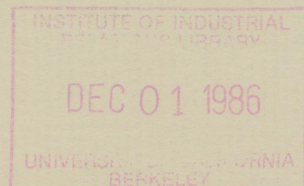


Part-Time employment

UPGRADING PART-TIME WORK :

Why Unions
Should Support
Voluntary Job Sharing. //

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UPGRADING PART-TIME WORK

Why Unions Should Support Voluntary Job Sharing

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NWW...

New Ways to Work San Francisco (NWW) is a national, non-profit organization that conducts research and provides information and training on a variety of work issues. Its goal is to encourage constructive and fulfilling work while improving the quality of work life for all.

Since 1974, NWW has promoted the use of voluntary job sharing as a means of meeting the varying needs of both workers and institutions.

THANKS...

NWW wishes to thank Diana Doughtie, business agent with AFSCME district 57, and Nancy Elliot, union activist and former business agent with SEIU Local 400, for reading a draft of this text and offering valuable comments and suggestions.

Job Sharing Defined

JOB SHARING is a voluntary work arrangement in which two persons, each working part time, share the responsibility for one full-time position. The position continues to be viewed as full time; the compensation, rights, and benefits generally accorded a full-time worker in that position are shared by the two partners.

- SALARY AND BENEFITS are usually prorated according to the hours worked, each person earning a pro-rata share of what he/she would otherwise earn as a full-time employee. Because sharers are often at different skill, experience, and seniority levels, they often earn different wages. Sometimes the employer pays the full rather than prorated amount for medical coverage for each partner, but other fringe benefits are almost always prorated.

- TIME schedules are usually agreed to by the two partners with the approval of the supervisor. The needs of the job and the needs of the sharers must be considered. A wide variety of schedules have been utilized. Sharers have worked on alternate days, have split the week by working the beginning or end, or have worked alternate weeks; some rotate their schedule to conform to the work flow; others overlap every day or once a week to cover peak periods of activity or ensure sufficient communication.

- DIVIDING THE WORK entails identifying the responsibilities of the job and relating them to the particular skills and experience of each sharer. Tasks are then allocated on the basis of the best use of each sharer's talents and energy.

JOB SHARING must be distinguished from WORK SHARING with which it is often confused. Work sharing is a term used to describe attempts to create alternatives to layoffs by temporarily spreading a reduced volume of work among an existing workforce. Job sharing is a means of creating permanent part-time opportunities in positions that cannot be split or reduced in hours.

Introduction

Most shared jobs have come about informally -- proposals made by one or two employees have been accepted by their employers. In some cases the employers have offered voluntary job sharing, particularly as a means of minimizing layoffs. And with increasing frequency, unions are negotiating job sharing as an employee option without ties to layoff conditions.

Teachers and other public sector unions have led on this issue. Hundreds of locals affiliated with both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association have negotiated contracts with provisions for job sharing. Furthermore, the representative assembly of the National Education Association, at its 1981 convention, passed a resolution supporting the concept of voluntary job sharing as a way to meet the varying needs of teachers. Independent public sector unions as well as locals affiliated with the Service Employees International Union, with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, and with Operating Engineers have also negotiated contracts for job sharing.

In the private sector, unions representing flight attendants have been most active in negotiating job sharing as an option for their members. The Association of Flight Attendants, in contracts with both Alaska and United Airlines in 1980, obtained provisions for voluntary job sharing as a way to avoid mandatory furloughs for their members. The International Union of Flight Attendants in the fall of that same year also negotiated a contract allowing job sharing with Pan American Airlines.

Unions Should Support Voluntary Job Sharing Because ...

#1. Workers Want And Need The Option To Job Share

The reasons vary. They include family responsibilities, job stress and burnout, health problems, disabilities, schooling, phasing into retirement, making a transition to another career, and the desire to pursue other interests.

But the fact remains the same. National surveys as well as union surveys of their own memberships indicate that workers want and need job sharing options. For example, one 1981 poll of adult family members conducted by Louis Harris and Associates asked the following: If you or your spouse were offered a single job shared with someone else, so that each person can take more time away from work but the job still gets done, would it help your family a great deal, somewhat, hardly at all or not at all? Fifty seven percent of the working men and sixty-four percent of the working women responded that job sharing would help their family somewhat or a great deal.

New Ways to Work sees almost 1000 clients a year -- men and women, rich and poor, union and non-union workers, unemployed and full-time employees -- who are all interested in job sharing as a part-time alternative. And more than a score of similar community organizations around the country report that they have clients with similar needs.

Unions must begin to respond to these workers.

#2. Job Sharing Upgrades Part-Time Work In A Way That Undercuts Management's Ability To Abuse It

Unions are legitimately concerned about the plight of traditional part-time workers. Employers have exploited people's needs to work less than full time. They have offered them dead-end jobs with low pay, no fringe benefits, and no job security. They have hired part-time workers rather than full-time workers because they have been cheaper. And they have undercut wages and other gains of full-time workers in doing so.

But there will always be people who want to work less than full time. And trends indicate that this number is increasing. Unions should acknowledge one of the possibilities that these conditions may indicate -- that some people want to work part time badly enough that they will lower their expectations in order to do so.

Rather than oppose part-time work because of its traditional drawbacks, unions should fight for wages and working conditions for part-time workers that give them parity with full-time workers, thus undercutting the possibility for management abuse and ensuring that part-time is voluntary.

Management has no dollar incentive to force workers to reduce to part time or to hire part timers rather than full timers when the union contract provides part timers with a proportionate share of the wages, rights and benefits accorded full timers. Elementary and secondary teachers, for example, have been sharing jobs under union contracts since 1965 and there are no known instances of management abusing the option by trying to force employees to part time or by hiring job sharers rather than full-time teachers. Furthermore, the job sharers have job security and parity with full-time workers. This contrasts markedly with the less favorable conditions

of part-time faculty members at community colleges around the country who are largely unorganized and have salary, benefits, and tenure rights that are significantly inferior to those of unionized teachers.

#3. Job Sharing Contributes To Full Employment

It makes absolutely no sense, particularly during times of high unemployment, to lock workers into full-time jobs when their preference is for part-time work. The National Commission on Working Women, for example, reported in a 1978 survey that almost one quarter of women working full time would actually prefer part-time employment and that roughly one half of all women job seekers were looking for part-time work.

Unions can save jobs for their members during times of layoffs by proposing voluntary job sharing programs. For every two full-time workers who prefer to reduce to half time and share a job one other union member is not laid off.

The alternative -- the loss of jobs -- also results in a net loss of union membership. Furthermore, it demoralizes and divides the entire workforce as those workers lucky enough to retain their jobs worry about whether they will be next. At the same time, the union is forced to deal with individual grievances about the layoffs and with work speedup.

Recognizing these facts, forward-thinking teachers' unions and employers in education have begun to initiate work-time options programs as a way to combat high unemployment. Declining enrollments and budget cutbacks in the mid to late 70's prevented school districts from hiring new teachers. In many instances even tenured teachers with years of seniority were laid off. In response to the bleak employment picture for teachers in Hawaii, that state's legislature initiated a job sharing program that permitted up to 100 partnerships. Tenured

teachers with seniority were offered the opportunity to cut back to half time and new teachers were hired to fill the remaining half-time positions.

Thus, job sharing not only can save jobs for those currently employed and facing the possibility of layoffs, but also can create employment opportunities for the handicapped, women, students, and others previously barred from the workforce by their need to work less than full time.

#4. Voluntary Job Sharing Can Be An Organizing Tool For Unions

While the percentage of the workforce in unions has decreased over the last ten years, the numbers of women and part-time employees in the workforce have increased dramatically. In the last decade alone, the ranks of part timers have grown three times as fast as the ranks of full timers.¹ Similarly, the rate of female participation in the labor force grew from 33.9 percent in 1950 to 50.9 percent in 1979.²

Unfortunately, both of these groups are under-represented in labor unions. Only one out of eight working women, for example, belongs to a union.³ The percentage is even smaller for women working part time.

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1. Joann S. Lublin, "Mutual Aid: Firms and Job Seekers Discover More Benefits of Part-Time Positions," Wall Street Journal, October 4, 1978. As cited in Alter, Jo Anne, A Part-Time Career for a Full-Time You, Boston, 1982.
 2. O'Toole, James. Making America Work: Productivity and Responsibility, N.Y., 1981.
 3. City Worker, April, 1982. Service Employees International Union Local 400, San Francisco.

Some unions have recognized the importance of organizing women and part-time workers. The Service Employees International Union is one notable example. The union initiated Local 925 as a nationwide attempt to organize clerical workers, who are largely female. And the union's San Francisco Local 400 editorialized in an April 1982 issue of City Worker, "... the very future of the U.S. labor movement is dependent on the number of women who are unionized."

Both women and part-time workers have a stake in obtaining job sharing options and could be organized around the issue of control of work time.

Yet another group of workers whose numbers will be swelling as the baby boom generation ages are older workers. In their pre-retirement years, these workers, too, will be demanding greater control over their work time and options for cutting back.

Many non-union companies are beginning to institute these new alternatives in response to interest from their employees, thus creating a workplace that attracts new recruits and obviates in the minds of the employees the need for a union. If labor is to be successful in future organizing drives, it, not management, must be viewed as spearheading changes in the interest of workers.

Publications as diverse as the daily newspaper of Rochester, New York, and the progressive Working Papers for a New Society have called for a commitment from organized labor to new work-time options.

In a December 1981 editorial, Rochester's Democrat and Chronicle discussed the growing numbers of women in the labor force (52.3% of all women) and enumerated some areas of growing importance, including flexitime, job sharing, and partial benefits. With reference to these changes, the editorial ended this way: "And if organized labor is to remain the powerful force it has been in America, it has to take account of the winds of change."

In a comprehensive article on part-time work in the May-June '81 issue of Working Papers, Suzanne Gordon concluded: "The prospect of expanding permanent part-time work contains great promise - with decent pay, fringe benefits, and pension coverage ... [but] ... the part-time worker must be a full participant in the effort to reshape, redefine, and control her work life. This means of course, that the nation's labor unions must begin actively to organize part-time workers and that part-time workers must begin to develop strong union commitments."

#5. Job Sharers Can Make Good Union Members

Concern around the union participation of part timers (i.e. they don't join unions, don't get involved, or are not as militant as are full-time workers) is widespread, although data to support that concern is not as readily available.

Two frequently cited examples of part-time employees who have been difficult to organize are fast food workers and faculty members at community colleges. But the difficulty of organizing the McDonald's workers appears to be due more to their transience (they aren't around long enough to be organized) than to their part-time status. And the problems faced by unions attempting to organize part-time faculty members appear, at least in part, to be the same as those that unions have struggled with when attempting to organize full-time engineers or other professionals whose self image divorces them from the labor movement.

The results of a 1980 survey dealing with collective action that was conducted by Nursing Magazine yield a different picture of union involvement of part timers. The survey posed two problems.

The first supposed a chronic staffing problem that the administration could not, or would not, solve. Would the nurse join her colleagues in a "sick in" to bring pressure for more staff? The part timers were actually slightly more inclined to join in: 41% answered positively (14% said definitely, 27% said probably), whereas 35% of the full timers (14% definitely, 21% probably) thought they would go along.

The second issue was money - "Suppose the nurses at your hospital are badly underpaid in comparison with nurses at other hospitals in your area." A choice of answers and actions was given. The answers from part timers and full timers were nearly identical.

Bob Wiesner, field representative in the Economic and General Welfare Program at the Minnesota Nurses Association reported in 1980 that "we find no difference at all now between full and part timers in their willingness to organize or take collective action." He attributed the change in attitude in part to a prorated dues structure, based on hours worked, and in larger part, to the long-term stake that part timers feel they have in nursing.

In another field, education, the examples of teachers active in their unions abound. In some cases the teachers have reduced to half time after being elected to leadership in their unions in order to have time for union business. In other cases teachers who have cut back for personal reasons later find that they, too, now have more time to participate in the union. Bob and Nancy Terrebonne, former part time faculty members at Forest Park Community College in St. Louis where they share one position as Assistant Professor of English, described their union activities in a letter to New Ways to Work: "... we have both been leaders in organizing the faculty for collective bargaining, a move which the Administration and the Board of Trustees strongly opposes. The shared job has given us extra time for such organizing activities: Nancy has been on the Negotiating Team for the faculty; Bob has been membership coordinator for the faculty."

And these are not isolated cases. A significant percentage of the membership of the Service Employees International Union work part time. According to Dave Cromer, assistant director of organizing for SEIU, the union won a representative election in one Virginia hospital specifically because of support from part timers. Moreover, part time workers have sometimes even spearheaded the union's organizing campaign.

Further proof that part timers can be militant and can organize for collective action comes from the experience of postal workers in the Netherlands. Part-time postal workers there were paid less per hour than their full-time co-workers and were denied many of the same benefits. When the postal service attempted to fire 30 of the part timers and the union failed to come to their aid, the part timers organized on their own, eventually winning an improved contract for themselves.

In short, part-time workers are not inherently bad union members. They may sometimes be more difficult to organize. One thing is certain: Their numbers are growing and they can be very valuable members for the union willing to commit resources to organize them and to fight for their interests.

CONCLUSION

This pamphlet has presented five reasons for union support of voluntary job sharing: (1) Workers want and need the option to job share; (2) Job sharing upgrades part-time work in a way that undercuts management's ability to abuse it; (3) Job sharing contributes to full employment; (4) Job sharing can be an organizing tool for unions; and (5) Job sharers can make good union members.

New Ways to Work urges union leaders and officials to consider these when responding to requests from the rank and file for job sharing. Further, we encourage union leaders to survey their membership to determine their interest in this work-time option and especially to do this when layoffs appear to be imminent. Finally, those unionists interested in how job sharing has been negotiated at the bargaining table may purchase a copy of Job Sharing Through Collective Bargaining by contacting New Ways to Work San Francisco, 149 Ninth Street, San Francisco, California, 94103. (415) 552-1000.

Any comments on Upgrading Part-Time Work or its companion handbook, Job Sharing Through Collective Bargaining would be welcomed by the author.

ADDITIONAL PUBLICATIONS

AVAILABLE FROM NWW

Job Sharing Through Collective Bargaining. A handbook for union members on how to negotiate job sharing. Includes suggestions on protections to obtain in the contract as well as sample language from several different contracts.

Job Sharing: General Information. This handbook defines job sharing and provides a brief overview of the pros and cons of this new work arrangement.

Job Sharing: Analyzing the Cost. General information and guidelines on what kinds of costs and savings an employer can expect when job sharing is introduced.

How to Split or Share Your Job. A discussion of the process involved in individual negotiation of a shared job.

For prices and a complete publications list contact:

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