

Senator BUSH. So it is not just a reduction in the workweek they want. It is really to get an increase in pay through that device. It that right?

Mr. WISHART. An increase in hourly rates would be involved in such a reduction.

Senator BUSH. So as to mean a stabilization in wage costs? It would result in a net income increase to the members. Is that true?

Mr. WISHART. I would not concede that a rate increase is necessarily an increase in wage costs. Under the impact of automation—

Senator PROXMIRE. What the workers want to do is to preserve their present annual income or weekly income. You speak for the AFL-CIO, and they want a shorter workweek not because they are lazy or do not want to work 40 hours, but because they know so many people who are relatives and friends and so forth who cannot get work, and they see in the auto industry and the steel industry people who have worked for 10 and 15 years and are thrown out because the automation has created a situation in which far fewer people can do more work. Is that not correct?

Mr. WISHART. Yes. And in some sectors of the auto industry there has been the deliberate application of a 6-day workweek, creating conditions under which the unemployed may lose their right to pension, to hospital, surgical, and other coverages. This has been part of the operation in the Detroit area.

Senator BUSH. This is why I raise the question, then, as to this 35-hour workweek, as to whether it would not result in considerable more overtime payment, beginning at the 35-hour level, and whether it would actually result in decreased employment for those who need the work.

Mr. WISHART. This would certainly not be the purpose.

Senator BUSH. I beg pardon?

Mr. WISHART. There has been a proposal for the increase of overtime premium to obviate this tendency on the part of employers to work a limited work force an unreasonable number of hours per week, in order to avoid certain fringe benefit costs.

Senator BUSH. The thing that puzzles me about the proposition is this: If you have a reduction in the workweek to 35 hours, whether employers would rather pay—they are going to work 40 hours anyway, maybe more—whether they would rather pay the overtime rate to those employed, rather than train a bunch of new workers to take up the one-eighth slack, or whatever it would be, and whether they would not find the latter more expensive than paying the overtime.

What is your judgment on that?

Mr. WISHART. My judgment is that in most industries today the choice would be for the 35-hour workweek. This might be a problem which we will face down the road, assuming the achievement of the 35-hour workweek. All the problems flowing from that have not been given total analysis at the present time.

Senator BUSH. Do you think the 35-hour workweek would actually increase employment?

Mr. WISHART. This is the reason that labor is solidly and substantially supporting the idea of reduced hours, without reductions in weekly take-home pay.