

## The Continuous Working Week in Soviet Russia

*The methods and principles of the regulation of hours of work have undergone important changes in Russia in the last few years. In October 1927 the Soviet Government announced its intention of introducing the seven-hour day in industry, and at the beginning of 1928 the reform began to be put into operation in some undertakings.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this first reform was to speed up and so increase production by the introduction of the three-shift system; it was subsequently completed by what is called the "continuous working week", which by abolishing general rest days aims at enabling undertakings to be kept going seven days a week, and so increase their output while lowering their costs of production. This system is at present applied in a very large number of undertakings, and materials are already available for the study of its characteristics and consequences. The following article, after a short history of the question, describes the organisation of work under the new system, and analyses the results obtained up to the present.*

**F**OR some two or three years the Russian policy on hours of work has been more and more influenced by one idea, that of reducing to a minimum the periods during which undertakings are not working so as to arrive at the highest possible output with the available means of production. It was this idea that induced those responsible for economic and social policy in Russia to introduce the three-shift system in the textile industry at the end of 1927, and subsequently in other industries, under the slogan of the "seven-hour day". The same endeavour to exploit the undertakings to the utmost gave rise in the summer of 1929 to a new measure affecting hours of work, namely, the introduction of the "continuous working week", or, as it is usually called, "the continuous production week". This means

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXII, No. 3, Sept. 1930, pp. 329-357 : "The Seven-Hour Day in Soviet Russia".



the abolition of "general rest days" so that the workers and employees take it in turns to have their rest day instead of having it together, and the undertakings are kept going seven days in the week. Recently—since the summer of 1930—the idea has been carried a step further. It is proposed to avoid not only the stoppage of work on Sundays, which was the object of introducing the continuous week, but also the interruption of work at night, and so to introduce "continuous production".<sup>1</sup> This new idea is still under discussion and only the first steps are being taken to realise it. The continuous working week, on the other hand, has become a fact in a very large number of undertakings, so that some account can already be given of its operation and effects.

### THE HISTORY OF THE CONTINUOUS WORKING WEEK

The growth of the idea of the continuous working week in the Soviet Union has been somewhat peculiar. Until the Fifth Congress of Soviets of the Union, held in the second half of May 1929, practically nothing was known about it. Since about June or July of that year, on the contrary, it has enjoyed general recognition. Recent literature on the subject—since the summer of 1929 the publishing market has been flooded with pamphlets and books on the continuous working week<sup>2</sup>—has sought to

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<sup>1</sup> Until this new problem arose the question of the continuous working week was often described as that of continuous production, and it is only recently that an attempt has been made to differentiate the terms and define them more exactly.

<sup>2</sup> The following pamphlets and books have been used in preparing this article :

A. ANDREJČIK : *Nepreryvka na transporte* (The continuous working week in transport). Moscow, General Council of Trade Unions, 1930.

M. ARONVIČ : *Nepreryvnoje proizvodstvo* (Continuous production). Moscow, Technika i Upravljenje, 1930.

L. BEREZANSKI : *Perekhod na nepreryvku* (The transition to the continuous working week). Moscow, General Council of Trade Unions, 1930.

S. BOBAŠINSKI : *Nepreryvnaja nedelja i principy jeje postrojenija* (The continuous working week and the principles of its structure). Moscow, Commissariat of Labour, 1930.

I. DAUKST and L. PAVČINSKAJA : *Nepreryvka na transporte* (The continuous working week in transport). Moscow, Moskovskij Rabočij, 1930.

F. A. DIETZ : *Nepreryvnoje proizvodstvo i elektroosnabženie* (Continuous production and the supply of electric current). Moscow, Moskovskij Rabočij, 1929.

DR. M. G. FRENKEL : *Nepreryvnoje proizvodstvo i zdorovje trudjaščikhsja* (Continuous production and the health of the workers). Moscow-Leningrad, State Medical Publishing Department, 1930.

I. LARIN : *360 ili 300* (360 or 300). 2nd edition. Moscow-Leningrad, State Publishing Department, 1930. (Referred to below as LARIN I.)

— *Za nepreryvnoje proizvodstvo* (Concerning continuous production). Moscow, Nododaja Gvardija, 1929. (Referred to below as LARIN II.)

— *Kulturno-bytovoje obsluživanje i obščestvennaja rabota pri nepreryvke* (The

record the slightest adumbrations of the idea in the period before the Fifth Congress of Soviets, but apart from a few isolated, insignificant, and completely unnoticed remarks in the daily Press, and an unpublished report by an official of the Supreme Economic Council, dated October 1928 (according to another source, 1927), nothing is to be found.<sup>1</sup> At the Fifth Congress of Councils itself it was Larin, a Communist writer known for

satisfaction of the workers' cultural needs and the continuous working week). Moscow, General Council of Trade Unions, 1930. (Referred to below as LARIN III.)

— *Preimušestva nepreryvki* (The advantages of the continuous working week). Moscow, Moskovskij Rabočij, 1930. (Referred to below as LARIN IV.)

M. LEIZEROV : *Kultrabota i nepreryvnoje pi izvodstvo* (Education and continuous production). Moscow, General Council of Trade Unions, 1930.

I. I. LJAŠČENKO : *Nepreryvka i što ona daje rabočemu klassu* (The continuous working week and what it offers the working class). Moscow, Commissariat of Labour, 1930.

A. OLIN : *Čto dala nepreryvka ?* (What has the continuous working week produced ?) Moscow-Leningrad, State Publishing Department, 1930.

S. ORLOV : *Nepreryvka v sovetskom apparate* (The continuous working week in the Soviet system). Moscow, General Council of Trade Unions, 1930. (Referred to below as ORLOV I.)

— *Čto rešilo vsesojuznoje soveščanije po nepreryvke ?* (What has the All-Russian Conference decided on the continuous working week ?). Moscow, General Council of Trade Unions, 1930. (Referred to below as ORLOV II.)

G. PATRUNOV : *Nepreryvka i bezrabotica* (The continuous working week and unemployment). Moscow, Commissariat of Labour, 1930.

N. PODOROLSKI and D. FRENKEL : *Nepreryvnaja rabota učreždenij* (Continuous work in institutions). Moscow, Moskovskij Rabočij, 1930.

S. RABINovič-ZAKHARIN : *Rabočeje vremja i zarabotnaja plata pri nepreryvke* (Hours of work and wages with the continuous working week). Moscow, Moskovskij Rabočij, 1930.

S. RINEVIČ : *Nepreryvka u stroitelej* (The continuous working week for building workers). Moscow-Leningrad, State Publishing Department, 1930.

J. RUDZUTAK : *Nepreryvka i socialističeskoje stroitelstvo* (The continuous working week and the organisation of Socialism). Moscow, General Council of Trade Unions, 1930.

I. A. SCHAUER (HEVEŠI) : *Organizacija nepreryvnogo proizvodstva na fabrikakh i zavodakh* (The organisation of continuous production in the factories). Moscow, State Technical Publishing Department, 1929.

D. SCHWARZMANN : *Nepreryvnaja proizvodstvennaja nedelja* (The continuous working week). Moscow, General Council of Trade Unions, 1930.

A. SORKIN : *Rabočeje vremja i otdykh pri nepreryvnom proizvodstve* (Hours of work and free time with the continuous working week). Moscow, Commissariat of Labour, 1930.

I. TOLSTOPJATOV : *Trudovoj režim i nepreryvka* (Working arrangements and the continuous working week). Moscow, General Council of Trade Unions, 1930.

A. S. WAINSTEIN : *Leningradskaja promyšlennost na nepreryvnoje proizvodstvo* (Leningrad industry adopts continuous production). Leningrad, Priboj, 1930.

In addition, there are at least a dozen publications that were not at the writer's disposal.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. ARONovič, p. 6 ; BEREZANSKI, p. 4 ; DAUKST-PAVČINSKAJA, p. 18 ; LARIN I, p. 9. Aronovič maintains that the problem of the continuous working week was discussed as early as 1922 by the Government Committee appointed to draft the Labour Code, and subsequently in 1926 by the Ordzonikidze Committee appointed to consider measures for fighting private capital. He is mistaken, however. In both cases the point considered was not the continuous working week, but the reduction of the number of holidays.

his predilection for unusual schemes, who raised the question of the continuous working week in the debate on the Government's report on its work. The Congress paid little attention to Larin's suggestion, and Rykov, President of the Council of People's Commissaries, did not even consider it necessary to mention it in his final speech.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the indifference at first displayed by the Congress of Soviets and the whole Press to his suggestion, Larin was able a few days later to record a success that even he could hardly have expected. It seems fairly certain now that during these days Larin succeeded in winning over Stalin, the General Secretary of the Communist Party, for his idea. This settled the matter. By the beginning of June 1929 the whole Press was already displaying enthusiasm for the "great socialist idea" of the continuous working week, and the economic authorities too were also immediately in its favour. By 8 June, *Trud* was in a position to report that the Supreme Economic Council of the R.S.F.S.R. had "instructed its Rationalisation Section to prepare within two weeks an approximate scheme for introducing continuous production in individual branches of industry". Soon after, the Supreme Economic Council of the Soviet Union ordered the economic authorities "to take all necessary steps for introducing the continuous production year" within three weeks, so that a comprehensive report on the necessary "practical measures" might be submitted not later than 15 July to the Presidium of the Supreme Economic Council.<sup>2</sup> It should be observed that this time there was no question of an "approximate scheme", as indicated in the above decision of the Supreme Economic Council of the R.S.F.S.R., but of concrete "practical measures". The Supreme Economic Council of the R.S.F.S.R. itself decided on 25 June that the "final examination of all questions connected with the introduction of the continuous production year should be expedited". "The examination must be terminated by 1 July, and those undertakings and departments of undertakings in which it is economically and technically possible to introduce the continuous production year within the next two or three months must at once be singled out."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Pravda*, 28 May 1929.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Trud*, 15 June 1929.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, 26 June 1929.

The only authority that expressed any doubts as to the advisability of an immediate transition to the continuous working week in industry was—and this is an interesting point—the Commissariat of Labour. Even at the beginning of the campaign Bakhutov, then Commissary of Labour of the R.S.F.S.R., had urged in a Press interview “that great caution should be exercised in proceeding to solve the problem in practice”.<sup>1</sup> In the second half of July Uglanov, then Commissary of Labour of the Soviet Union, summoned a conference of representatives of the authorities to discuss the questions connected with the continuous working week. The Commissary of Labour’s rather reserved attitude towards the idea emboldened the representatives of the economic authorities to point out the difficulties in the way of introducing the continuous working week. In his final speech, summing up the discussion, Uglanov said emphatically “that obviously the problem of introducing the continuous working week must be attacked with the greatest caution and all the related questions must be thoroughly studied”.<sup>2</sup> Soon after, the Commissary of Labour submitted a report on these lines to the Council of People’s Commissaries, the gist of which was that “a number of real difficulties stood in the way of effecting the change-over to the continuous working week, and that it was practically impossible to overcome these difficulties for several years”. The difficulties in question were “shortage of fuel, raw materials, electric power, credits, and labour, the worn-out condition of machinery and boilers, the disorganisation of the worker’s mode of living and of the system of satisfying his cultural needs”. This report by the Commissary of Labour was not indeed published, but it was attacked all the more energetically in the Press as “an offensive against the new initiative” and “an expression of an opportunist attitude”.<sup>3</sup>

The force with which even the mildest criticism of the new idea was rejected is no doubt to be explained by the fear that this criticism might easily find its echo in the country—not only among the economic authorities, who had already shown at the above-mentioned conference that they were extremely susceptible to it, but also among the working masses, where the proclamation

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<sup>1</sup> *Idem*, 8 June 1929.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, 23 July 1929.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. B. MARKUS: “Protiv oportunizma — za bolševistskoje otnošenije k trudnostjam” (Against opportunism — for a Bolshevik attitude towards difficulties), in *Pravda*, 3 Aug. 1929.

of the new idea aroused discontent.<sup>1</sup> Since the second half of July 1929, therefore, any criticism of the continuous working week has in fact been described as "counter-revolutionary". Here too, it was Larin who took the initiative, and as early as the middle of July, in his theses for the Reporter on the continuous working week, he urged that "the scorn of the masses" should be kindled against "bureaucratic sabotage of our economic successes".<sup>2</sup> Thenceforward, this view was continually reproduced, and later developed by Larin himself in an article on "Bigots and mischief-makers in the field of industrialisation". All doubts as to the advisability of an immediate transition to the continuous working week were here ascribed to "narrow-mindedness" or "unscrupulousness". Larin attacked the "silently respectful sabotage" by the managers of undertakings and "the mocking of the Party's anxiety to speed up industrialisation", and urged the G.P.U. to investigate whether behind it all there was not "some leading spirit, deliberately seeking to do harm".<sup>3</sup>

In the meantime, the legislative foundations for changing over all work in general, and not only in industry, to the continuous working week were being laid. On 26 August 1929 the Council of People's Commissaries of the Soviet Union adopted a Decree "on the transition of undertakings and institutions to continuous production". This Decree provided as follows :

... Whereas the introduction of continuous production, subject to the safeguarding of existing standards of free time, will strengthen the economic power of the country, ensure better exploitation of existing [industrial] equipment, shorten the time spent on new construction and on the reconstruction of old undertakings, create additional openings for the development of industry, and lead to a substantial increase in the number of workers employed in industry ;

Whereas, further, this will create new and important facilities for satisfying the demand of the workers and peasants for industrial goods and improving the material and cultural standard of living of the working class ;

The Council of People's Commissaries of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics :

(1) Declares it essential that the systematically prepared transition of undertakings and institutions to continuous production should begin during the economic year 1929-1930. . . .

At the same time the State Planning Commission (*Gosplan*) was instructed to revise the figures of its economic forecast for

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> *Ekonomičeskaja Žizn*, 16 July 1929.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. LARIN II, pp. 36-38 ; LARIN IV, pp. 12-13.

the Soviet Union for 1929-1930 with reference to the forthcoming introduction of the continuous working week in a large number of undertakings, and a special Government Committee was appointed for "the permanent supervision and control" of the transition of undertakings and institutions to the new system.

The expected rate of transition was increasingly accelerated. At the Fifth Congress of Soviets Larin only tried to make the public generally interested in the idea of the continuous working week.<sup>1</sup> By the beginning of June 1929 he had already made the following calculation: at that date the continuous working week applied to about 15 per cent. of the industrial workers (in the petroleum industry, the paper industry, foundries, etc.); in 1929-1930 it would apply to a further 20 per cent.; in 1930-1931 to a further 20 per cent.; in 1931-1932 to a further 10 per cent.; and in 1932-1933, i.e. the last year of the five-year period, it would be introduced for the remaining 35 per cent. of industrial workers.<sup>2</sup> According to the revised figures of the economic forecast for the Soviet Union for 1929-1930, the continuous working week was expected to apply to 49 per cent. of the industrial workers by the end of the first half-year, and to as many as 67 per cent. by the end of the economic year.<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, however, even this rate was soon exceeded, so that by 1 April 1930, i.e. at the end of the first half of the economic year, according to the report of the Government Committee on the continuous working week, 63 per cent. of the industrial workers had—at least nominally<sup>4</sup>—already gone over to the continuous working week.<sup>5</sup> The somewhat less comprehensive statistics of the Supreme Economic Council give a similar figure. These statistics, showing the percentage of workers to whom the continuous working week applied on 1 April 1930, are of interest in that they give information on the application of the system in individual branches of industry.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. LARIN I, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. LARIN: "Kak izmenitsia rabota?" (How will work change?), in *Trud*, 8 June 1929.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Trud*, 14 Dec. 1929; *Pravda*, 25 June 1930.

<sup>4</sup> See below, p. 165.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Pravda*, 25 June 1930.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Trud v U.S.S.R. Spravočnik 1926-30* (Labour in the Soviet Union, Reference Book for 1926-1930), pp. 22-23. Moscow, State Planning Commission, 1930.

Industrial group		Percentage of workers with a continuous working week
<i>Group A (industries for producers' goods) :</i>		
Fuel	91.7	
Coal extraction		90
Coke production		100
Petroleum extraction		100
Petroleum refining		100
Ore extraction	85.8	
Silicates	99.7	
Cement		100
Glass		100
Rough pottery		100
Other silicate industries		87.7
Metals	63.1	
Electrotechnical industry	77.9	
Electrical generating stations	100.0	
Chemicals	78.0	
Chemicals proper		84.2
Bone working		49.7
Dyes		78.4
Wood distillation		87.0
Other chemical industries		71.2
Wood	58.7	
Average for Group A		71.6
<i>Group B (industries for consumers' goods) :</i>		
Salt extraction	74.9	
Pottery	100.0	
Textiles	40.1	
Cotton		31.2
Wool		46.5
Linen		75.5
Hemp		57.3
Silk		5.2
Clothing	66.2	
Leather	42.6	
Chemicals	38.7	
Rubber		28.3
Matches		38.9
Fats and perfumes		82.6
Drugs		58.4
Food, drink, and tobacco		
Tobacco		55.5
Beer		31.9
Yeast		63.9
Spirits		7.1
Oil		75.1
Printing	60.6	
Paper	100.0	
Average for Group B		46.5
Average for Groups A and B together		61.0

The reorganisation is being carried out energetically ; and according to the most recent data of the Supreme Economic Council of the Soviet Union, the number of industrial workers under the system of the continuous working week had already reached 69.2 per cent. by 1 July 1930.<sup>1</sup> According to the decision

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the report on the industrial situation in June 1930 in *Za Industrializaciju* (organ of the Supreme Economic Council of the Soviet Union), 22 July 1930.



of the Government Committee on the continuous working week taken at the end of June last, the change-over to the new system is to be completed in all industries during the coming economic year (1931-1932), except in the textile industry, where the problem in its relation to that of raw materials is to be considered separately.<sup>1</sup>

These are the official figures. But as a result of the political factors that, as shown above, played a part in the transition to the new system, the change was sometimes undertaken, at least nominally, without adequate preparation, whether from the economic, the technical, or the organisational standpoint. The result is high figures, but these do not altogether correspond to the facts. Not long ago, the following statement was openly made in a report to the Presidium of the Supreme Economic Council of the Soviet Union :

In spite of the satisfactory number of undertakings in which the system of the continuous working week has been adopted, the change-over in many of them is only nominal. Thus, in the Kharkov electrical generating stations, the continuous working week has been introduced nominally for 75 per cent. of the mechanics, but in fact only for 10 or 12 per cent. In many branches of industry, including engineering and metal working, the introduction of the continuous working week is only fictitious.

In particular, the report refers to "the majority of the Leningrad industries".<sup>2</sup> How far the change to the new system is only nominal cannot be determined as yet from the statements in the Press. But it is assuredly wrong to assume that the bulk of the industrial undertakings have gone over to the continuous working week only in appearance, and that the new system has had little or no effect in practice. That the continuous working week is playing an important part in Russian industry cannot be doubted.

But the introduction of the continuous working week has gone much further than industry alone. At first this was not at all the intention. In Larin's speech to the Congress of Soviets there was not a word of the reorganisation of commerce, offices, institutions, etc., on the new system. (In this connection it should be noted that the continuous working week is still generally described in the Soviet Union as a continuous production week, even for offices, administrative departments, etc. The

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Pravda*, 25 June 1930.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Za Industrializaciju*, 1 Aug. 1930.

system was first thought of only in connection with industrial undertakings, and the terminology has been affected by this idea.) In his series of articles in *Trud* in June 1929, Larin, however, was already speaking of the necessity of reorganising all retail trade, as well as such restaurants, cafés, cinemas (these were closed as a rule on Mondays, and many restaurants and cafés on Sundays), dispensaries, means of transport, etc., as were not already reorganised, so that the new system might not interfere with the satisfaction of the industrial workers' needs.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that this is no adequate reason for so far-reaching an extension of the system of the continuous working week, and in particular for the inclusion of all retail trade. The real motives for the extension of the system to the bulk of employees are rather to be found in the endeavour of the leaders of Russian social policy to avoid sparing non-manual workers the hardships that the manual workers would experience when work was reorganised on the new system. This end was pursued with all the greater intensity because non-manual workers are in many ways much worse treated by Soviet Russian social policy than are manual workers. The motives that proved decisive for the extension of the system to the bulk of non-manual workers were thus partly political. This became especially evident when it was decided to make the system general for all employees, and in particular for all officials.<sup>2</sup> The Decree of 26 August 1929 mentioned above was the first to embody these views. Up to the present no figures have been published showing how far the system has actually been introduced in retail trade, public offices, etc., and in fact no such figures appear to exist.

A special case occurring under the reorganisation of hours on the basis of the continuous five-day week is the so-called "interrupted" five-day week, in which the undertakings work four days and close on the fifth. Provision for introducing this system was made in the Decree of the Council of People's Commissaries of 25 December 1929 :

Industrial undertakings that cannot be changed over to the continuous production week may be changed over to the interrupted five-day week only if this is necessary to reduce the excessive demand for

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Trud*, 20 June 1929.

<sup>2</sup> It may be remembered that under Soviet law no distinction is made between officials and other employees.

electric current in the locality in question, or to relieve tramway and suburban transport congestion. . . . The weekly rest days for the various undertakings in a given locality that have adopted the interrupted five-day week shall be fixed by the local labour authorities in agreement with the undertakings and local inter-trade union bodies, in such a way that approximately the same number of workers and employees are free on each weekday.

In practice, the interrupted five-day week appears to be of little importance.

### WORKING ARRANGEMENTS UNDER THE CONTINUOUS WORKING WEEK

The basic idea of introducing the continuous working week was to avoid having the machinery idle during the workers' rest days, this being useless and sometimes even a direct cause of loss. The workers were to have their free days, but the undertakings were to go on working day in and day out, as had been done for years on the railways and in other so-called continuous-process undertakings. "360 or 300" was the title of Larin's first pamphlet: the factories were to work not 300 days, as hitherto, but 360 days.

This, however, was not to be achieved by reducing the workers' free time, but by a complicated distribution of hours of work, and in certain circumstances by the appointment of "flying squads" in the undertakings to replace the workers who were resting.

The change-over to the continuous working week could not be effected simply by dividing the workers into seven groups, each with its own special rest day. There were two obstacles to such an arrangement. The first was the shorter working day of six hours fixed by law for the eves of the weekly rest day and of the revolutionary holidays. The second was the relatively large number of general rest days, including eight public holidays (the so-called "revolutionary holidays"), and a certain number of "special rest days" (the term "religious festivals" was avoided in the legislation) not definitely fixed in the Labour Code ("up to ten"—in practice usually six). With the continuous working week the shortening of hours on the eve of the weekly holiday is hardly practicable, since it would mean that some of the workers must stop their work early every day, which in certain circumstances might seriously interfere with the working of the undertaking. The retention of

the many other rest days is also contrary to the object of the new system. The responsible authorities were rather agreed from the outset that when the continuous working week was introduced the number of holidays (excluding weekly rest days) should be reduced to a minimum, namely, to five days, and in the transition year six days. On these days all work would cease. They considered, further, that shorter hours should not be worked on the eves of the rest days. But in order that the individual worker might have the same number of hours of work during the year, the new arrangement of hours had to be based on a shorter "week" than the seven-day week then in force.

At first there was no agreement on the length of the new "week". The most varied schemes were suggested. In particular, Larin had at first proposed a six-day week (five working days and one rest day), but this would not quite have balanced the loss of most of the holidays and of the shorter working day on the eves of the rest days; to make up the difference, the annual leave would have to have been correspondingly lengthened. The discussion was closed by the publication of the Decree of the Council of People's Commissaries of the Soviet Union dated 24 September 1929 "concerning hours of work and rest periods in undertakings and institutions which change over to the continuous production week".

The Decree provides that the new organisation of work is to be based on the five-day week, consisting of four working days and one rest day.<sup>1</sup> An exception is made for building undertakings and seasonal undertakings in general, for which the Government Committee on the continuous working week was to devise a different scheme of hours of work, based on the principle of the continuous working week. In addition to this general exception specified in the Decree itself, the Decree provides that exceptionally "in individual undertakings and institutions" too, or in whole groups of these ("railways, water transport, etc."), "a different working week shall be fixed, according to their special circumstances", but subject to official approval. The undertakings and institutions that introduce the continuous working week are to stop work on the following five days in

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<sup>1</sup> This must not be confused with the five-day week that is the aim of the American trade unions, namely, an ordinary week with five days' work and a free Saturday and Sunday. In Soviet Russia this American five-day week is called the "Ford week".

the year<sup>1</sup>: 22 January, as the "commemoration day of 9/22 January 1905", and also "Lenin Day" (Lenin died on 21 January 1924); 1 and 2 May—"the days of the International"; and 7 and 8 November—"the days of the October Revolution". The remaining 360 days of the year are working days and are divided into 72 five-day weeks. All workers and employees "are to be given one rest day a week in rotation on different days, in accordance with special schedules to be prepared by the management of the undertaking or institution in agreement with the works' committee or other body taking its place."

The number of hours of work in the year is in principle to remain almost unchanged after the introduction of the continuous working week. This does in fact happen with the adoption of the five-day week, as will appear from the following figures. With the old system of hours of work and the eight-hour day, a worker would have 2,196 hours in 1929, and with the seven-hour day 1,962 hours. With the continuous five-day week, the corresponding figures are 2,208 and 1,932 hours, or 0.5 per cent. more and 1.5 per cent. less respectively.<sup>2</sup>

The five-day week appears in fact to have been adopted in most of the undertakings that have gone over to the continuous working week. At the same time, however, other versions of the continuous working week have been established. In building undertakings, according to a decision of 23 October 1929 of the Government Committee on the continuous working week, there is a six-day week (five working days and one rest day). In factories that have to stop work one or two days a month for repairs, there is a continuous six-day or seven-day week. There are also cases in which only part of the factory has adopted the continuous working week, and even cases in which there is a continuous working week of different lengths in different departments of a single factory.

As regards the actual arrangement of the work with the continuous working week, there are two principal forms. As a rule, with the five-day week, where there are a large number of workers doing very similar work, they are divided into five groups, five workers, each with his own rest day, being allotted

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<sup>1</sup> This of course does not apply to continuous processes. Here, when the continuous working week is introduced, the same principles are to be observed as in other undertakings in arranging hours of work, and work on the five revolutionary holidays is to be paid as overtime at double rates.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. BEREZANSKI, p. 30.

to every four jobs. The disadvantage of this arrangement is that the individual worker cannot work at the same job throughout the week, as will appear from the following schedule, giving the simplest grouping of five workers (A, B, C, D, and E) for work in one shift with the five-day week :

	Job 1	Job 2	Job 3	Job 4
1st day	A	B	C	D
2nd day	A	B	C	E
3rd day	A	B	D	E
4th day	A	C	D	E
5th day	B	C	D	E

This grouping may be altered in various ways, but for the bulk of the workers a change of job remains essential. To avoid this, a special device is often adopted. The arrangement of the work is based not on four but on five jobs, so that the regular workers retain their own jobs, and are replaced on their rest days by supplementary workers, who thus work at a different job every day. The supplementary workers—when there are whole groups of them, these are called “flying squads”—must have more than average skill and experience, so as to be able to adjust themselves quickly to new jobs. The collective agreements accordingly fix higher wage rates for these workers than the ordinary ones.

The matter is more complicated and difficult in undertakings where the work is more varied and individualised, for then the workers cannot be divided into four or five groups, and also cannot be so easily replaced by supplementary workers. This is especially true of the intermediate and higher technical staff, and of the managing staff in general. Many complaints have been made that the adoption of the continuous working week has in fact often deprived these groups of their regular rest days. There will be occasion to return to this point in the next section of this article.

These difficulties are specially apparent in offices, administrative departments, etc. Here, with the system of the continuous working week the work has to be arranged in such a way that any employee can be replaced by any other employee, so that the work need not be stopped on any day. In a pamphlet dealing with the problem of organising the continuous working week in the Soviet system, and describing its introduction in the administrative departments as “a powerful weapon in the fight against bureaucracy and waste” and a means “of bringing the

Soviet system nearer to the masses and of rendering better service to wide masses of the workers”<sup>1</sup>, the arrangements for substitutes are described as follows :

The continuous working week in general, and the problem of substitution in particular, call for a change in the Soviet administrative machine. It is therefore necessary in the first place to fix exactly the duties of each person, to define the functions of each individual employee. Furthermore, the employees must be trained not to carry official papers about with them in portfolios or to keep documents in their desks. The organisation must be such that all official papers not in current use are kept in a particular place (in the registry or the general department) where any employee can find them without difficulty. The day's post must as far as possible be dealt with on the eve of the rest day. Before his rest day, the employee must inform his substitute what he has to do, what questions have not been settled, how far they are to be regarded as urgent, and what persons he may expect to call and for what reasons. If the employee is unable—owing to the absence of the substitute, or for any other reason—to settle all this by word of mouth, he must do it in writing.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, it is expressly prescribed that the number of employees in offices, administrative departments, etc., may not be increased when the continuous working week is introduced.<sup>3</sup>

### THE EFFECTS OF THE CONTINUOUS WORKING WEEK

The principal object of introducing the continuous working week was to increase the output of Russian industry and reduce the costs of production. There can be no doubt that the new system is in fact capable of giving positive results of this kind. But the actual economic advantages of the continuous working week have been less than was expected, for the frequent precipitancy and lack of adequate preparation in changing over to the new system were bound to have an unfavourable effect on its economic results. Reliable data for throwing light on the question are not available, however, as the results of the new system have been seriously investigated in isolated cases only. At the end of May 1930 the organ of the Supreme Economic Council published an article entitled “The first results”, based on material supplied by the Commissariat of State Control (Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate), in which it expressly

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. ORLOV I, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 179.

referred to this point and at the same time stressed the inadequacy of the first results of the new system<sup>1</sup>:

The economic organisations under the Supreme Economic Council have not paid sufficient attention to the continuous working week. Practically nowhere can reliable information be found on what the continuous working week is intended to bring about and what practical results may be expected from its introduction. No steps have been taken to concentrate production in the best undertakings and increase their output. Practically no enquiries have been made into the experience of the undertakings that adopted the continuous working week at an earlier date. . . .

The overwhelming majority of the undertakings covered by the survey were without either administrative or technical preparation for the change-over to the new system. In the best of cases, all that was done was to prepare graphs and make financial calculations—on very inadequate bases—of the economic yield to be expected from the continuous working week. . . .

The lack of technical and administrative preparation for the change-over to the new system meant that the work in many undertakings *showed no improvement*. On the contrary, in some places the result was a definite setback. *In a number of localities the undertakings found it necessary after one and a half or two months' work on the new system to reintroduce the interrupted working week.* . . . One consequence is that in foundries, for instance, there are *various types of working week* in force; the five-day week, the six-day week, the seven-day week, and even other variations of the working week.

As a result of the adoption of the continuous working week the gross monthly output shows a *considerable rise*. This varies widely in magnitude. Since the adoption of the continuous working week the following undertakings have increased their monthly production: the Bakal metal mines (in the Urals) by 62 per cent., the Bjelo-Kalitvino metal mines by 13.4 per cent., the copper foundries of the Lugansk locomotive works by 33 per cent., the coach factory of the Koval works by 50 per cent., the leather goods factory of the Baku chemical and leather trust by 78 per cent., and the Tomna works of the Ivanovo silicate trust by 133 per cent. with a 2 per cent. increase in the number of workers.<sup>2</sup> The following undertakings on the contrary *have reduced their production since the adoption of the continuous working week*: the Nižni-Saldin works by 5 per cent., the Nadeždinsk works by 4.6 per cent., the No. 1 factory of the Ivanovo engineering trust by 14.3 per cent. with a 26 per cent. increase in the number of workers, and the "RGI" works of the Volga trust by 3 per cent. with a 12 per cent. increase in the number of workers.

The results with regard to output per head are similar. The majority of the undertakings covered by the enquiry show *an increase in output*

<sup>1</sup> *Za Industrializaciju*, 22 May 1930. The italics are as in the original.

<sup>2</sup> It is quite obvious that a large part of the indicated increases in production cannot in the great majority of the cases be ascribed to the adoption of the continuous working week. The figures have been given notwithstanding, so as to make it clear how little real enquiry has been made into the economic results of the new system. Even the Commissariat of State Control—the highest supervisory authority of the Soviet Union—was unable to produce reliable figures.

This also applies to the other data quoted above, concerning output per head after the introduction of the new system.



*per head* : the No. 2 factory of the Ivanovo engineering trust an increase of 40 per cent., the Volodarski works of the Ivanovo silicate trust 49 per cent., the Dzerzhinski and Pravda foundries 13.8 per cent., the "Sickle and Hammer" Works in Kharkov 7.3 per cent., the Nadeždinsk works 6 per cent., etc. Various other undertakings, on the contrary, showed a *fall in output per head*, which was particularly marked in the leather factories (19 per cent. in the Ziemliacka factory, 17 per cent. in the "Truženik", 15.5 per cent. in the "Red Tannery"). . .

When the continuous working week was first introduced, there were frequent cases of workers staying away on Sundays and holidays and of a certain deterioration of the work of the undertakings on these days. The survey made by the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate shows that this tendency has been practically overcome by now.

In these circumstances it hardly seems possible to give an empirical judgment on the actual economic effects of the system of the continuous working week. It may safely be assumed that the substantial increase in production of Soviet industry during the past year is partly due to the change-over to the new system, just as the deterioration in the quality of industrial production, which is generally and bitterly deplored in the Russian economic Press, is partly to be ascribed to the deterioration in the general conditions of production due to the irrational way in which the change-over was effected.

The social effects of the new system are much clearer. There are two fundamental differences between the Russian system of the five-day week and the system of hours of work hitherto in force. The first is the more even, not to say absolutely even, distribution of hours of work and free time over the whole year, and the second is the abolition of the general weekly rest day.<sup>1</sup>

The object of the first measure is to rationalise the distribution of hours of work, and it had no doubt some value for this, especially in Russia, where there have hitherto been rather a large number of holidays distributed very irregularly. But further special enquiry is needed to determine how far such a distribution

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<sup>1</sup> The present article considers only the economic and social aspects of the introduction of the new system without touching on the religious aspect. It is clear that the introduction of the continuous working week, with its compulsory abolition of religious festivals and Sundays, involves some coercion of conscience. But in Russia the population appears to take this less hardly than would be the case for instance in countries with a Catholic or Anglican population. In the first few months of the campaign for the new system, however, the Soviet Press laid emphasis precisely on the religious aspect and represented the continuous working week as a powerful means of fighting piety. This stress on the anti-religious significance of the reform was certainly exaggerated, and was manifestly aimed at intimidating its opponents and helping to counteract the workers' dissatisfaction, which was due chiefly to social reasons.

of hours, setting aside the provision that hours of work shall be shorter on the eves of holidays, can be regarded as an asset from the point of view of labour physiology and social reform. For the present it is impossible to give a reliable scientific answer to this question. But the general tendency everywhere of a progressive policy in the matter of hours of work, after achieving a definite general shortening of hours, is to achieve a further improvement of working conditions by lengthening the free week-end (the English week, the American five-day week) ; this seems rather to argue against the purely arithmetical tendency of the latest Russian system of hours of work.

But even if the advantage in principle of a longer week-end as compared with the shortening of the " week " from seven to five days is questioned, the new system, combining the change in the length of the week with the abolition of the general rest day, certainly means a distinct change for the worse in the arrangement of free time.

There have of course for decades been large groups of workers taking their holidays at different dates. Railwaymen are an obvious instance. But among social reformers this was always regarded as an evil, even if a necessary evil, to be kept within the limits of what is absolutely necessary. To make such a state of affairs the general rule must be regarded as a serious matter. A rest day taken when most other persons, and in particular most other colleagues, are working, is in fact only half a rest day. With the acute housing shortage in Russia, which means that often many families live in one dwelling and the workers are frequently housed in overcrowded factory tenements, combined with the fact that there are often two or more members of a worker's family going out to work, the abolition of the general rest day must undoubtedly be felt as a change for the worse in the arrangement of free time.

In official circles it was believed that these bad effects of the new system could be alleviated if not altogether abolished by arranging that the rest days for the individual workers should be fixed with all possible reference to their wishes, and in particular by allowing, whenever possible, the members of any one family to be free on the same day. It was thought that it would be quite " simple " to carry out such a measure.<sup>1</sup> In fact, how-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. LARIN, in *Trud*, 20 June 1929.

ever, it was usually "not even tried"<sup>1</sup>; in view of the diversity of methods of distributing hours of work in different undertakings (and even different departments of the same undertaking)—a diversity due to the existence of "weeks" of different lengths and the variety of the schedules, and taking the most extreme forms with the multiple-shift system<sup>2</sup>, whose extension has been energetically pressed during the last few years—it could not even be seriously contemplated.

That the adoption of the continuous working week must be felt as a hardship by the workers in these circumstances was demonstrated in *Trud*<sup>3</sup>, even if in a distorted manner :

The change-over to continuous production could of course not fail to rouse opposition among the most conservative workers. As an instance, the meeting of the staff of the Moscow textile factory "Labour Set Free", which was to decide on the question of changing over to continuous production, split on the point. This split was due to the women workers, and in particular the older women, who said that they wished to have their rest day on Sunday together with their husbands and would not have anything to do with the continuous working week. People were also heard to say at this meeting : they want to deprive us of our last chance even of praying, and to prevent us from going to church any more.

In the bleaching works of the Sverdlov calico factory there was another and even more dangerous phenomenon : the departure of such skilled workers as engineers. Before the continuous working week was adopted there were twenty engineers, now there are only twelve. The engineers do not say directly why they are leaving the undertaking, but it is whispered that they are going to other undertakings where the continuous working week has not yet been introduced.

Especially during the first months the Press tried to attribute this dissatisfaction of the workers with the introduction of the continuous working week solely or primarily to religious motives, so as the more easily to fight it as "reactionary". But the real causes of this dissatisfaction among wide sections of the workers were obvious. "We shall have to clean on the rest day as we now do on Saturdays," say the working women ; "the woman worker will not be able to rest on her rest day because she will have to wash and clean at home".<sup>4</sup> "How are we to work now", asks a young worker, "if mother is free on one day, father on another, brother on a third, and I myself

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. ORLOV I, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 178.

<sup>3</sup> 17 Sept. 1929.

<sup>4</sup> *Pravda*, 1 Oct. 1929 ; *Izvestia*, 5 Sept. 1929.

on a fourth ?”<sup>1</sup> And in the Donetz district the Communist Press recorded cases of protests even by young Communists that the continuous working week “imposed a yoke on them”.<sup>2</sup> “What is the good of having a family ?” said the workers of the “Sickle and Hammer” metal works in Moscow to a *Pravda* correspondent when asked about the effects of the continuous working week. “Is there to be no rest at all ? What is there for us to do at home if our wives are in the factory, our children at school, and nobody can visit us, so that there is nothing left but to go to a State tearoom ? What sort of a life is it if we are to rest in shifts and not together as a whole proletariat ? It is no holiday if you have to have it alone.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus even if the same number of hours are worked in the year, that is to say, even if the former free time standards are approximately maintained in quantity, the introduction of the continuous working week often means a substantial change for the worse in the quality of free time conditions. But even purely quantitatively the former standards are not always strictly observed. This is true in particular of the six-day week. The six-day week for building workers (i.e. a six-day week without the additional rest day once a month) in itself involves a reduction of the workers’ free time. But even the six-day week in factories that have to stop work once a month for repairs, which by law was not to lead to an increase in the number of hours of work calculated over the month or year, has in fact been turned in many cases into a six-day week without the additional rest day :

The economic institutions that introduce the six-day week in factories where work must stop one day a month do not as a matter of fact use this day for repairs but keep it as a normal working day. This is absolutely contrary to the decisions of the Council of People’s Commissaries of the Soviet Union of 26 August and 24 September 1929, which prohibit quite categorically enough the raising of the number of hours worked in the year when introducing the continuous working week.<sup>4</sup>

For a large number of non-manual workers an extension of hours is directly prescribed. Hitherto the regulation for

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<sup>1</sup> *Pravda*, 1 Oct. 1929.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, 16 Oct. 1929.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, 1 Oct. 1929.

<sup>4</sup> From the circular of the Supreme Economic Council and the General Council of Trade Unions of July 1930, in *Za Industrializaciju*, 13 July 1930.

non-manual workers engaged in intellectual or office work not directly connected with production was that their normal working day should be six hours. The Decree of 24 September 1929 provided on the contrary that the hours of work in offices, institutions, etc., should be raised to seven a day (more accurately six and a half hours, since the lengthening of the working day was to be accompanied by a half-hour break to be reckoned as working time). It is suggested to these workers, however, that they have accepted the lengthening of hours of work "with enthusiasm"<sup>1</sup>, as they have "subordinated their sectional interests to general class interests":

Non-manual workers have understood this, and all of them, apart from a few statements by obviously foreign elements, have expressed themselves in favour of the longer hours. But this is not all. When the Government decided to fix a seven-hour day for non-manual workers, a large number of their associations in the Soviet institutions decided to request the Government to introduce it without counting the break.<sup>2</sup>

But these remarks in a semi-official pamphlet intended to popularise the idea of the continuous working week among employees are characteristic not so much of their views as of the general atmosphere in which the new system is put into effect in the Soviet Union.

Notwithstanding all this, the resulting increase in hours of work is a relatively small matter. What is much more serious is that the introduction of the continuous working week has made it an ordinary occurrence for large groups of the workers to suffer uncertainty as to obtaining any free time at all. It was pointed out above that this risk has become especially acute for numbers of non-manual workers.<sup>3</sup> But it is also serious for workers not belonging to large groups employed on similar work.<sup>4</sup> Efforts are made to overcome these difficulties, at least nominally, by reckoning hours of work roughly over longer periods, as was in fact recommended in the Decree of 24 September 1929. This also often adversely affects workers in large non-specialised groups. The results to which it may lead in

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. ORLOV I, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Trud*, 2 Oct. 1929; ANDREJČIK, p. 10; LARIN III, pp. 46-47; ORLOV II, p. 28; PODOROLSKI and FRENKEL, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> *Pravda*, 1 Oct. 1929.

the so-called continuous-process undertakings may be seen from the following report :

According to very incomplete data it is reckoned that there are some fifty different ways of arranging the work in the undertakings that have changed over to continuous production. The shift rotation period varies from 4 to 38 days ; the number of shifts worked without a rest day varies from 4 to 30 ; the length of the weekly rest period varies from 24 to 84 hours ; the break between two shifts (for the same worker) is not seldom only 8 hours.<sup>1</sup>

Just as when the three-shift system and the seven-hour day were introduced<sup>2</sup>, so, too, when the continuous working week was introduced the Soviet Press continually urged as a social justification for the new measure that it would lead to the engagement of many additional workers and thus to a substantial reduction of unemployment. In the autumn of 1929 the Commissariat of Labour calculated the number of additional workers and employees to be engaged during the next four years, i.e. until the end of 1932-1933, in consequence of the adoption of the continuous working week, and arrived at the following figures<sup>3</sup> :

Industry	643,500
Building	376,500
Transport and communications	77,200
Social and educational institutions	77,500
Commerce and banking	66,200
Peat extraction	50,000
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Total	1,290,900

Larin gave similar figures : about 600,000 in industry, 200,000 in building, 200,000 in peat extraction, forestry, transport, etc.<sup>4</sup> Similar calculations were made repeatedly. It soon became clear, however, that the increase in staffs was as a rule only nominal.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. SORKIN : "O režimie truda na predpriyatijakh s nepreryvno deistvuiščim proizvodstvom" (Methods of arranging the work in undertakings with continuous production), in *Voprosy Truda*, Dec. 1929, p. 47. The same publication (p. 121) also contains the following passage : "There are factories (with continuous production) where the workers have to work for 30 successive days, sometimes 30 successive nights, after which they get 7 free days."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXII, No. 3, Sept. 1930 : "The Seven-Hour Day in Soviet Russia", especially pp. 353-354.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. ARONOVİČ, p. 15 ; PATRUNOV, p. 12. Patrunov himself (pp. 13-14) considers that other figures should be given, as follows : industry, 200,000 ; building, 300,000 ; transport, 50,000 ; commerce, 100,000 ; social and educational institutions, 150,000 ; total, 800,000.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. LARIN II, p. 22 ; somewhat different figures, but of the same order of magnitude, are given in LARIN I, pp. 61-62, and LARIN II, p. 77.

It was a case not of the engagement of new workers, but of the continued employment of workers who would otherwise have been superfluous in the undertaking, or would have become superfluous on the adoption of rationalisation measures. As early as 18 September 1929 the Government Committee on the continuous working week decided that the adoption of the new system was to be carried out "with a compulsory observance of the programme of production . . . as regards the quantity of labour"; in other words, the prescribed number of workers was not to be exceeded. "If however changing over to the continuous production week makes it necessary to increase the number of workers beyond the figure fixed in the programme, . . . the new system may be introduced only with the approval of the Supreme Economic Council in agreement with the General Council of Trade Unions."<sup>1</sup> This was put even more clearly by the Committee set up by the Supreme Economic Council to consider the introduction of the continuous working week. On 24 September 1929, the very day that the Council of People's Commissaries was to discuss the Decree on the adoption of the continuous working week, "the fundamental principles" adopted by the Committee were published in the Press. These stated very clearly:

In changing over to the continuous working week an automatic increase in the number of workers employed proportional to the increase in the hours worked by the undertaking is in no case to be allowed. The need for additional labour must be met in the first place by drawing on the existing latent surpluses in the industry, and by the greatest possible intensification of the working day, the efficient employment of the workers in accordance with their skill, and the adoption of methods of organisation and rationalisation designed to increase the output per head.<sup>2</sup>

The Decree of 24 September was silent on this point so far as manual workers are concerned. Another Decree of the same date, dealing with the "reorganisation of work" for salaried employees in undertakings and institutions, on the contrary, expressly provided that the transition to the continuous working week must be effected without an increase in the number of employees.

At the same time the daily Press continued to insist that the adoption of the new system would lead to a substantial rise

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<sup>1</sup> *Trud*, 21 Sept. 1929.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, 24 Sept. 1929.

in the number of workers in employment, especially manual workers. At the All-Russian Conference held in December 1929 to discuss the problems connected with the continuous working week, Tolstopjatov, then Deputy Commissary of Labour, repeated that the number of additional workers to be engaged in industry in consequence of the adoption of the new system would be 600,000.<sup>1</sup> On the same date as this report, however, the most recent estimates of the Supreme Economic Council were published elsewhere. According to these the number of additional workers to be employed in industry would reach 801,800 by the end of the five-year period, i.e. the end of the year 1932-1933. Of these workers, however, the great majority would be employed in new undertakings (492,100), or in extensions of existing undertakings, or to replace workers leaving in the ordinary course, and only 38,700 would represent "the new demand arising out of the adoption of the continuous working week".<sup>2</sup> This makes it appear that the adoption of the new system will result in only a relatively small increase in the number of workers.

It is still impossible to say how far the proposed "intensification of work" can be carried out by means of rationalisation. Up to the present, however, it seems that more additional workers are being engaged in consequence of the introduction of the continuous working week than was estimated by the Supreme Economic Council.

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<sup>1</sup> *Idem*, 12 Dec. 1929.

<sup>2</sup> *Torgovo-Promyšlennaiia Gazeta*, 12 Dec. 1929.