow a decrease, but achieve a further increase in production due to a continued increase in labor productivity. For this it is necessary to improve production in an even more steadfast manner, to incorporate progressive methods, new techniques and modern technology, to increase the skills of all industrial workers, to develop the creative initiative of the masses, ideas for inventions and efficiency innovations. We became convinced of this because of our own experience.

The periods of transition to the shortened day and

introduction of new conditions for labor remuneration at numerous enterprises, construction projects and institutions of Saratov were determined by the sovnarkhoz and the executive committees of local Soviets and coordinated with trade union organs. During this the Party and trade union organizations were making sure that these periods were established in each individual case with consideration of actual possibilities and after comprehensive preliminary preparations. One of the important tasks was considered by us to be large scale elucidation to the workers of the resolution of the CC of the Party, the USSR Council of Ministers and the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions "Deadlines for Completing the Transition to a Shortened Work Day and Regulating Wages of Bench and Office Workers." Party and trade union meetings, as well as seminars for 20,000 agitators were devoted to the discussion of this document. These agitators subsequently conveyed the sense of the document to all bench and office workers. All enterprises in our city have drawn up plans for incorporating new technology modernizing existing equipment, reconstructing certain shops, mechanizing many processes, as well as taking organizational steps to insure the transition to the shortened work day. An extensive Party and union group of active members, engineer-technical workers, efficiency innovators, inventors, production innovators, as well as tens of thousands of persons taking part in the permanently operating production meetings have been attracted to the working out of these tasks. Their joint efforts have revealed tremendous internal reserves in the enterprises and have outlined practical methods for their use. In this respect an example from the experience of the "Sardizel" Plant is worthy of attention. When the city Party committee studied the situation here it turned out that in reviewing the wage system in the mechanical and assembly shops, the directors did not reach every worker, did not explain to many of them the importance of introducing new calculation-technical norms and wages. Of 150 workers in the mechanical shop, only 89 went through wage adjustments in commission, while the remaining groups were changed without preliminary explanation. There were also considerable losses in labor time as a result of unsatisfactory labor organization.

Then the Party organization of the plant, aided by the members of the city Party committee, directed the carrying out of organizational-technical measures and attracted to this project a large number of engineers, technicians and leading workers of the enterprise. Members of the Party organization bureau were appointed to the shops, and with their participation a month-long campaign for efficiency ideas and inventions as well as

a plant review of production technology improvement were conducted. The Komsomol organization also did its part. It set up check points for ascertaining losses of work time in the shops. The plant and shop commissions for cooperation in technical progress helped in incorporating during this period more than 90 valuable proposals for improving production and raising the quality of diesel electric power stations produced. All of these measures aided in the successful transition of the collective to a 7-hour work day and the improvement of the enterprise's operations. While shortening the work day, the plant is overfulfilling production plans and labor productivity in these plans. Average wages have increased here by 3%. The Party city rayon committees are conducting notable organizational work in implementing the transition of the enterprise collectives to a shortened work day. They are aiding the primary organizations in ascertaining defects in this, in overcoming difficulties and in eliminating trouble. The Frunzenskiy Party rayon committee detected serious flaws in the organizational-technical plan of the gas equipment plant. Almost no measures at all were provided for decreasing labor consumption of products. Of 6,416 norms only 1,165 were rated, and many newly established norms were not incorporated. In photographing the work day at one of the sectors of the casting shop it was established that basic work comprises only 65% and losses of work time to be blamed on the workers themselves--20.5%. The rayon committee bureau, having discussed these problems, made practical recommendations to the Party and economic directors of the Plant for eliminating defects, aided in organizing the execution of the resolution which was passed. The collective of the enterprise, making the transition at the end of last year to a shortened work day, is systematically increasing labor productivity and successfully carrying out its socialist obligations. Primary Party organizations engaged in daily work in preparing enterprises for the transition to the 7-hour work day. They took into consideration the experiences and omissions of those collectives which had first gone over to a shortened day and used that which we furnished them in our seminar and exchange of information. Furthermore, as fewer mistakes were allowed, necessary preparations were carried out more carefully. Indicative in this respect is the work of the Party organization of Garment Factory No. 5.

The bureau of this Party organization, jointly with the trade union committee and the administration, undertook broad elucidation in all shops of the new wage-qualification regulations for the various wage groups, the conditions of the wage system and the encouragement labor remuneration

system. As a result, with the aid of the workers themselves, about 200 lowered norms were reviewed and increased. At the beginning of this year the Party and union organization of the factory organized a public review of the preparations for transition to the shortened work day. During the review 135 proposals were introduced for improving labor organization and decreasing losses of labor time. Many new machines and devices were produced and incorporated into production which are aiding the growth in labor productivity and increase in product quality. During the days of preparation for the July Plenum of the CC of the Party, leading workers Sinyagina, Kiseleva and Belousova pledged to carry out their operations exclusively with "excellent." The general factory conference on production quality approved their initiative and appealed to all workers to join in the competition for the honor of the factory brand. The collective speedily answered this appeal, organized competition for high results and recently made the complete transition to a shortened work day, without decreasing wages and guaranteeing a further increase in production. How should further labor productivity be achieved as well as the success of growing tasks at enterprises which have shortened the work day and have not increased their personnel? The main path for solving this task was pointed out by the Twenty-first Party Congress, the June (1959) and July (1960) Plenums of the CC of the Party. This is the path of technological progress. Those collectives which have embarked on this course and have not turned from it despite all difficulties are achieving great success. For example, let us take the Saratov railroad division. The party organizations of the enterprises of this division figured that in order to fulfill the previous shift assignments during 7 hours, it would be necessary to hire an additional 1,416 persons, and the quarterly wage totals would be increased by almost three million rubles. But they would not settle for this and undertook persistent work to search for internal reserves, to introduce progressive methods and new technology, to develop the creative thought of the collectives. On their initiative electrical centralization of switches and signals was incorporated at the railroad division junctions; the Saratov-Atkarsk run as well as almost all passenger trains were switched over to diesels and the roundhouse of two depots--Pokrousk and Sennaya--were switched over to oil heating. Many labor-consuming processes were mechanized; obsolete machine tool equipment in the rolling stock depot of Saratov-II station and at other enterprises was replaced; modern labor methods began to receive broader application. The steam locomotive men of the railroad division have delivered more than ten million tons of freight above plan in heavy

trains during eight months alone. About 12,000 railroad cars were economized due to the broad introduction of economic loading. During this period about 600 valuable proposals were received from efficiency innovators, the majority of which have already been put into effect and are saving three million rubles. Creative organizational work in seeking out reserves for production has made it possible to free in the division more than 1,300 workers of varied professions with quarterly total wages of 2,800,000 rubles, to make a transition to the shortened work day and to carry out 8-hour shift tasks successfully in 7 hours.

The attention of the entire city Party organization has been directed to the development of technological progress as the most important condition for increasing labor productivity and shortening the work day. In March of this year we conducted a scientific-technical conference on questions of large-scale mechanization and automation of production processes. More than 800 engineers, designers, technologists, efficiency experts and innovators of the enterprises took part in it. It was preceded by plant technological-economic conferences, the participants of which introduced thousands of valuable proposals for the automation and mechanization of production, the improvement of labor organization, and uncovered enormous new internal reserves for increasing production. In July the city committee once again assembled designers, technologists and production leaders. This time a broad exchange of ideas in carrying out the resolutions of the preceding conference was organized and concrete measures were outlined for implementing the resolutions of the July Plenum of the CC of the Party. A large part is being played by the commissions for implementing technical progress. Right now there are more than 200 of them in Saratov. They are steadfastly struggling for a more rapid incorporation into production of the newest achievements of science and technology. As an example we can mention the commission at the "Serp i Molot" Plant, which consists of the best efficiency experts, designers, technologists and foremen. Jointly with the technical council of the enterprise, they have worked out a plan for reconstructing casting-mechanical plant No. 2. On its initiative experimental testing and selection of tools for an automatic line have been successfully carried out. In the development of technological progress the public is playing a greater and greater part. One of the forms of this participation were the design bureaus set up at the initiative of the public. Right now there are more than 30 of these bureaus operating the city's enterprises, and their number is increasing

constantly. Many of them have shown themselves to be true champions of the introduction into production of the most modern technology as well as everything new and progressive.

Supporting and developing creative technological facts with all the means at their command, the efficiency innovator and inventor movement as well as the Party organizations of the enterprises have achieved initial successes in solving the tasks in the large-scale mechanization and automation of production presented by the June Plenum of the CC of the Party. Last year 60 automatic, semi-automatic conveyor and production lines were produced at the city's plants and factories (instead of 50 according to obligations) and 829 units of metal cutting and forge-press equipment were modernized (instead of 600 according to obligation). All of this made it easier for the enterprise collectives to make the transition to the 7-hour work day and made it possible to increase labor productivity and production under the new conditions. But perhaps the most important thing of all done by the Party organizations toward preparations for the transition to the shortened day is the increase in creative activity by rank and file workers of industry, the mobilization of their forces for the fulfillment and over-fulfillment of the tasks faced by the shortened shifts and the dissemination of the experience of leading workers. As early as the year before last, when people were just beginning to talk about the imminent shortening of the work day, extremely valuable initiative arose in the city. A young grinder in the state bearing plant, Faina Mazitova, offered to work according to an hour schedule and to fulfill the shift norm in 7 hours. She successfully coped with this task by herself. Formerly she, as well as other grinders, had worked in "cycles": she would grind a few dozen rings, then she would begin to check their dimensions on a special instrument and stamp them. During this time the machine tool would be standing idle. Noting that almost as much time is taken up in checking and stamping the rings as on grinding, she decided to carry out these operations simultaneously; while a new ring was being machined on the tool, she would have time to check the finished ring and stamp it. Immediately her production increased considerably. The Party and union committees of the plant approved the initiative of Faina Mazitova and printed a poster with a detailed account of her experiment. The Party city committee held a seminar of enterprise Party organization secretaries at the bearing plant, where they became acquainted with her experiment on the spot, and it

organized speeches by the grinder at other plants in the city. Her valuable initiative was popularized by agitators and reporters of primary organizations. As a result the Mazitova method found broad distribution to other enterprises.

Right now, when the collective of the bearing plant has already become accustomed to the 7-hour work day, new initiative has been born. Lathe operator Lidiya Klochkova has decided to fulfill the shift norm in 6½ hours and by the end of the year--in 6 hours--with a more efficient use of labor time and the incorporation of modern advanced labor methods. She herself is carrying out the machine tool adjustment and its prophylactic inspection. Klochkova is increasing her knowledge and skill, is studying in the eighth grade of the worker youth school and is striving to achieve a higher category. Shop Party organizations are using all the means at their command to popularize the example of Lidiya Klochkova, and now she has 1700 followers at the plant. In view of the transition to the shortened work day production study and incorporation of advanced methods have received broad development. At many enterprises courses for worker youth have been organized. The importance of this is evident in the following example. The Party and union organization of the "Serp i Molot" Plant conducted jointly with the management much preparatory work to the transition to the 7-hour work day. An extensive and carefully thought plan of organizational-technical methods was implemented and many innovations, automatic and transfer devices have been introduced; more than 2500 calculation-technical norms have been drawn up and rates for the new wage system have been established. All of this has allowed a painless transition to the shortened work day and the plant has made a complete success of fulfilling the increased program. However, in the first month after the transition, one-fourth of the piece-rate workers could not cope with the new, increased norms. Some of them did not possess the necessary professional skills, but many of them simply turned out to be unprepared for the new working conditions. The Party committee and the plant union committee immediately undertook measures to organize individual production training, advanced experience schools were set up, and hundreds of persons took short courses of qualification improvement. As a result the number of unfulfilled norms decreased 300%.

The shortened work day and new labor remuneration conditions have now been incorporated in almost all the enterprises in Saratov. The collectives are working well with a high morale. The 9-month plan for this year for the city's industry has been fulfilled by 105.4% in gross

production. The volume of industrial production has increased 12.4% in comparison with the same period last year. Labor productivity growth and production cost decrease tasks have also been overfulfilled. The work day has become shorter, labor productivity higher, and the wages of the absolute majority of workers have increased. In the mechanical section of Shop No. 4 of the Heavy Machinery Plant (the workers of this sector won the title of Communist labor collective), before the transition to the shortened work day the average monthly earnings were 730 rubles, while now they have increased to 845. The city committee, the rayon committees and primary Party organizations are making an effort for the further development of socialist competition between collectives for the ahead of schedule fulfillment of the plan for the second year of the Seven Year Plan. This competition is characterized by many valuable beginnings, directed at increasing labor productivity, at incorporating technical-calculation norms and the implementation of new technology. The number of workers competing for Communist labor is increasing. Now there are more than 30 plant collectives, 8,300 shops, sectors and brigades in the city competing for the elevated title of Communist. 1,730 collectives have already acquired this title. 2,726 workers bear the honorary title of shock workers of Communist labor.

N. S. Krushchev in his report at the Twenty-first Party Congress noted that the highly mechanized and automated production of the future will not require many hours of labor from workers, and as a result of this there will be much free time for pursuits in the sciences, arts, literature and sports. Even now, when the enterprises have made the transition to the shortened work day, the flow of workers and primarily youth to the evening schools has increased. Taking this into consideration, we have taken measures to expand the system of worker youth schools and correspondence divisions of special schools. Right now more than 20,000 young production workers and engineering-technical workers are studying by correspondence and in the evening universities and technical schools. The Party city committee has supported the valuable initiative of the collectives which, striving to improve labor conditions and every-day living conditions of workers, began to construct kindergartens and nursery schools based on public support and from materials which have been saved through various economies. This year 14 children's institutions have been put into operation and 30 more are being constructed. The city Party organization has increased its attention to problems of raising the level of the culture of workers and their healthful rest. Three amateur people's

theatres and seven universities of culture, in which thousands of workers participate, are now in successful operation on the basis of public support. Not long ago a new music school opened in Lenin rayon. Here and in the Stalin rayon new palaces of culture are being built, and in the Kirov rayon--a moving picture theatre. Mass sport is undergoing tremendous development. The workers of Saratov are already making use of the large palace of sport which was built in past years, and now they have added a winter swimming pool and a new stadium for the "LOKOMOTIV" sports society. A plan for a recreation area on the Volga between Sokolova Gora and the village of Pristannyy is being worked out. New sports and water sports facilities will be built, as well as a dormitory and various sanitary and other facilities. The Communists of our great Volga city are doing everything in their power for the labor of the enterprise collectives, under the conditions of a shortened work day, to become even more productive and for the way of life and recreation of the workers to become even better.