



WORKERS ACTION MOVEMENT
MOVIMIENTO ACCION de TRABAJADORES
ORGANISATION d'ACTION OUVRIERE

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS TO WAM CONVENTION

We are meeting here just a little more than one year after the birth of our organization. We are meeting here after hundreds of years of struggles by working people just like ourselves to shorten the hours of labor. It is no accident that our convention is being held on May Day, which symbolizes the international working class battle for shorter hours. May Day originated in Chicago during the great struggle for the 8-hour day during the 1880's.

As we look back over the past year, we can gain some idea of what we've accomplished. We can also see how far we still have to go. Our convention--and the conventions to be held in Toronto in six weeks and in San Francisco in September should attempt to sum up the past years work. We must also address ourselves to a number of questions regarding our future work.

Why Do We Need 30 for 40?

30/40 is the single demand that WILL HELP US WIN ALL OTHER DEMANDS, will so unite the trade union rank and file and the whole working class--nationally and internationally--that the FULL POWER OF THE WORKING CLASS CAN BE EMPLOYED BEHIND ANY AND EVERY DEMAND.

30/40 will help us win higher wages and smash the wage freeze because 1) 30 hours work for 40 hours pay BY DEFINITION means a higher hourly wage (\$120 a week for 40 hours equals \$3 an hour; \$120 a week for 30 hours equals \$4.00 an hour); 2) we are coupling 30 for 40 with the demand for a BIG WAGE BOOST, meaning an increase beyond just the automatic change upward in hourly wages just mentioned; 3) the push to create more jobs resulting from winning 30/40 means millions of workers employed, on welfare, working part-time, in lower-paying non-union jobs in the unionized industries--and 30/40 will act as a great spur to organizing the unorganized.

The fight for the shorter work week has always had this effect. A union organizing drive is never simply just to sign up and pay dues --but is an effort organize to battle the bosses more effectively so that we can win something.

30 for 40 as a key demand of an organizing drive--as a unifying demand for all the workers to be organized - will help generate a more successful campaign. It is no accident that the leaders of the great struggle for the 8-hour day - those who established May Day as the workers' holiday in the U.S. and around the world - were also among the first great leaders of the efforts to build unions in the U.S. It is also no accident that the final victory of the 8-hour movement and the successful organizing of the CIO occurred at the same time during the 1930s.

"Organize the unorganized." "Reduce the hours of Labor." These have always been the key slogans of the labor movement. Around these twin ideas millions upon millions of workers have rallied, fought and won significant victories. It is up to us to carry that tradition forward. We are not starting something new - we are carrying on a battle that is as old as the working class itself.

30 for 40 will help us break down the racist divisions the bosses use to keep us weak. Aside from pushing to create more jobs, and thereby setting up openings into which victimized minorities can move, especially on the basis of preferential hiring and upgrading, 30 for 40 CANNOT BE WON WITHOUT THE GREATEST UNITY OF ALL WORKERS.

Therefore, in fighting for 30 for 40 because of all the other reasons we need it, it will force workers by necessity, to begin to smash the racist chains that bind us, and bring us to unite behind this all-embracing demand.

30 for 40 will help us win strikes, and help develop greater labor solidarity behind strikes of particular groups of workers fighting for 30 for 40 because 30 for 40 cannot be won and really maintained by a small group of workers. Therefore, any group of workers anywhere fighting for 30 for 40 or some variation of shorter hours with a pay boost would cause other workers demanding the same thing to come to their aid more readily. And the over-all unity among the whole working class that 30 for 40 creates will necessarily spill over into the solidarity needed in every strike of any group of workers for virtually anything.

30 for 40 will help to democratize the unions because it is the kind of demand that cannot be bargained for in some deal behind closed doors, trading off one group of workers' demands for another. It can only be won by the MASS PARTICIPATION of all workers. The fact is, that's the only way shorter hours has ever been won. The only way to even get the unions to demand 30 for 40 is to have maximum rank-and-file pressure on the top labor misleaders who now run the unions as their private business, which will bring workers to the point of organizing to throw them out and install rank-and-file leaders.

30 for 40 will make a big push against discrimination against women workers possible. To unite the working class, to democratize the unions, to win strikes, and to do all the other things 30 for 40 leads to, as well as to win equal pay for equal work and provide for day care centers in a MASSIVE way that will make it easier for millions of women to work who want to, and at a living wage - to do all this means all ideas of the "inferiority" of women and 2nd class status for women must be smashed. Historically women workers fought like hell for shorter hours and helped lead that fight, because it meant more time for the family to spend together, more jobs at better pay, more attention of a united working class to the special problems of women and women workers.

30 for 40 will help make working conditions safer. It will mean less hours, therefore less tiredness and less susceptibility to accidents. It will mean stronger unions and more united workers, to fight for better, healthier, less hazardous conditions on the job. Instead of less jobs with more speed-up, it will push for more jobs, with less fear of losing one's job and therefore less pressure of feeling we have to work like hell to someone else will take our place (always threatened by the boss), all contributing to less accidents on the job.

30 for 40 means better public services - in the hospitals, in government offices (like welfare, unemployment, social security), in schools - everywhere that a person's job involves giving services. Shorter hours means you'll be less tired and irritable, less likely to make mistakes, less likely to take your hostility toward the boss out on the worker you have to serve.

This is extremely clear in the hospitals where it is a matter of life and death for the patients - most of whom are workers. A tired, sped-up, overworked hospital worker can make the kind of mistake that can kill. The boss then blames the workers - saying they were careless. The fact of the matter is that such accidents are entirely the hospital administration's fault. As we succeed in forcing the hospital bosses to give in to 30 for 40 WE WILL AT THE SAME TIME BE SAVING THE LIVES OF UNTOLD NUMBERS OF PATIENTS.

30 for 40 will mean pressure against unemployment and for more jobs. In round-the-clock industries it could mean four 6-hour shifts instead of 3 8-hour shifts, making a 33% increase in the work force there almost a necessity. Overall it will force the bosses to hire more workers if they want the same amount of production as before.

30 for 40 will give us a lot more leisure time to spend with our families, train for better-paying jobs, or however else we want to spend that extra ten hours a week. And it will also mean that some of that time can be used in strengthening the very movement that would be fighting to win 30 for 40 - the unions, the committees, the action groups like WAM - so that the very act of fighting for and winning 30 for 40 leads to the potential to fight for even more and better things to make our lives more enjoyable.

30 for 40 will link us with workers in other countries - which is no small matter - because 30 for 40 and the fight for shorter hours is an INTERNATIONAL demand. It cuts across all national boundaries. Historically it has always had this character. In fact, May Day was born as an international workers' holiday around the struggle for the 8-hour day back in 1886 - which is why we march on May Day.

International unity around such a demand is of great importance to all workers. Just witness the no-strike sellout just signed by the steel bosses and the Abel gang in the steelworkers union. It was put over on the basis that "foreign" workers are "stealing" U.S. jobs. The bosses tell us, "You've got to work faster, otherwise 'they' will take your jobs." The steel bosses got off scot free, whether in the U.S., Japan, West Germany, or anywhere else. The international unity created by hundreds of millions of workers the world over fighting for shorter hours - and ALL WORKERS not only need this demand, but millions are already fighting for it as we have read in the WAM newsletter - will help stop the bosses from using our brothers and sisters in other countries against us by making them out as our "enemies."

30 for 40 is a two-sided idea. On the one hand it is a demand for something we need, for all the reasons already spelled out. On the other it is a strategy for linking up all the battles for all the things we need.

Finally, and because of all the above reasons, the fight for 30 for 40 will PUT THE WORKERS ON THE OFFENSIVE. Instead of just reacting defensively to every attack by the bosses on our jobs, our living standards, our unions, 30 for 40 says that the workers want to not just hang on to what we have, trying to keep our heads above water, like on a treadmill, but that we want something more than what we have now, and we mean to fight like hell to win it.

30 for 40 is an OFFENSIVE demand, in more ways than one. It is particularly "offensive" to the bosses because they never want to give up what they've stolen from us. And it puts us workers on the offensive in demanding something we don't have now. The movements for shorter hours in past decades has always created mass movements of workers for all other demands--for organizing the unorganized, for higher wages, for more jobs, for job security--because it galvanizes the whole working class behind a single, clear demand for something that all need and all benefit from.

This is why the bosses will try harder to break up a movement for shorter hours, harder than almost on any other issue, because

they know what such a movement means on all other issues.

So 30 for 40 is what we need and 30 for 40 is what it will be!

Some people have asked the question: why should WAM and its central theme of 30 for 40 concentrate in the trade union movement with an organized force of approximately 20 million workers as against the unorganized workers, who number around 60 million, plus those who are unemployed?

The answer to this lies in the fact that the organized workers objectively constitute the most advanced segment of ALL the workers; that historically all major reforms have come about because of the trade unions despite, at times, an entrenched labor bureaucracy who does everything in their power to impede any meaningful struggle.

One only has to look back upon the mammoth fights for the eight-hour day and the social security movement (in addition to many others, like those waged over child-labor laws and for public education) to see how true this is.

The unorganized workers will be brought into the trade unions, as well as organizing themselves into the unions, once they see that it is in their interests to do so. The fight for 30 for 40 will bring this home to them with stunning clarity.

Only the workers can raise the standard of living of ALL the people. The trade unions spearhead this drive and 30 for 40 is the coming slogan for the unions.

FEBRUARY 1972 to APRIL 1973

What have we accomplished? 30 for 40 is the Number One demand of the following unions: UAW Local 420, AFSCME State of Minnesota District Council, IAM Lodge 2119, Washington State AFL-CIO, Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, Lodge 1330, IBEW Local 817. In some of these - and in a number of other unions - 30 for 40 committees exist, and furthermore, in a number of unions, the bargaining position includes some form of the shorter work week.

Two observations can be made about these events. One, in most cases where 30 for 40 has been made a number one demand, it is as a result of the efforts of WAM members who started the ball rolling. Two, these are still pretty much paper resolutions. The union leaderships are not committed to a serious fight for 30 for 40 - only rank and file pressure has forced them to put 30 for 40 into the bargaining position. But at this point few if any union leaders will fight for it. While some local officials are sincere in their desire to make 30 for 40 a key demand - only our work in mobilizing the power of the overwhelming majority of the union members can move the unions into a battle for 30 for 40.

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At the same time that we've been fighting to make 30 for 40 a key contract demand in the unions, WAM members and friends have taken up the task of fighting to make 30 for 40 a law. In the San Francisco Bay area, in New York, Boston and Detroit, election campaigns have been launched. 30 for 40 referendums are being put on the ballot. We are using these campaigns to popularize 30 for 40, to gather people together who we might not reach directly at our workplaces and in our unions.

The combined fight to make 30 for 40 a contract demand, to set up official union 30 for 40 committees and to launch 30 for 40 referendum drives, has been our work for the past year. Already thousands of workers have been involved directly in these campaigns. Already millions have been made aware of 30 for 40. Everywhere we have carried our message we have been met by enthusiasm from the workers - and naturally, by antagonism from the bosses, government officials and the top dogs of the labor movement. And this shouldn't surprise us.

After all, the worker who can barely support his family - even by working huge amounts of overtime - or the worker who faces unemployment - or the worker who is now unemployed and forced to live on unemployment or welfare; how could these workers be against 30 for 40? On the other hand, Nixon who makes \$200,000 in salary, plus all he can steal, or the directors of the giant corporations who rake in a million dollars a year - tax free - or the George Meany's who broke the wage freeze by giving themselves big pay boosts - paid for with our union dues: naturally they will be against 30 for 40.

30 for 40 is becoming a mass idea. That is our main accomplishment in the last year - and we have every reason to be proud of ourselves. But it is not even our only accomplishment. Many of us were completely inexperienced a year ago. We wanted 30 for 40 - but we didn't even know how to put out a leaflet. We wanted 30 for 40, but we were afraid to get up at a meeting to talk about it. We wanted 30 for 40, but we didn't know how to chair a meeting. We wanted 30 for 40, but even setting up a bank account, or renting an office, or buying supplies was a new experience for many of us. Street corner rallies, addressing large union

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meetings, putting out a WAM newspaper, raising money, etc.--these things were beyond our wildest dreams. Yet hundreds of us - who had never done any of these so-called "little" things have done them - and done them well. And we will do them better - and more importantly we will train our brothers and sisters in how to do them. A small thing you say - but workers are always taught that they can do none of these things. We are always told we need a protector to look out for us - tell us what to do, organize our lives for us - and take 99% of the value of what we produce. We are proving to ourselves and everyone else that we can do everything we choose to do!

But even this is not all that we have accomplished. Although WAM is basically a 30 for 40 organization concentrating in the unions, ~~xxxx~~ our members (and as a result of our initiative) our friends have organized battles for a number of other important demands. Our 30 for 40, WAM core, has helped lead battles against unsafe working conditions, against racial and sex discrimination by the bosses, for workers solidarity in strikes, for better job conditions, for more democratic unions - in fact WAM members in the last year have been involved in fighting the bosses and their agents on every issue that affects workers. And during those fights we have worked to win our brothers and sisters to the long-term outlook of rebuilding the labor movement around the 30 for 40 demand. While our main work is in the unions, we have involved many unemployed workers, ~~xxxx~~ many unorganized workers, many people who have been forced onto welfare. WAMe's are involved in union organizing drives, we are involved in the fights against ~~xxxx~~ welfare cutbacks, we are involved in the National boycott of iceberg lettuce in support of the Farm Workers.

For a small organization - only a little more than one year old, we would have to say, we've made a pretty good start. But we are not here just to congratulate ourselves - pat ourselves on the back, go home and go to sleep, muttering a lot of nonsense ~~xxx~~ about having done a good job. We must examine our efforts critically. We must decide what to do in the coming period of time.

Some errors and weaknesses: Although the response of workers to 30 for 40 has been good - our reaction often has been to be pleased and let it go at that. We don't follow situations up

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seriously. This has occurred in every single WAM chapter. We get off to a flying start--maybe run into a problem or two--and then

drop it - and go on to something else. For example, we started an ~~national~~ international 30 for 40 petition drive to the union leadership. Every time we went out, we got huge numbers of signatures. But we failed to make real campaigns around the petition. Sometimes we even lost the petitions. At best some of the chapters added the names to their mailing lists - but we all know that are capable of piling up hundreds of thousands, millions of signatures on these petitions - and having done that we can take those petitions and use them to prove that 30 for 40 is not simply some crackpot idea - but is a living breathing force among the workers. If nothing else we could pile these petitions up under the ass of some bought off union leaders and set a match to them. If we did that to George Meany, you'd see him move faster than that fat robber has ever moved in his life.

Our hesitancy on the petition drive is just an example of our holding back everywhere. Frankly, the limits of this 30 for 40 movement are only the ones we limit ourselves to - the bolder and more aggressive we are - the more progress we make. If we really believe that 30 for 40 is a life-and death question, then we have to act on that belief. We believe that the WAM members can and will - and that is why we're going to win.

Even more serious perhaps has been our generally sloppy attitude on the question of building the WAM organization. Some chapters meet very irregularly - some go long periods of times without chapter meetings. Finances are a hodge podge. Although the chapters made pledges to the international office, few pledges have really materialized - and no chapter has been consistent, although some have been better than others. Although the International treasurer has written to the chapters and made everyone crazy by bringing the need for money before people at Steering Committee meetings, everyone has promised - but the performance has been poor. In New York, those responsible for getting out the international newsletter let 6 months go by without getting out a single issue.

If we want an organization - we have to organize it. This may

sound like a pretty simple-minded notion--but somehow or other minor questions of organization seem to get forgotten--and if they are forgotten long enough, the entire WAM bogs down and the 30 for 40 movement bogs down with it.

There is another aspect to building the WAM organization on which we have been weak. Many of us have gotten it into our heads that once we have a 30 for 40 committee in the union we don't need WAM anymore. Others have fallen into the trap of believing that once a 30 for 40 referendum gets going, we don't need WAM. In other words, we only need WAM to get things started--and then let's not bother with it. The fact of the matter is that with each successful effort, we need WAM more than ever. As more and more unions set up 30 for 40 committees--as more and more referendum campaigns develop, increasingly enemies of the workers will try to take over the 30 for 40 movement. These enemies will try to get the workers to have faith in them--they will say to us "Don't strike...don't be militant...don't, don't, don't! We will get 30 for 40 for you." Even with a strong WAM organization, many will fall into the trap. But without WAM--or some similar kind of organization--it is guaranteed that the sellout union leaders and the politicians will take over our movement and lead it--just the way these fakers took over the civil rights movement, the peace movement, and every other mass movement that the workers have been involved in.


WAM can help prevent that development. But we should face facts: the 30 for 40 movement, as it grows larger, may very well find itself led by these enemies. Then our task will be to fight for leadership of that movement; to fight to see honest, sincere, militant workers in the lead. The WAM organization, if it is to build seriously, must make it much easier to conduct that fight--and make it more likely to be successful.

We will be hearing chapter reports that will spell many of these things out in greater detail. We will go into workshops where, with our brothers and sisters in similar work situations, we will be able to make concrete, specific plans for the coming year.

Let us urge you to focus on three main questions, as the main basis for organizing:

1. BUILD THE WAM CHAPTERS AND BUILD THE INTERNATIONAL WAM ORGANIZATION;
2. FIGHT FOR 30 FOR 40 COMMITTEES IN OUR UNIONS TO MAKE 30 FOR 40 WITH A BIG PAY BOOST THE NUMBER ONE CONTRACT DEMAND.
3. DEVELOP REFERENDUM CAMPAIGNS WHEREVER POSSIBLE AS A WAY OF PUBLICIZING AND ORGANIZING MASS SUPPORT FOR 30 FOR 40--BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE UNIONS.

"So long as there is one worker who seeks employment and cannot find it, the hours of labor are too long..."



WORKERS' ACTION!

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The Workers Action Movement is organized around a 3 point program:

1. 36 HOURS WORK FOR 40 HOURS PAY!
2. SUPPORT FOR WORKERS STRIKES BY ALL OTHER WORKING PEOPLE!
3. DEMOCRATIC UNIONS -- THROUGH BUILDING RANK AND FILE COMMITTEES FOR POWER IN THE UNIONS!

**JOIN THE WORKERS
ACTION MOVEMENT**