

# Job commitment in America: is it waxing or waning?

*An analysis of literature and popular indicators of the work ethic show no evidence of either increasing or decreasing commitment; many workers continue to work more than the standard 40-hour week*

JANICE NEIPERT HEDGES

The degree of commitment Americans have to the work ethic continues to preoccupy both scholars and politicians. But, their discussions often are based on philosophical reflection and anecdotal evidence rather than data.

This article examines some of the "indicators" that have been used to assess job commitment; statistical series on absence from work, quits, and working part time by choice—phenomena generally associated with weak commitment—and multiple job-holding and overtime—often associated with strong commitment. In addition, comprehensive measures of worktime (scheduled, actual and preferred) and other possible indicators of job commitment are examined. Finally, the commitment of three worker groups—men of prime working age, women, and youth is discussed.

## **Some indicators of commitment**

*Absence* among workers frequently is assumed to include a substantial element of "absenteeism" that arises from poor attitudes. In fact, much of the research on absence implies that workers are freer to decide whether or not to go to work than is the case. A model of attendance developed by Richard M. Steers and Susan R. Rhodes incorporates both ability

and motivation to attend work.<sup>1</sup> Health, family responsibilities, and transportation are the principal determinants of ability in the model. The determinants of motivation are job satisfaction and several internal and external pressures, *among which* are organizational commitment and personal work ethic.

In practice, absenteeism and legitimate, or unavoidable, absence are not easily separated. The difficulties arise in part from lack of agreement on definitions and on acceptable levels of absence.<sup>2</sup> To circumvent these and other problems, attempts to identify absenteeism generally have focused on the duration or timing of an absence. For example, absences of a few days or less and those occurring just after the weekend (the "Blue Monday Syndrome") often are assumed to be avoidable. Such approaches neither exclude all legitimate absence nor capture all absenteeism.

A slight decline in absence as unemployment rises can be observed in national data from the Bureau of National Affairs' (BNA) survey of selected employers and from the Current Population Survey (CPS) of households covering all workers.<sup>3</sup> This cyclical pattern is attributed by some to an improved work ethic as employees seek to protect their jobs. Alternative explanations include the fact that younger workers and production workers, groups which tend to be absent more frequently, are among the first to be laid off.<sup>4</sup>

National data show no secular increase in absence that would support a thesis of weakening job commitment. De-

---

Janice Neipert Hedges is a labor economist formerly with the Bureau of Labor Statistics. A version of this article appears in Jack Barbash, ed., *The Work Ethic-An Analytical View*, Industrial Relations Research Association, 1983.

spite rapid growth in sick leave benefits, CPS data show that the incidence of absence attributed to illness or injury fluctuated narrowly between 1968 and 1980, ranging from 2.3 to 2.5 percent a week for part-week absences, and from 1.5 to 1.7 percent for absences of a full week. Absences attributed to miscellaneous reasons (including family responsibilities, transportation problems, and personal business) generally remained at just under 2 percent for part-week absences, and under 1 percent for full-week absences.

“*Quits*,” or resignations, are a legitimate concern only if they are excessive or occur for the wrong reasons. To insist that workers not change jobs would demand greater commitment from employees than from employers. It would impede the efficient allocation of labor. The rising incidence of quits among production workers in the 1960’s, for example, could be attributed in part to the wider diffusion of market information to a more educated and sophisticated work force. As Paul A. Armknecht and John F. Early observed: “Better knowledge of alternative opportunities made it possible for the worker to behave more like the classical economic man.”<sup>5</sup>

The literature on the determinants of quits is extensive; the findings are diverse. The major factors identified by researchers were summarized by John R. Hinrichs as “items external to the individual, such as pay, working conditions, and co-workers; factors associated with the employees’ personal characteristics, such as age and sex; and factors tied to the employees’ reactions to the job, such as job satisfaction, involvement, and expectations.”<sup>6</sup>

Hinrichs noted that organizational commitment (an employee’s expressed intent to remain with a firm) was emerging as a key variable. Allen I. Kraut, for example, held that, “. . . a direct measure of intent to remain . . . is a more powerful predictor of . . . turnover than are other measures of job satisfaction.”<sup>7</sup> Kraut’s research was predicated on the likelihood that the employee provides “the best synthesis of attitudes toward his work situation, his opportunities elsewhere and other aspects of his life that bear on a decision to remain on the current job . . .”<sup>8</sup> However, social psychological factors were assigned the role of intervening variables by James L. Price in a codification of the literature on organizational turnover.<sup>9</sup> In his view, the determinants of turnover are structural: pay (the money, fringe benefits, and other commodities of financial value received in return for services), integration (the extent of workers’ participation in primary or quasi-primary groups, or both), communication (the degree to which information is transmitted), and centralization (the degree to which power is concentrated). Paul A. Armknecht found tenure and relative wages to be the leading variables in determining inter-industry differences.<sup>10</sup>

The diversity of findings supports Hinrich’s conclusion that “the search for some primary and overriding reason for turnover has not been particularly successful.” Mean-

while, recent studies using improved models and techniques have found no significant secular trend in the quit rate.

*Voluntary part-time’s* association with poor job commitment is refuted by managerial experience. Users of part-time employees report positively on their performance.<sup>11</sup> The effort expended per hour at work, as assessed by workers themselves, is greater among part-time than full-time employees.<sup>12</sup>

The work commitment of part-time employees is particularly noteworthy in view of their conditions of employment. Their median weekly earnings in 1981 were about three-tenths those of full-time workers, although their workweeks were almost half as long.<sup>13</sup> The disadvantage in relation to fringe benefits is even greater. For example, paid sick leave was available in 1978 to little more than half the part-time employees (usually prorated), compared with 19 of 20 full-time employees in the same firms.<sup>14</sup> But the most severe test to the commitment of part-time workers may be management’s perception, as reported by Stanley D. Nollen and others, that “[Part-time employees are] . . . outside normal career paths and not interested in, or in some cases eligible for, advancement or promotion.”<sup>15</sup> Notwithstanding the terms of part-time employment, the same authors observed that:

With few exceptions, employers in user organizations believe in the seriousness of purpose of part-time workers. Few managers refer either to positive characteristics . . . such as maturity and stability, or to negative characteristics, such as lack of commitment. Neither are important issues for users.

*Overtime hours* are worked by a highly diverse group, including factory operatives and managers. About two-fifths of all employees who exceeded the standard 40-hour workweek on their sole or primary job in May 1980 earned a premium wage for overtime.<sup>16</sup>

Overtime, even for a premium wage, receives a mixed reaction from workers. Richard Perlman observed that the typical worker (in a position of equilibrium wage income and leisure at a given work schedule) would always choose to work overtime hours at premium pay, as would all under-employed workers.<sup>17</sup> Some over-employed workers could be induced to work overtime if the premium pay were sufficiently high, but others would refuse if given the option. About one-fifth of the employees who worked overtime in 1977 were unable to refuse without penalty.<sup>18</sup> Both the right of refusal and the equal distribution of overtime are subjects of collective bargaining.<sup>19</sup>

When the freedom of male household heads to vary their hours of work in the early 1970’s was examined, it was found that nearly half of them (46 percent) would not have been paid for overtime. With few exceptions, these workers also lacked a definite marginal wage rate for reducing their usual weekly hours.<sup>20</sup> Among the male family heads who were in jobs which paid for marginal work, well under one-

fifth could vary their hours in either direction; about one-fourth could either increase or decrease their hours; and the remainder were fully constrained. Edward Kalachek noted: “. . . somewhat less than one-third of all blue collar workers and one-fifth of all white collar workers had jobs which provided both marginal pay for marginal work and some freedom for the worker to vary hours.”<sup>21</sup>

Data on overtime for production workers in manufacturing show a cyclical pattern, but no secular trend. Between 1960 and 1979, average weekly hours of overtime per worker ranged between 2.1 and 3.9 hours.

*Multiple jobholding* is a solution to insufficient hours on the primary job for some workers. When hours on all jobs were totaled, about three-fourths of the multiple jobholders in 1980 exceeded the standard workweek.<sup>22</sup>

A small minority (about 5 percent of all workers) holds more than one job. The practice is most prevalent among husbands, least prevalent among wives (6.2 percent versus 3.4 percent in 1980). By occupation, multiple jobholding occurs most often among workers whose primary jobs are in professional or technical occupations. Such workers tend to have more marketable skills as well as more flexible work schedules. Protective service workers (police, guards, and firefighters) and farm workers also have above-average rates. Factory operatives, who have greater opportunity than most workers to work overtime for premium pay, and clerical workers, who are predominately women, are the least likely to hold more than one job.

The conditions that have been identified as encouraging a worker to hold more than one job include little or no opportunity for overtime or extra hours on the primary job, a work schedule on the primary job that permits a second job, and a feeling that income is inadequate.<sup>23</sup> Financial reasons are the principal motivation cited by the majority of multiple jobholders (55 percent in 1979) in the Current Population Survey. The second largest group (18 percent) explained that they enjoy the work,<sup>24</sup> and Richard Perlman noted that some get more satisfaction from their second jobs, which are not their primary jobs only because of lower wages or limited hours of work.<sup>25</sup>

According to Paul Mott:

. . . perhaps the most common motivation to moonlight arises from a complex set of conditions which impinge on the family's economic planning. Every family pursues a certain style of life as a goal and every style . . . has its price tag. If the husband's wages are inadequate for obtaining the desired standard of living, then the family must make some decisions . . . One option is to reduce their economic aspirations . . . Another alternative is for the wife to take a job . . . Moonlighting is another option.<sup>26</sup>

A slight decline in multiple jobholding rates among husbands in recent years (almost 1 percentage point from 1973 to 1979), coupled with employment growth among wives, suggests that more families may be choosing the second option. Edward S. Sekscenski pointed out: “. . . the growth

in the number of multi-earner families may have diminished the economic incentive for some husbands to hold more than one job.”<sup>27</sup> An increase in the prevalence of multiple jobholding among all employed women (from 2.7 percent in 1973 to 3.5 percent in 1979) is in sharp contrast to the decline among men. Rising rates for women may be explained in part by the growth in the proportion of women who are their families' primary earners.

*To summarize*, absence and turnover—two of three phenomena often associated with weak job commitment—are poor indicators because they involve determinants which are unrelated to commitment. The third phenomenon—voluntary part-time work—attracts many persons who are highly motivated.

Overtime work and multiple jobholding are associated with strong commitment. Overtime gets a mixed reaction from workers, some would prefer more hours of overtime than are offered, others seek the right to refuse overtime. The cyclical pattern in overtime hours, however, suggests that business conditions rather than worker preferences determine the amount of overtime worked. Multiple jobholding is practiced by a small minority: financial reasons are most frequently the primary motivation, followed by “enjoy the work.” The prevalence of multiple jobholding has been declining among men, but rising among women.

### Significance of worktime

In weighing the extent to which workers' hours decisions are restricted by institutional rigidities, Edward Kalachek observed that although employers normally set the work schedule they do not determine it: “The employers' offer curve merely represents one side of the market. The workers' supply curve represents the other side.”<sup>28</sup> For this reason, trends in weekly schedules and leave benefits can provide insight into changes in the commitment that workers are prepared to make to a job. Bureau of Labor Statistics' area wage surveys of employers in metropolitan areas and its analyses of major collective bargaining agreements provide such data.<sup>29</sup> Neither source shows substantial growth in shorter schedules in recent years.

*Scheduled hours.* Weekly schedules of 40 hours or more were in effect for 89 percent of the plant workers and 60 percent of the office workers in metropolitan areas who worked full-time weeks in 1979–81. Schedules of fewer than 40 hours had gained a modest 4-percentage points since 1960–61, rising from 7 percent to 11 percent of all full-time schedules in plants and from 35 percent to 39 percent in offices. The continued dominance of 40-hour schedules probably can be attributed, at least partially, to the collision of forces: “fixed costs, fringe benefits and payroll taxes encourage employers to offer longer workweeks until they encounter the penalty pay provisions of the FLSA [Fair Labor Standards Act].”<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, had workers preferred more

leisure over higher earnings, shorter schedules would have spread more rapidly.

One of the most significant developments in scheduled worktime during the past 20 years has been the narrowing gap between plant and office workers. Weekly schedules of 41 hours or more were relatively rare for office employees as early as 1960. In the ensuing two decades, the proportion of plant workers on such schedules declined from 11 to 6 percent. Differences between plant and office workers in average scheduled hours were almost halved, as average hours remained steady in offices (38.9 in 1960–61 and 38.8 in 1979–81) and declined in plants (from 40.5 to 39.7).

Differences in paid time off also narrowed. At least 2 weeks of vacation were available by 1960–61 to most office workers with 3 years of service;<sup>31</sup> between 1960–61 and 1978–81, the proportion of plant workers with such benefits rose from 63 to 88 percent. Holidays numbered the same for plant and office workers in 1978–81: just under 10 days a year. These trends toward equality in weekly schedules and leave entitlements should not be interpreted as a weakening of the job commitment of plant employees, but rather as a healthy development.

Shorter workweeks, more paid vacations and holidays, and earlier retirement have been part of organized labor's strategy to improve job security. John Zalusky acknowledged that "part of the appeal for a shorter work week is a demand for more leisure time," but he emphasized that "... the strongest push comes for a desire to protect and increase jobs."<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Howard Young explained the growth in paid personal holidays (which, in contrast to traditional holidays, keep firms open and operating): "For some workers . . . [paid personal holidays] means a job opportunity. . . . In pre-bargaining conferences, the membership's message was clear: jobs are the issue."<sup>33</sup>

Worktime reductions achieved under collective bargaining have been modest for the most part in recent years. In 1980, nine-tenths of the major agreements which referred to specific weekly hours stipulated 40 hours; one-tenth, fewer than 40 hours. This was the same distribution as in 1966–67, despite organized labor's often expressed support for shorter workweeks.<sup>34</sup> In vacation entitlements, the largest gains were reserved for workers with substantial seniority. For example, 4 weeks or more paid vacation after 15 years of service was provided in three-fifths of the major collective bargaining agreements in 1980, four times the proportion in 1966–67. As John Zalusky pointed out: "Vacation at the low end of the seniority list nears 100 percent entitlement while only a few workers would enjoy the extra week after 10 years' service."<sup>35</sup>

Some workers, notably those whose jobs were particularly threatened by automation, achieved substantial reductions in annual hours in recent years. Among employees covered by United Automobile Workers–General Motors agreements, for example, the average full-time, straight-time work year declined an estimated 104 hours between

1967 and 1976, to 1,768 hours.<sup>36</sup> More recently, leaders of the Auto Workers and other unions have negotiated "give-back" clauses in efforts to lower employer costs and thus, hopefully, improve job security.<sup>37</sup>

*Actual hours.* Hours at work per week or per year can differ substantially from scheduled hours. Overtime, wages in lieu of holidays or vacations, and multiple jobholding can extend hours at work beyond scheduled worktime; hours cutbacks and unscheduled absences curtail them. Hours engaged in work (a concept that excludes formal and informal work breaks and on-the-job training) approximate actual hours of work even more closely than do hours at work.

Weekly hours at work have declined substantially over the long term. At the turn of the century, persons employed in the civilian economy worked about 53 hours a week, on average. Their counterparts in the late 1970's, before the prolonged slump that began in 1980, worked about 39 hours.<sup>38</sup> Some researchers have observed, however, that the groups comprising the work force have had little or no net gain in leisure time since the end of World War II.

John Owen disaggregated weekly hours at work by sex, marital status, school enrollment, and age, and found that the workweeks of non-student men were as long in 1975 as in 1948, even after adjustments for vacations and holidays.<sup>39</sup> This finding was consistent with Thomas Kniesner's conclusion on the weekly hours of adult men from 1948 to 1970.<sup>40</sup> Shorter workweeks for women and longer weeks for male students in 1975 than in 1948, according to John Owen, reflected compositional changes within those groups: wives and mothers, who tend to put in fewer hours in paid jobs than other women, were a larger component of women workers in 1975, while older students, who tend to work more hours than younger students, were a larger component of employed students. Leisure, thus, had not increased in recent decades, but,

Indeed, one could more reasonably interpret the increased employment of groups with extensive nonmarket work responsibilities as tending to reduce free time. Students must go to school, attend classes, and prepare assignments . . . [Similarly] the shift from full-time housewife to employed wife . . . was probably associated with a decline [in] free time.

Annual hours at work edged down about 40 hours from 1968 to the close of the 1970's for full-time, nonagricultural employees as a whole. Shorter workweeks accounted for roughly two-thirds of the reduction; holidays, about one-fourth; and liberalized vacation benefits, one-tenth. The highly publicized vacation gains for long-service employees had less impact than might have been expected. Earlier retirements among men, an influx of women and youth into the labor force, and rising unemployment had further reduced the minority of workers with as much as 15 years of service from 19 percent to 14 percent.<sup>41</sup>

Hours engaged in work (that is, actually working) are

significantly lower than hours at work. Work breaks and on-the-job training account for most of the difference.

Morning and afternoon work breaks of from 10 to 15 minutes each were provided all employee groups in a majority of the companies which responded to a Bureau of National Affairs survey on work scheduling policies.<sup>42</sup> Employees own records of their time use throughout a 24-hour period show that scheduled breaks (such as for "coffee") averaged 16 minutes a day in 1976; unscheduled breaks ("socializing," personal business, and so forth), for another 27 minutes.<sup>43</sup> In another survey, about one-third of the employees reported that talking to friends, doing personal business, or just relaxing accounted for 30 minutes or more of their average workday.<sup>44</sup> Losses from these unscheduled breaks on this scale suggest weak job commitment.

The amount of effort expended by workers probably would be a better indicator of job commitment than a measurement of hours. Alfred Marshall pointed out that ". . . even if the number of [working] hours in the year were rigidly fixed, which it is not, the intensity of work would remain elastic."<sup>45</sup> Interest in the intensity of work effort has been directed toward alternative methods of pay, such as piecework and incentives, in particular work settings. However, a scale of work intensity developed at the Institute for Social Research provides some indication of the effort of various groups of workers.<sup>46</sup>

Changes in the ratio of output to hours of labor input (productivity measures) sometimes are cited as evidence of changes in the work ethic—particularly when productivity declines. However, such indexes reflect the interaction of many factors, including technology, capital investment, human resources (education and skill), energy, and raw materials. They have little relevance to the commitment of workers to their jobs.

*Preferred hours.* The 40-hour reduction in annual worktime during the 1970's absorbed roughly one-sixth of the decade's productivity gains. Apparently the taste for fewer hours of work, though stronger than in the 1960's, was far weaker than the taste for additional goods and services.

Workers in general seem to be satisfied with their weekly hours. However, some would prefer to work additional hours for higher earnings, while others would be willing to exchange earnings for a reduction in worktime.

Working "excessive hours" was considered a problem by less than one-tenth of those who reported a problem with their hours in 1977—fewer by far than complained of "inconvenient hours."<sup>47</sup> Evidence from a variety of sources suggests that the workers who desire additional hours of work per week are more numerous than those who view their worktime as excessive. For example, in a 1978 national survey, more than twice as many workers preferred additional hours and proportionately higher earnings than favored fewer hours and lower earnings: 28 percent versus 11 percent.<sup>48</sup> Among male family heads surveyed in 1971,

those who were free to vary their hours worked longer workweeks than those who were constrained.<sup>49</sup>

Choices between earnings and leisure were influenced, however, by the type of worktime reduction considered. In the 1978 survey, longer vacations were far more popular, for example, than shorter workweeks.<sup>50</sup>

Perhaps the most telling evidence of the desire to commit more hours to paid work is the large group of employees (as many as 5 million persons in 1981) who want full-time employment but work part time for economic reasons.<sup>51</sup> The group includes black, white, and Hispanic men and women of every age and level of education. Although the prevalence of part-time work for economic reasons peaks during periods of recession, the proportion of employees in this situation gradually rose from 2.0 percent of all employees in 1969 to 3.2 percent in 1979.

*To summarize,* analysis of worktime offers little support, on the whole, for the thesis of weakening job commitment. Reductions in scheduled worktime have been relatively modest in recent years, and have narrowed the gap between plant and office workers in weekly hours, vacations, and holidays. Job security has been the primary motivation for the reductions in scheduled worktime sought by organized labor. While hours at work have declined overall, changes in the composition of the work force are largely responsible. Major groups of workers, including adult men and women, and students have experienced little or no net gain in leisure since World War II. Some evidence of insufficient job commitment is found, however, in what appears to be excessive unscheduled work breaks reported by some workers.

### **The commitment of selected groups**

*Employed men of prime-working age* (25 to 54 years) are less likely to be suspect of weak job commitment than are other workers. Before the economic downturn in 1979, their workweeks approached 44 hours on average. Almost 7 percent of them held more than one job.

However, recent trends in worktime for these men differ markedly by marital status. Single men of prime working age were working slightly more hours per week in 1979 than in 1968. In contrast, weekly hours of married men had declined by about one-half hour. The reduction was largest for husbands 25–34 years (almost 1 hour on average), but fewer hours also were reported by married men 35–54 years. Men in both marital groups continued to exceed the standard workweek on average (44.5 hours for husbands and 41.8 hours for single men in 1979).

The decline in weekly hours (as well as a drop in multiple jobholding rates) for married men of prime working age may be attributable, in part, to a tendency of workers in the growing underground economy to under-report hours, particularly those hours worked on second jobs. However, an important factor in reducing the weekly hours of married men probably was the rising prevalence of working cou-

ples.<sup>52</sup> The same phenomenon also may explain the increased time men were spending taking care of family responsibilities.<sup>53</sup>

*Women workers* as a group spend considerably less time than men at paid jobs. Women are far less likely than men to work year round (57 percent versus 71 percent in 1979). Moreover, in the weeks they work, their hours average substantially fewer than those of men (34.5 hours versus 41.6 hours in 1979).

Marital status, however, has a dramatic effect on sex differences in paid worktime. Among single persons, women workers have about the same likelihood as men of working year round, full time (36 percent versus 38 percent in 1979), whereas the proportion of wives who make that time commitment to a paid job is little more than half the proportion of husbands (43 percent versus 79 percent).

Analysis of weekly hours by marital status shows a similar pattern: single women average about nine-tenths as many hours at work as single men (32.6 hours versus 35.9 hours in 1979), while wives work less than four-fifths as many hours as husbands (34.4 hours versus 43.8 hours in 1979).<sup>54</sup>

Although women spend less time in paid employment, work for pay plus work in family care is roughly the same for men and women: about 57 hours versus 56 hours in 1975.<sup>55</sup> Economic theory holds that the hours supplied to paid work and to unpaid household work by individual family members is determined by some consensus within families, based on the respective "efficiencies" of the individuals in market production versus household production. Thus, with women's hourly earnings substantially below those of men,<sup>56</sup> fewer hours for women in paid work and more in household production are based in economic realities.

The proportion of time at work actually spent working and the level of effort expended are reported to be higher for women than for men.<sup>57</sup>

*Youth's* job commitment often is faulted, usually on the grounds of frequent job changes and work absences. Relatively high rates of turnover among youth are both natural and beneficial. The part-time or seasonal work which young people typically find as their first jobs seldom leads to full-time, year-round employment. Older youth may test a variety of full-time jobs before finding the type of work and the environment in which they can function best. Moreover, young workers have not acquired the seniority-based benefits that inhibit job changing among mature workers.

Although absences are more frequent among workers 16–24 years than among those 25 years and older, they tend to be shorter. The proportion of scheduled work time lost in 1980 was the same for youth as for persons of prime working age (3.3 percent versus 3.2 percent), and substantially less than for workers 55–64 years (4.0 percent). Moreover, youths' record on absences should be considered in conjunction with their relatively limited vacation benefits.

The practice in the United States of tying vacation entitlements to length of service provides young workers with little time off to make the adjustments from a generally less structured student life, and to cope with the demands placed on them as they set up their own households.

Part-time employment for students has been widely endorsed as a way to bridge the transition from school to work. This view is responsible in part for the employment growth among teenagers in the 1970's. In October 1979, 38 percent of the 16- to 19-year-olds enrolled in school were employed, and an additional 7 percent were looking for jobs.<sup>58</sup> The majority of student workers were at work 15 hours or more a week.

Recent studies tend to support a rising concern that some youth may be over-committed to paid work. Students' employment, particularly when it exceeds 15 or 20 hours weekly, has been found to entail costs as well as benefits. The costs include diminished involvement in school activities, increased absenteeism from school, and possibly a decline in academic grades.<sup>59</sup> The National Association of Secondary School Principals, noting that some students appear to be working excessive hours, has urged that a proper balance between job experience and class time be maintained.<sup>60</sup>

### Conclusion: encouraging signs

What is a reasoned assessment of the state of job commitment?

The phenomena frequently associated with weak commitment prove largely unreliable indicators. Many absences, for example, are unavoidable. Job changes often are both necessary and desirable. As for employees who work part time voluntarily, managers attest to their commitment.

When we turn to measures of worktime, we find that many employees continue to exceed the standard 40-hour week; some by working extra hours on their job (with or without premium pay), others by holding more than one job.

Average scheduled worktime and hours at work have declined very modestly in recent years. Moreover, reductions in hours to some extent have been more apparent than real. Major groups of workers, including adult men, are working as many hours as they did several decades ago. Heralded gains in vacation benefits for extended service are available to a relatively small and declining group of workers. Moreover, the impetus from organized labor for reduced worktime has risen more from a desire to protect and expand employment than to increase leisure.

"Hard" evidence of weak commitment rests largely on reports from a minority of workers that their unscheduled work breaks are of a length that most observers would consider excessive.

Because many workers are unable to increase or decrease their worktime (whether weekly hours or leave) freely, workers' stated preferences for worktime are helpful in evaluating commitment. Surveys show that far more workers

prefer longer workweeks and more pay than prefer fewer hours and less pay. However, workers are more willing to exchange earnings for longer vacations or sabbaticals than for shorter workweeks.

If the data show major cause for concern, it is that the desire for hours of work seems greater than the hours available. Several million men and women of every age—whether black, Hispanic, or white—want to work full time but can obtain only part-time jobs. The group is growing in number and as a proportion of all workers.

—FOOTNOTES—

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT:** The author thanks Paul O. Flaim, Bureau of Labor Statistics, for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

<sup>1</sup>Richard M. Steers and Susan R. Rhodes, "Major Influences on Employee Attendance: A Process Model," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, August 1978, pp. 391–407.

<sup>2</sup>To illustrate, some researchers include alcoholism and drug abuse in their definition of illness. See for example, John B. Miner and J. Frank Brewer, "The Management of Ineffective Performance," in Marvin D. Sunnett, ed., *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (Chicago, Rand McNally College Publishing Co., 1976).

<sup>3</sup>For BNA statistics on absence, see *BNA's Quarterly Report on Job Absence and Turnover*, various issues. CPS series on absence are included in *Labor Force Statistics Derived from the Current Population Survey: A Data Book, Volume 1* (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1982), and *Employment and Earnings* (Bureau of Labor Statistics, various issues).

<sup>4</sup>For a discussion of absence and unemployment, see Steers and Rhodes, "Major Influences on Employee Attendance."

<sup>5</sup>See Paul A. Armknecht and John F. Early, "Quits in manufacturing: a study of their causes," *Monthly Labor Review*, November 1972, pp. 31–37. For a further discussion of turnover and the allocation of labor, see Paul Armknecht, *Job Mobility Among American Nonagricultural Industries* (Dissertation, Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America, 1982).

<sup>6</sup>John R. Hinrichs, *Controlling Absenteeism and Turnover: Highlights of the Literature* (Scarsdale, N.Y., Work in America Institute, Inc., 1980).

<sup>7</sup>Allen I. Kraut, "Predicting Turnover of Employees from Measured Job Attitudes," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, April 1975, pp. 233–43. Turnover studies have focused so heavily on quits or resignations that the terms turnover and quits are used interchangeably. Labor turnover in the full sense is comprised of voluntary separations (resignations or quits), involuntary separations (dismissals, layoffs, retirements, and deaths), and accessions.

The question used to elicit an expression of intent was: "If you have your own way, will you be working for (this company) 5 years from now (1-Certainly, 2-Probably, 3-Not sure one way or the other, 4-Probably not, 5-Certainly not)."

<sup>8</sup>See James L. Koch and Richard M. Steers, "Job Attachment, Satisfaction, and Turnover Among Public Sector Employees," *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, February 1978, pp. 119–28; and Lyman W. Porter, Richard M. Steers, and Richard T. Mowday, "Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Among Psychiatric Technicians," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, October 1974, pp. 603–09.

<sup>9</sup>James L. Price, *The Study of Turnover* (Ames, Iowa, Iowa State University Press, 1977).

<sup>10</sup>Armknecht, *Job Mobility*.

<sup>11</sup>Stanley D. Nollen, Brenda Broz Eddy, and Virginia Hider Martin, *Permanent Part-Time Employment: The Manager's Perspective* (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1978); and Comptroller General of the United States, *Part-time Employment in Federal Agencies: Report to the Congress* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976).

<sup>12</sup>Frank Stafford and Greg J. Duncan, *The Use of Time and Technology by Households in the United States*, Working Paper Series (Ann Arbor, Mich., Institute for Social Research, 1979).

Some encouraging signs appear in the data. One is a small reduction in the weekly hours of married men, who traditionally have worked very long hours. It may be that the rising employment of wives is aiding husbands to move toward a little better distribution of their time between paid work and household responsibilities. The second encouraging sign is that weekly schedules and leave benefits of production workers are approaching those of office workers. Few are likely to read these changes as evidence of a weak work ethic among married men or production workers. □

<sup>13</sup>Earl F. Mellor and George D. Stamas, "Usual weekly earnings: another look at intergroup differences and basic trends," *Monthly Labor Review*, April 1982, pp. 15–24.

<sup>14</sup>Stanley D. Nollen and Virginia H. Martin, *Alternative Work Schedules*, Parts 2 and 3 (New York, AMACOM, 1978).

<sup>15</sup>Nollen, Eddy, and Martin, *Permanent Part-Time Employment*.

<sup>16</sup>Daniel E. Taylor and Edward S. Sekscenski, "Workers on long schedules, single and multiple jobholders," *Monthly Labor Review*, May 1982, pp. 47–53.

<sup>17</sup>Richard Perlman, *Labor Theory* (New York, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969).

<sup>18</sup>Robert P. Quinn and Graham L. Staines, *The 1977 Quality of Employment Survey* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research, 1979).

<sup>19</sup>*Characteristics of Major Collective Bargaining Agreements, January 1, 1980*, Bulletin 2095 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1981). An American Arbitration Association study in the 1960's reported that employee claims that they were not given their rightful share of overtime ranked fourth as a cause of grievance, after discipline, seniority, and job content. See Sar A. Levitan and Richard S. Belous, *Shorter Hours, Shorter Weeks: Spreading the Work to Reduce Unemployment* (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

<sup>20</sup>The marginal rate for a reduction in hours was considered to be the hourly rate for regular hours. This rate was obtained by the questions: "Do you have an hourly wage rate for your regular work time?" The marginal rate for overtime was obtained by two questions "if you were to work more hours than usual during some weeks, would you get paid for those extra hours?" (If yes) "What would be your hourly rate for that overtime?" Jonathan Dickinson, "Labor Supply of Family Members," in James N. Morgan and others, eds., *Five Thousand American Families: Patterns of Economic Progress, Vol. 1* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research, 1974).

<sup>21</sup>Edward Kalachek, "Workers and the Hours Decision," in Robert L. Clark, ed., *Work Time and Employment* (Washington, National Commission for Manpower Policy, 1978), pp. 175–97.

<sup>22</sup>Some multiple jobholders work less than a full-time workweek (defined as 35 hours or more). The hours distribution of multiple jobholders in May 1980 was as follows: 1–34 hours, 15 percent; 35–40 hours, 9 percent; 41 hours or more, 76 percent.

<sup>23</sup>Paul E. Mott, Hours of Work and Moonlighting," in Clyde E. Dankert, Floyd C. Mann, and Herbert R. Northrup, eds., *Hours of Work* (New York, Harper and Row, 1965); Perlman, *Labor Theory*; and Nand K. Tandan, *Workers with Long Hours*, Special Labour Force Studies, Series A, Statistics No. 9 (Ottawa, Canada, Information Canada, 1972).

<sup>24</sup>Edward S. Sekscenski, "Women's share of moonlighting nearly doubles during 1969–79," *Monthly Labor Review*, May 1980, pp. 36–39.

<sup>25</sup>Perlman, *Labor Theory*.

<sup>26</sup>Mott, "Hours of work and moonlighting."

<sup>27</sup>Sekscenski, "Women's share of moonlighting."

<sup>28</sup>Kalachek, "Workers and the Hours Decision."

<sup>29</sup>The Bureau's area wage survey program covers selected plant and office occupations in firms located in metropolitan areas and employing a

minimum of 100 workers. Scheduled hours are the weekly hours which a majority of the full-time, day-shift employees in a firm are expected to work, whether they are paid straight-time or overtime rates.

Major collective bargaining agreements are defined as those covering 1,000 workers or more.

<sup>30</sup> Kalachek, "Workers and the Hours Decision."

<sup>31</sup> In January 1981, 3.2 years was the average (median) length of time on the current job. See Francis W. Horvath, "Job tenure of workers in January 1981," *Monthly Labor Review*, September 1982, pp. 34-36.

<sup>32</sup> John Zalusky, "Shorter Hours—The Steady Gain," *AFL-CIO American Federationist*, January 1978.

<sup>33</sup> Howard Young, "Jobs, Technology, and the Hours of Labor: The Future of Work in the U.S.," *Hearings of the Joint Economic Committee's Special Study on Economic Change*, Washington, D.C. June 14, 1978.

<sup>34</sup> See for example, the AFL-CIO platform proposals presented to the 1980 Democratic and Republican national conventions.

<sup>35</sup> John Zalusky, "Vacations and Holidays: Tools in Cutting Work Time," *AFL-CIO American Federationist*, February 1977.

<sup>36</sup> Young, "Jobs, Technology and the Hours of Labor."

<sup>37</sup> See George Ruben, "Collective bargaining in 1982: results dictated by the economy," *Monthly Labor Review*, January 1983, pp. 28-37.

<sup>38</sup> Hours data for 1979 are used predominately in this article to avoid the effects of the subsequent economic downturn. Figures are for non-agricultural wage and salary workers in May (the traditional month for hours analysis) unless specified otherwise. The weekly hours cited here are annual averages for the civilian economy as a whole.

<sup>39</sup> John D. Owen, "Workweeks and leisure: an analysis of trends, 1948-75," *Monthly Labor Review*, August 1976, pp. 3-8.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas J. Kniesner, "The Full-Time Workweek in the United States, 1900-1970," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, October 1976, pp. 3-15.

<sup>41</sup> Median years of service declined from 3.8 years in 1968 to 3.2 years in 1981.

<sup>42</sup> Bureau of National Affairs, *Work Scheduling Policies, Personnel Policies Forum Survey 118* (Washington, Bureau of National Affairs, August 1977).

<sup>43</sup> Stafford and Duncan, *The Use of Time*.

<sup>44</sup> Quinn and Staines, *The 1977 Quality of Employment Survey*.

<sup>45</sup> As cited by John H. Pencavel, "Work Effort, On-the-Job Screening, and Alternative Methods of Remuneration," in Ronald G. Ehrenberg, ed., *Research in Labor Economics, Vol. 1* (Greenwich, Conn., JAI Press, 1977), pp. 225-58.

<sup>46</sup> Stafford and Duncan, *The Use of Time*.

<sup>47</sup> Quinn and Staines, *The 1977 Quality of Employment Survey*.

<sup>48</sup> Fred Best, *Exchanging Earnings for Leisure: Findings of an Exploratory National Survey on Work Time Preferences*, R&D Monograph 79 (Washington, Superintendent of Documents, 1980).

<sup>49</sup> Dickinson, "Labor Supply of Family Members."

<sup>50</sup> Best, *Exchanging Earnings for Leisure*. In support of the validity of the attitudinal data, the author cites a case in which workers chose to sacrifice some earnings for fewer hours.

<sup>51</sup> Robert W. Bednarzik, Marillyn Hewson, and Michael A. Urquhart, "The employment situation in 1981: new recession takes its toll," *Monthly Labor Review*, March 1982, pp. 3-14.

<sup>52</sup> Howard Hayghe, "Husbands and wives as earners: an analysis of family data," *Monthly Labor Review*, February 1981, pp. 46-53.

<sup>53</sup> John P. Robinson, *Changes in Americans' Use of Time: 1965-1975: A Progress Report* (Cleveland, Ohio, Cleveland State University, 1977).

<sup>54</sup> Janice Neipert Hedges, and Daniel E. Taylor, "Recent trends in work-time: hours edge downward," *Monthly Labor Review*, March 1980, pp. 3-11.

<sup>55</sup> Robinson, *Changes in Americans' Use of Time*.

<sup>56</sup> Mellor and Stamas, "Usual Weekly earnings."

<sup>57</sup> Stafford and Duncan, *The Use of Time*.

<sup>58</sup> Anne McDougall Young, "School and work among youth during the 1970's," *Monthly Labor Review*, September 1980, pp. 44-47.

<sup>59</sup> Ellen Greenberger and Laurence D. Steinberg, *Part-time Employment of In-School Youth: An Assessment of Costs and Benefits* (Washington, U.S. Department of Education, 1981); and Shelia Cole, "Send Our Children to Work?" *Psychology Today*, July 1980, pp. 44-68.

<sup>60</sup> National Association of Secondary School Principals' resolutions for the consideration of its members at the 1983 convention in Dallas, Tex.