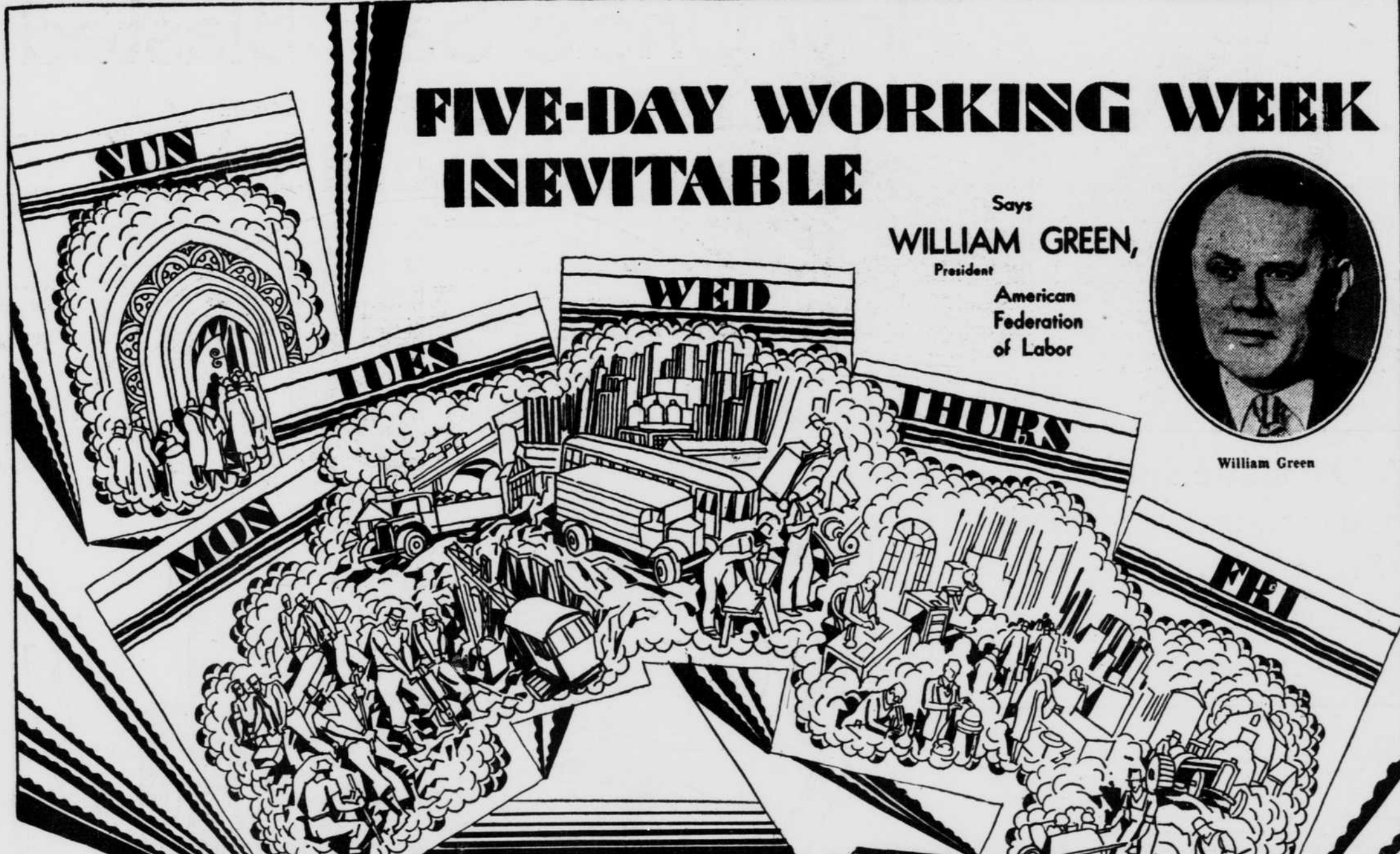


# FIVE-DAY WORKING WEEK INEVITABLE

Says  
**WILLIAM GREEN,**  
President  
American  
Federation  
of Labor



William Green



## What We May Expect

**RELEASE** of men's minds for intellectual and cultural development.

More time for family life, the education and guidance of children, visiting friends and increasing the strength of our social structure.

We may expect an increase in the demand for commodities and products, even novelties and unessentials.

Demand upon the machine of production will be greater.

A five-day working week will affect favorably the circulation and velocity in the movement of money.

**T**HE struggle for plenty of work and suitable pay with a sense of security for the future is almost as old as the human race. It is mankind's eternal problem.

Equally strong as a compelling force in life is the desire for congenial work meriting the skill and craftsmanship of the worker. Work well and skillfully done has its own sense of gratification and creates its own thrill of pride. The worker likes to be known for his skill as a craftsman.

The struggle to work and the desire for congenial work is the problem of more than 10,000,000 people in the United States today. It presents the largest economic question of the time, and is fraught with deeper and more far-reaching consequences than any other question of which I know.

Unemployment for us has reached the high level of a major national calamity. It is a challenge to the business and economic genius of the day, and cannot be thrust aside with the fleeting and futile expedient of "odd jobs." As a Nation cognizant of our responsibilities, we must meet it with effective and constructive remedy.

This calamity has not been brought about solely by business depression. The depression more probably has been one of its effects rather than one of its causes. It unquestionably served to magnify and to multiply the troubles which this downward cycle brought to the country.

For several years before the stock market crash turned business into a downward swing, industrial unemployment was on the steady increase. It started two or three years after the close of the World War and climbed steadily during the intervening years. In the last 20 months it has grown by peaks and leaps, so that today more people are affected by it, directly or indirectly, than at any other time in our history.

**VARIOUS** estimates give the number of persons who are out of work as from seven to ten millions. There is no dependable estimate whatever as to the number who are on part-time work or who are subsisting through the expedient of chance jobs.

Depression and stagnation in business served only to intensify and to make more clear this problem which has been threatening men and women in industry, and in other lines of endeavor as well, for several years.

The introduction of labor-displacing machinery and of new processes in production has taken place at a pace and on a scale in recent years as to completely reshape the inherent structure of industry, and to raise the serious question of whether we are in a vicious cycle which, drawing closer and tighter, must ultimately destroy the efficacy of the new mechanism itself.

Even in the prosperous years of 1925 and 1926 more than 1,600,000 wage-earners were out of employment, and in 1929, at the peak of prosperity, the number had grown to 2,400,000.

With the displacement of men and women in industry and forcing them into idleness, the buying and consuming power is constricted and reduced in a corresponding degree. Men and women employed, with their wages as buying power, is the necessary complement of production. The law of supply and demand has its own way of maintaining its equities.

Let us look at some of the figures: Man's producing power per day in our manufacturing industries, by reason of new devices, increased

four times as fast in the 10 years from 1919 to 1929 as in the previous 20 years. The yearly rate of production per man employed in 1929 was 49 per cent greater than in 1919, but the gain in the 20 years before that was only 11 per cent.

Summing up these changes year by year, we find that, although manufacturing industries produced 42 per cent more in 1929 than in 1919, they actually dispensed with the services of 193,000 men.

**PROBABLY** a better view of the situation is found in the conditions on the railroads.

In 1923 there were 2,000,000 men engaged on the railroads. In 1929, however, this number had been reduced to 1,700,000, although, during that time the volume of railroad traffic was steadily increasing. Larger engines and cars and longer trains were taking a toll in the number of men employed.

Today the number of men employed by the railroads is 1,300,000; a net loss of 700,000 in approximately eight years. Not even the most optimistic railroad manager believes that more than 300,000 of these men will again find employment with the railroads, and there are some who believe that the day is not far distant when the present volume of traffic may be handled by a million men.

The question may well be asked: What are these men doing and where have they turned? Some of them unquestionably have found employment in other trades and vocations, but beyond any doubt they are to be found also in the ranks of the great army of unemployed.

Coal mines in those years reduced their working forces by 120,000 men, and it is estimated that 800,000 men in agriculture lost their jobs by the introduction of new machinery.

New industries and the expansion of old ones have not been able to absorb these workers, and there is no indication that with the passing of the depression they will be taken again into the ranks of employed wage-earners. The future in its present outlook for them holds nothing of certainty and stability. They are faced at whatever age they may have attained with the necessity again of a new start; of possibly learning another trade and of trying to fit themselves again into the industrial and economic structure.

Since we live under a money economy which has social sanction, society owes every person an opportunity to earn a living. Under our economic organization, business and industry provide the opportunities of work. Clearly it is essential to business and industrial prosperity that every one should have a steady job and an assured income. This cannot be brought about by the displacement of men in industry with the machine and thereby destroying the wages that constitute buying power and determine the range of consumption.

This problem has reached beyond the persons who are actually employed. It hangs like a shadow over the worker at his task, for he does not know when new machines and new pro-

cesses may rob him of his job and his income. A long record of faithful service is no guarantee for him. Efficiency and skill in the performance of his work do not afford protection for him. He finds himself faced with a situation more cruel than the law of the jungle—it is not even a question of the survival of the fittest—because the machine is taking its heaviest toll among the skilled and best-trained workers.

**THE** trend of mechanical invention and of machine replacement is to relieve the human hands of their most intricate and skillful efforts in the production process. Craftsmanship that has required years in apprenticeship and training is duplicated in the twinkling of an eye by the machine, and the worker finds that his long years of arduous training are no longer of consequence. His art and skill, upon which his subsistence and livelihood depend, are submerged in a machine.

This is a cruel process, and its effect and influence have reached far beyond the number of people who are actually employed in industry. It hangs over the economic structure itself and raises the broad question of whether the range of opportunity in this country and the possibility of substance and economic independence for many people of this and coming generations are to be denied.

We know that employment is the only solution for unemployment. No one has estimated the costs of the business depression, but we know that it runs into staggering totals in dollars and in intangible values of human capacity. Jobs must be made available and men must be put to work. Business and industry must either face this fact and act upon it or society will be compelled to lay down rules for business and industry which will afford the remedy.

The coming of the five-day week is inevitable. The attitude of society toward the machine since its first installation in industry has been to more and more control its operation, and to restrict and limit its competition with human effort. That is one of the self-evident things in the history of business and industry.

Since 1919 there has been little shortening of the work hours. This is a strange inconsistency in the industrial growth in the intervening decade. Although the machine was displacing men and the human equation assuming increased consequence, the hours of work have remained almost unchanged.

In this respect we are out of step in the march of progress. The whole aim and purpose of machinery in industry is to perform

faster and to afford a larger measure of free time for the worker himself. This tendency brought about the 48-hour week. And its inevitable consequence in the present situation will be in a still shorter work week.

The eyes of labor are constantly to the future. A century ago the movement for the 10-hour work day began before the 12-hour work day had been entirely won. Before the 10-hour day was won the movement for eight hours had taken form and became a concerted drive in 1886. In 1926 before the wage earners had yet fully won the eight-hour day the effort for the five-day week started.

Other questions are presented by the growth of the "machine age." The strain on nerves, eyes and muscles; noise, monotony and tension in the operation of powerful machinery running at higher speeds are increasing the physical and mental tax upon the individual worker, and in more cases than we fully realize is resulting in greater risks.

**THE** shortening of the work week in recent decades has released the minds of men for intellectual work and cultural development. Only with the realization of shorter hours of labor have workers had the energy to read and to study after the day's occupation, or to engage in those recreational pastimes which are accepted as essential to the social well-being of our people.

The enormous increase in reading and in attendance at adult classes in the last decade is evidence of wakening minds and growing vigor, following shorter hours at work and release from toil. This is the social justification for the increased use of machinery in the productive process.

Attendance at night school classes increased from 515,000 to 914,000 in the six years after 1920. In the eight years from 1919 to 1927 we almost doubled our publication of books and pamphlets, and 470,000,000 were printed in 1927 alone. The publication of books tripled in those eight years.

Circulation of daily newspapers increased from 33,000,000 to 42,000,000, and the circulation of magazines grew from 92,000,000 to 121,000,000.

Besides reading for pleasure, there are more people today who are trying to understand the fundamental facts of their environment and to equip themselves with knowledge to meet their problems. This is a healthy sign of the day, pointing to a more intelligent and progressive citizenship. The five-day work week will give this movement a great impetus and afford returns in larger and broader social values and benefits to the country as a whole.

We cannot close our eyes to the fact that the five-day week means much in family life. It brings the parent into more frequent association with his family. It gives him the opportunity for a larger participation in the education and guidance of his children.

There is time for visits and for friends. There