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**THINK FOR YOURSELF PRESS**

Marika Dy Zaster, President for Life  
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"Work is a social duty."

The Grand Council of Fascism,  
1927

"Labor is a duty of all."

Constitution of the USSR, 1924

"When work is a duty, life is slavery."

Maxim Gorky

# WORKING SUCKS

by Tim Righteous

No matter how much I hated it, I had to face up to the fact that I would have to earn some money. I was like many fullbloods. I didn't want to work in an office or a factory. I thought myself too good for that, not because I was stuck up, but because any human being is too good for that kind of no-life, even white people. I trained myself to need and want as little as could be so that I wouldn't have to work except when I felt like it. That way, I got along fine with plenty of time to think, to ask, to learn, to listen, to count coup with the girls.

-John Lame Deer

*we just had was a piece of work! I work at Mc Donalds flipping burgers for \$3.75/hr. When I write "Working Sucks!" I am referring to the last meaning of the word work: time and effort exchanged on the labor market for a wage or for a salary.*

As I point out in the text, working less doesn't mean being unproductive. Working less also doesn't necessarily mean leaching off your community. My low-work friends spend much of their free time volunteering and helping others; doing "work" that is important to the community but that doesn't have any value on the labor market. For that matter, who can put a dollar value on something like being with friends? Communities are built on friendship. What could be more important? But friendship doesn't pay.

*How will we eat if everyone refuses to work? We'll figure something out - we always have. Human beings are nothing if not inventive and adaptable. With imagination and courage, we can create any future we desire.*

Kissy, kiss, Tim Righteous, 1997

Working sucks.

Day after day we get up early and trudge to work. We swallow our pride and put up with being ordered around by the boss. We sweat and toil at jobs we hate, wasting away our lives. Why do we do it? Because we have to? Because we need the money? Or because we don't know how to live any other way?

As Americans we work way too hard. Most of us work 40 or more hours a week from when we are 18 years old until after we turn 60. One in four American workers works more than 49 hours a week. One in eight works more than 60 hours a week and one in ten holds down more than one job.

And we keep working more and more. Americans have added 20 extra work days to our work year since 1970. American factory workers work an average of five weeks a year in overtime alone. Americans work two months more per year than the French and the Germans. We must be crazy.

Working this hard is weird and unnatural. For hundreds of thousands of years before the dawn of history, people lived as hunter-gatherers and simple farmers. Hunting and gathering is a pretty relaxed way to make a living. Modern hunter-gatherers like Native Australians "work" less than four hours a day. Even after we gave up the forests and built cities, we still didn't work very hard. During medieval times in Europe, people worked as few as 120 days a year.

There is no reason for us to be working so hard. As advances in technology help us work more productively, we should be able to work less. Today, American workers are ten times more productive than we were 100 years ago. That means, for every hour we work today, we produce as many goods and services as workers produced in ten hours in 1890. That also means we should be able to work one tenth as much, and live just as well, as people did back then. That would be less than eight hours of work a week!

Finally, please, please, please, working less is not (gasp) a trend. The quickest way to kill a good, radical idea is to let the vampiric corporate media get a hold of it. I can see it now: working less, neutered and declawed, appearing on the cover of "Newsweek" and on "MTV NEWS," complete with a hairstyle and a soundtrack. I get shudders. So treat the media like a bad smell. Use community access TV. Use pirate radio. Use truly independent publishers and record labels. But don't try to use the corporate media. You don't use them - they use you.

Kissy Kiss, Tim Righteous 1994

## Postscript

This second edition is only slightly revised. I would like to make one clarification though. I think that most of the people who have had problems with WS tripped over the word *work*. We use *work* to describe a collection of very different things: *I am working on a new painting. I work out at the gym on Wednesdays. That apple strudel*

## Afterword

I stole most of the ideas and statistics from the books listed by Bob Black, Juliet Schor, and Paul Lefargue. Intellectual property is theft. Anything original comes from my own experiences living in a low-work tribe of friends we called "The Mt. Hood Collective" and from research at the Boston Public Library.

I wrote this pamphlet by combining some of Black's and Schor's ideas with my own, but using language that is accessible to high school-aged Americans. This pamphlet is targeted at Americans who identify themselves as middle class (90% of the population according to one survey), although many of the ideas I presented are relevant to rich, middle, and poor. As Schor and also Barbara Ehrenreich have pointed out, it's not that the poor are playing a different game from the middle class. Rather, the poor are playing the same produce-and-consume game, and losing.

Since we don't work eight hours a week, where did all that extra productivity go? A lot of it went as profits into the pockets of the rich. The rich in America are richer than any other group of people ever in the history of the world. If we work harder or better, our rich bosses aren't under any obligation to pay us more or let us work less. Sadly, that's how capitalism works. (Capitalism really sucks, but that's beyond the scope of this pamphlet. There are books listed at the end that go into some depth about how capitalism sucks and what we can do about it.)

The rest of that productivity went into "improving" our standard of living. We made a decision to buy more rather than work less. Some of the things we bought really did improve the way we live. Very few homes in 1890 had running water, electricity, or flush toilets. But most of what we bought were fluff consumer products like big cars and color TVs that are fun to own, but that we don't really need. The question is: why did we make

this choice? Why did we choose to buy more crap instead of working less?

We didn't. American corporations made the choice for us by brain-washing us with advertising. Advertisements are everywhere, telling us we will be happier, better looking, admired, respected, and even loved, if we just buy this or that product. Of course we all know that we can't buy happiness or love, but with advertising poking into every part of our lives, it's hard not to give in to the idea that we can buy a better life. Eventually almost everyone does give in to the dull, exhausting trap of work and spend, work and spend, produce and consume.

The price for this choice is high. Work saps our spirit and crushes our sense of freedom. Kissing our boss's ass all day is humiliating. The worst is when we actually get used to being pushed around. Human beings need to be free to develop our independent selves. The more we work, the less we think like free people and the more we think like dogs: dull and obedient.



be a lot of help in organizing a low-work tribe of friends.

“The Art and Science of Dumpster Diving” by John Hoffman. Also printed by Loompanics. John has some foolish political ideas, but if you can get past that, the information is priceless.

“Future Primitive” by John Zerzan.

Autonomea, PO Box 568, Williamsburgh Station, Brooklyn, NY 11211-0568.

Hunter-gatherers were zero-work experts. This book will make you want to smash your TV and head for the hills.

“Edible Wild Plants” by Lee Peterson. If you live in the country, there's free food under your feet!

“The New Farm Vegetarian Cookbook” edited by Louis Hagler and Dorothy R. Bates. Book Publishing Co. This is a good book for beginners or try any vegetarian cookbook that looks good to you.

Work takes time from other, better things like being with our families and friends, traveling, making love, drinking beer, painting, writing, reading, playing music, cooking and eating good food, etc. These are the things that make life rich and interesting. Work makes life boring, short, and gray.

Work is also killing us. Twenty five thousand American workers are killed each year on the job. Two million more are disabled and 25 million are injured. These numbers don't include the 50 thousand Americans who are killed each year in car crashes, many of whom are traveling to or from work.

Finally, we can't afford to keep consuming things the way we do. Americans make up only 5% of the world's population, but we consume more than 25% of the world's resources and energy. Soon those resources will run out. Our over-producing industries are filling the sky and water with smoke and sludge. Most of the smog in the air comes from people

commuting to work in cars. Our consumption habit is ruining the earth.

To keep up the flow of resources into our country, we force the rest of the world (and many poor Americans) to do our dirty work. Poor people in places like Mexico and South Africa sweat all day in factories and mines so we can have cheap fabric and coal to make our clothes and heat our homes. The median income world-wide is only \$2,000 per person a year. The average American makes 65 times the salary of the poorest half of the world. If we could learn to work and consume less, these poor people could spend less time working for us, and more time working to feed and house themselves.

If we want to be free, if we want to really live our lives, if we want to live on a healthy planet, if we want to end suffering and exploitation in the world, we will have to learn to work less.

you will pick up your own set of tactics and tips. What couldn't be included in this short pamphlet can be found in the books listed below. These are great books. Some of the titles may be hard to find. Try inter-library loans at your local library or ordering them directly from the publishers. Spread the word and have fun.

"The Abolition of Work and Other Essays" by Bob Black. Loompanics Unlimited, PO Box 1179, Port Townsend, WA 98368. A classic. If there's one book on this list you must read, this is it.

"The Over-worked American" by Juliet Schor. Where Bob Black is snotty and radical, Juliet Schor is measured and thorough.

"The Right to Be Lazy" by Paul Lafargue. Charles H. Kerr Publishing Co., PO Box 914, Chicago Illinois 60690. Also a classic. A little out of date after more than 100 years but still fun to read.

"Directory of Intentional Communities" Communities Directory, c/o Alpha Farm, Deadwood, OR 97430. This book can



## Going All the Way: Zero Work

After working less for a while, you will start to really enjoy the extra free time. You may find yourself not wanting to work at all. (Who could blame you?) If this is the case, you can go all the way and simply stop working. There isn't enough space here to discuss zero-work tactics other than to say it can be done. Zero-work tribes combine most of the living-cheap tactics and tips with squatting (living for free in abandoned buildings), shoplifting food, foraging for food, and using advanced dumpster diving techniques to live on practically no money at all. As you get more into the low-work scene in your town, you will probably meet some zero-work experts who can show you the tricks. Working less is great but working not at all is a blast!

There's much more to learn about working less, but this should be plenty of information to get you started. As you go,



"I do not like work even when another person does it."  
Mark Twain

*But if I work less, won't I starve?* Most middle Americans have a terrible fear that if they stop working all the time, they won't be able to afford food and rent. The trick is learning how to work less by learning how to spend less. In the next section we will go over a few simple ways to live cheap and spend a lot less. Living cheap doesn't mean suffering and starving. You can live cheap and also enjoy a comfortable, plentiful life.

*But I like my job.* There are some lucky people who have better jobs or who work at jobs where they do something they like. If you are one of these people, you have to ask yourself, do you really like your job, or do you just hate your job less than most people? If you had a choice, would you choose to work at your job for 40 hours a week? Even sex would get boring after going at it for 40 hours a week, 50 weeks a year. Work can spoil anything. Many people love gardening, but farm-work is hot and back-breaking. Cooking can be fun, but working as a cook in a busy restaurant is hell. If you like your job now,

g) The Blitz. Most people who work less, work part-time, but part-time jobs often are the worst jobs and don't pay well. Some clever low-workers get around this problem by working short stints at full-time jobs. These "Blitzers" work for a few months at a well-paying full-time job, all the while living cheap and saving money. Then, when they have a good bit of cash saved up, they quit and live for as long as possible on the money they have saved. "The Blitz" is a good way to reap all the benefits of working full-time and still work less.

h) Relax. This might come as a surprise, but working-less is stressful at first. Living without a regular paycheck can mess with your head. Don't try to make the change alone. Talk things over with your under-employed friends. Lean on your friends. Friends rule! If you have to go back to full-time work for a while to find your balance, it's not a failure. Just quit your job again when you feel ready.

and have tons of loans hanging over your head, your best bet is to start living cheap now, but keep working full-time so you can pay off those loans as fast as possible. It's almost impossible to live cheap and work less with school loans weighing you down.

e) Don't ever accept a management job. Even if the management job is supposed to be part-time, you will end up working more. Giving a part-time worker an assistant manager's job is a sneaky way to get that worker to go full-time. Besides, who would want to be a dick-headed assistant manager anyway?

f) Don't buy a car. Cars are so expensive, and in larger towns and cities, mostly useless. On top of the cost of the car itself, there are finance charges, registration, gas, repairs, and the big one, insurance. Get a bike, use public transportation, but don't buy a car. If you live in a group, you might want to keep one car to use for road trips and shopping. In that case you can share the costs of gas and insurance, and it won't be so expensive.

you will like your job even more if you work less.

*If I don't work, what will I do?* Working less doesn't mean being unproductive. Take gardening again: Gardening doesn't pay. To make gardening pay, you would have to work like a farmer. But you can easily grow lots of vegetables, possibly enough to live on, simply by goofing around in your garden. Why work?

Life is an adventure if you have the time. There are so many things to do in the world, one person couldn't possibly do them all. It's sad: we get so caught up in our jobs, that when we get home, we can't think of anything better to do with ourselves than watch TV. Don't be a zombie slave - quit your job!



“Work is the refuge of people who have nothing better to do.” Oscar Wilde

you learn to be a robot - obedient and dull. Forget it. Forget it all.

d) Think hard about going to college. Almost nobody can afford to pay for college these days, so most people have to take out loans. It used to be that going to college meant getting a high-paying job after graduation. Sadly, there aren't that many high-paying jobs left anymore. Most college graduates end up flipping burgers and waiting tables with the rest of us. But unlike those of us who skipped college, these poor college graduates have monstrous loans to pay off.

Think about waiting a while after high school and seeing what happens. Who knows what you will want to do in four years. You can always go to college later. If you really want to go to college, local community colleges are much cheaper than state schools or private colleges. If you are motivated, you can get just as good an education at a community college as you could get at a fancy private school, at a fraction of the cost (remember: never pay full price). If you already went to college

child you have after the first will make it that much harder to live cheap.

If you do have a child, it will be even more important to live in a big group. Living in groups cuts down on the housework. This is another good reason to live with a group of friends, even if you don't have kids. It takes just a little bit longer to cook for ten people than it takes to cook for one or two. If seven friends share the cooking, each person only has to cook dinner once a week. You can also share the house cleaning and (most importantly) the child care. Without living in groups, it is difficult for families to live cheaply enough to be able to work less.

c) Forget everything you learned in high school. High school sucks. The classes are too big and the teachers are burnt-out and under-paid. With 25, 30, or 40 kids in a class there's no way your teachers could ever actually teach. The best they could do is train you to be a good worker. Be on time. Be quiet. Do what you're told. Don't talk back. Teachers act like bosses and

## LIVING CHEAP - WORKING LESS

Imagine being able to live on a part-time job, and work only 20, 15, or even 10 hours a week. Life would be like one long weekend, with a little work thrown in here and there. You could sleep in, everyday. You could go on long trips; travel the world. You could take up a serious hobby or spend some time on a project you've been forced to put off. You can live this way - you just have to be smart, a little crafty, and learn how to live very cheap.

There are two main tactics to living cheap. The first tactic is simple: never pay full price. It's amazing how much more expensive things are when they are new. This all comes back to the power of advertising and the cycle of work and spend, produce and consume. Advertising has convinced us that new is always better. New isn't better - it's just more expensive. Now that you know, you don't have to fall into that trap.

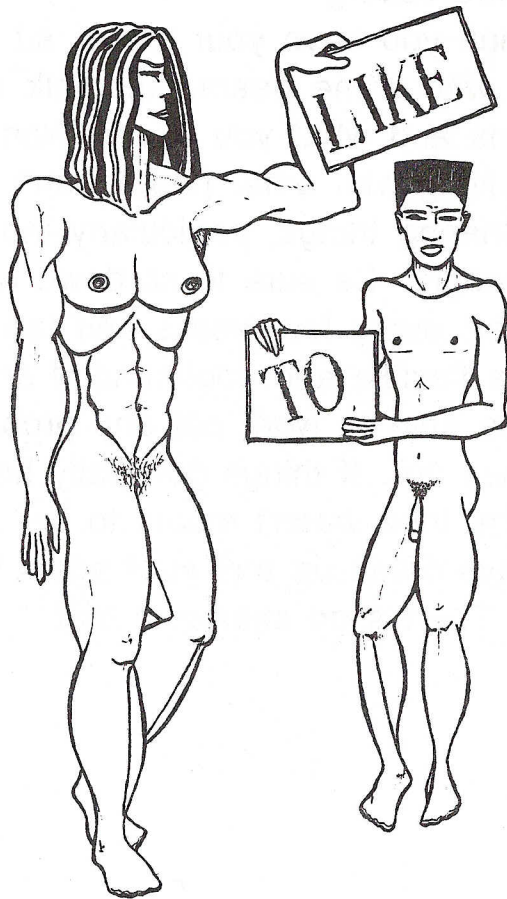
Learn where to find the best used stuff in your town or city. Where are the good used clothing stores and used book stores? Where can you buy a used bike? Many larger towns and cities have weekly magazines devoted to want-ads. These are great: you can find almost anything, and since you are buying from the owner, there's no sales tax. Be a miser. Be a cheap bastard. Don't part with one extra penny if you can help it.

It's also amazing how much stuff you can get for free. Every day at the supermarket in your neighborhood, pounds and pounds of produce are thrown out because the produce is slightly damaged or because it is a bit over ripe or under ripe. Stupid American consumers won't buy fruits or vegetables unless they are perfect, so all this good stuff gets put in a bag and thrown in a dumpster behind the market. If you grab that bag, all that perfectly good food is yours for free.

It's hard to try dumpster-diving, but it really isn't as gross as you might think. Most of what is in dumpsters isn't smelly,

In addition to the two main tactics (never paying full price and living in groups), here are a few more tips you will want to keep in mind as you plan your low-work life-style:

- a) Go vegetarian. Meat is disgusting, unhealthy, and evil, but on top of all that, meat is really expensive. Meat-eaters spend two to three times as much money on food as vegetarians do. If you can learn to cook and eat vegetarian, you will save cash. A cookbook is listed at the end that can help you get started.
- b) Don't get yourself, or anyone else, pregnant. Children are expensive and time-consuming. Full-time working mothers spend an average of 45 hours a week caring for their children on top of the 40 hours they put in working to pay the bills. If you need cheap birth control, Planned Parenthood is a trustworthy organization that can be found in the yellow pages in almost every town. If you really want to have kids, have just one. You can spend 18 years pampering and spoiling one beautiful child and still afford to work less. Every



“A worker is a part-time slave.” Bob Black

rotting food - it's wrapping and packaging (another huge waste of our consumer culture). Anything cool you find in a dumpster is yours for free. Grab these free treasures as you laugh at the zombies trudging off to work. If you live by one rule, make it this: never pay full price.

The second main tactic for living cheap is to live with a large group of friends, say six to twelve people. Large groups of people spend less money per person than single people living alone. Economists call this fact an "economy of scale." For instance, one big apartment is usually cheaper to rent than a bunch of little apartments. It's also less expensive to buy food as a group. You can buy economy-size packages of food or you can really save money and shop at cooperative supermarkets or bulk-discount stores.

Living in groups is cheap because you can share resources. Let's say one friend in your group finds a part-time job that pays well. She can pitch in extra money for rent. Another friend might work at a restaurant that doesn't pay as well but she

can bring home some food for the group. A third friend might have a car the group can use. Not everyone will have the same resources to share with the group, but if everyone pitches in what they can, it will all even out in the end.

One more advantage to living in a group is security. This is probably the most important reason to live with a tribe of friends. For most people, money is their security. If they get sick or lose their job, they have money saved up to help them survive. Working less means making less money and usually saving less money. It's good to know you have friends that can support you and take care of you if you lose your job or break your leg. That "all for one and one for all" spirit is the best part of living in a good low-work tribe.

So pass this pamphlet around to your friends and see if anyone is interested. If you can't find a lot of people at first, don't worry too much. Even three or four people can live with less money than one person alone. Sooner or later, more people will

want to join you when they see how much fun you are having

When you have your group, sit down together with some beers, and talk about your plans and what you expect from each other. Living with other people isn't always easy. Sharing things, particularly money, can be tough. Be sure to sit down (with more beer) every few weeks and talk things over. Be flexible and cool-headed and you should be able to work out any problem that comes up. If things get really heavy, maybe the tribe wasn't meant to be. You can always break up and start again in new groups. There's no shame in that.