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Attention: Prof. Dan Aronson

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BEYOND RECONCILIATION: THE POTENTIAL FOR COMMON GROUND ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND LABOR

FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 2017

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There is, among business leaders and conservatives, a history of advocacy for user fees for driving. NJ Chamber of Commerce president Tom Bracken, with a view to replenishing the Transportation Trust Fund, supported the recent increase in the gas tax; President George W. Bush was one of the only politicians to support Mayor Bloomberg’s congestion pricing proposal, offering NY State $354 million in mass transit funding contingent upon authorization; and President Reagan called his gas tax increase a “user charge.”

Substantially higher user fees for driving would create a market, and generate funding for less expensive transit alternatives. In turn, effective transit would reduce the demand for parking, making it possible to build housing on superfluous parking lots. Note that housing people instead of housing cars would reduce real estate prices for future buyers via the increase in supply.

This cost-reducing, market-based scenario has profound implications: lower household costs reduce the amount of necessary work time. Far from being an idealistic dream, work time reduction is a historic reality. According to the US Chamber of Commerce, between 1850 and 1950 the average workweek fell by 43%.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Benjamin K. Hunnicutt is the premier historian on US work hours. He has written for The Wall Street Journal and Politico. His books include Kellogg’s Six-Hour Day, and Free Time: the Forgotten American Dream.

Hunnicutt has worked as a consultant to unions and businesses interested in shorter hours and the potential of leisure to improve the community and workplace. He is currently working on a book titled, The Age of Experiences: The Promise of Liberation Capitalism.