

Benjamin Franklin believed the early bird gets the worm.

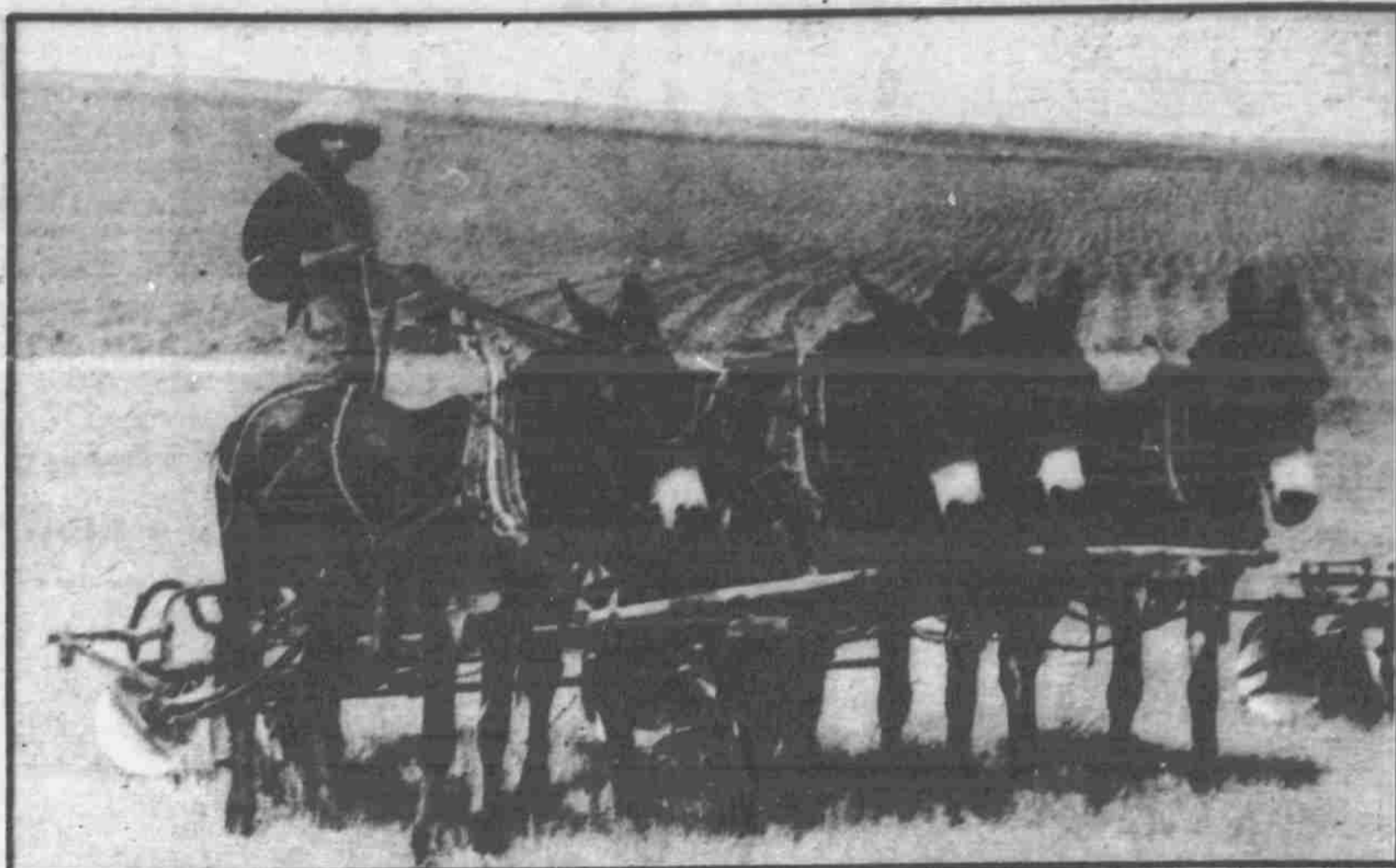
John Q. Adams' diary reveals he felt guilty about going swimming or playing pool.

Our forefathers gave us a work-is-virtue, play-is-sin" ethic that may be experiencing reversal.

But for many reasons, the value of a hard day's work is deeply engrained in the modern American.

## The changing American work ethic

By Terri Willson



Photos courtesy of the State Historical Society

"No matter how much you love your job you still got to be able to eat enough to do the job. Money... always means a little bit to us—let's face it."

This is from Gene Landkamer, manager of the local employment office of the Nebraska Department of Labor. "Our job system is based on lots of prestige."

This is from Benjamin Rader, UNL history professor. Both sentiments partly describe the prevailing American work ethic in 1976. Today, the American worker may value a fast buck or a fun job. He may value success, wealth or status. A lot depends on his age, background and type of work.

America, still the land of opportunity, supports a variety of work attitudes. In Nebraska, part of America's rich farm belt, the family farm maintains the proud traditional ethic of private enterprise. Hard work and frugal living are the way of life.

Ask a Nebraskan where the money is, and he'll take you past a hereford feed lot in Milford or a dairy farm near Plattsmouth to let you smell it.

Nebraskans hold about as many attitudes toward work as they do jobs. Lincoln is a mixture of those who hold to the traditional American dream and those who are reshaping that dream—whatever it is.

Harold Farenholtz has ridden around in circles for 20 years. Called "Sam" at Cushman Outboard Motor Company, he test-drives motor vehicles 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Mon. through Fri.

He likes his job and won't move up to a higher position, even though he is a skilled mechanic. He lives with his 74-year-old mother, rides to work in carpools and saves most of his money.

"Phil" Lebsack has worn an aqua-colored smock for 43 years. She works from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. for the F.W. Woolworth Co. at the 1170 St. store. She holds stock in the company.

Around Lincoln they call him "Doc." Dr. Glenn Johnston, a semi-retired dentist, has been practicing in an

Continued on next page

# Expanding medical field to add jobs

Continued from p. 1

*The Over-Educated American.* In his book he explores the possible reasons and trends behind the current situation.

In the 1950s and '60s the U.S. pushed college as a goal for millions of high school graduates, Freeman says. The number of graduates with bachelor's degrees increased by 91 per cent, the number of college students tripled, and the number of master's and PhD. degrees awarded increased by over 300 per cent. This massive influx of students to higher education was partially due to the "science and technology" lag we were losing in the Cold War, partially to the post-World War II American dream of affluence for future generations.

In the '70s we began to see the impact of the American "more-is-better" ethic when teachers flooded the available market and the teaching degree became an almost commonplace possession of secretaries, clerks, and laborers. PhD.s in chemistry and other fields began looking desperately for any kind of work they were even remotely trained for. The trends have continued. Most fields are now glutted with qualified people. R.O.T.C. programs, business and industrial recruiters and enrollments in certain departments indicate that what students of the '60s rejected most violently, 1970s students are turning to.

Freeman quotes some "typical comments" of mid 1970s students and faculty: "The bad job market has really depressed students on this campus." "People are just stepping all over each other to get these grades." "The

kids are worrying about jobs." "The competition is fantastic." "Chemistry classes are jammed with premed kids who are willing to cheat, steal, sabotage, or do anything else it takes to get into medical school."

Another effect of the higher education boom has been educational inflation. A master's degree has the implied "job-buying power" a bachelors degree once had. A PhD. has the former power of a master's. And the bachelor's has become, in most cases, equivalent to graduating from high school in the 1930s.

Third Dimension interviewed Dr. Freeman last week by telephone. He declined to predict the job market in any specific way, but said, "I really don't expect any major improvement until 1980. Demography can show some predictions... In the 1980's there will be fewer college-age children and a resulting decline in numbers of college graduates. This should open up the market somewhat."

Freeman said the educational system is changing to meet new needs.

"Educators are reacting to the changes in the market. Courses are changing, and there is a trend towards more junior college and vocational education. I think we've learned that college is not for everyone. Someone who is not academically inclined, but who has some non-academic skill, now sees no point in pushing himself through the college system. In the 1960's a person couldn't say 'I'm not going to college.'"

"People used to say that the average difference in lifetime earnings between a college graduate and someone

who has not gone to college was \$100 to \$300,000, but I believe that this is grossly overestimated. A high school graduate that starts working four or more years ahead of someone going to college makes up any difference in average income."

Freeman said he expects new jobs in agriculture, computer science and other jobs created by technological innovation. He said he didn't see any such program as the 1960s space program developing in the near future.

Asked if the emphasis on post-graduate degrees from top schools indicates a plug on upward social mobility, Freeman replied.

"In one sense, that of formal education, yes, but people will still be able to gain social rewards for their ability. Blacks and women still can use higher education as a route to higher social positions, but I expect the general trend to be a leveling off."

"A college education still gives a person the advantage... but while it used to get you in the door, it now gets you into the line to get into the door."

Freeman also commented on the political situation.

"Under the Nixon-Ford administrations, the real income of the American people has not risen at all. It has been a very funny period. I assume that real economic growth will reassert itself eventually... The Ford economic policy, I think, is... sort of a defeatist policy—realistic defeatism. There has been no effort really to get out of the problems, because nobody has a workable

Continued on next page

## Opening remarks

Sooner or later, all of us will have to go out and get a job. Well have to toss out our student I.D. cards, start paying regular admission to concerts and movies and pack away pounds of college textbooks along with our memories.

Chances are in these moments of decision upon graduation, students will turn to their parents for advice. But the working world has changed enormously since our parents collected their first paycheck.

This special issue of Third Dimension is our attempt to summarize the current trends in the job market and provide a profile of work today. It is not a guide to finding a job (there have been enough articles written about that in recent months). It is rather a portrait of what today's student can expect to find when he or she is finally settled in the work force—five, 10, 15, 20 years from now.

Doomsday critics abound today with predictions of grim futures for college graduates. Scholars tell us we're overeducated. We have given space to their views, but we also tried to include some bright spots.

Included is information about specific courses, including job prospects, future working conditions and legislation likely to affect it. We included profiles of recent graduates.

Of course, no one really can predict the future of something so unpredictable as employment. The space program of the 1960s, for example, created many jobs few persons 20 years earlier ever would have imagined.

If you're a freshman, with four more years of academic shelter to look forward to, or a senior, about to end what has seemed like endless preparation for a distant goal, this supplement will apply to you.

Despite exchanges among undergraduates of remarks about the "cold, cruel work 'out there,'" having a job really won't be so bad. Just think of the obvious benefits: The long nights of homework will be over; you'll be collecting the money for once; you'll have more personal independence than ever before... so say hello to the working world.

The Third Dimension Staff

## 3<sup>RD</sup> DIMENSION

### The Staff

Editor \_\_\_\_\_

Nancy J. Stohs

Staff Writers \_\_\_\_\_

Terry Keefe

Rich Tilson

Terri Willson

Layout Assistant \_\_\_\_\_

Steve Boerner

Third Dimension is published biweekly Thursdays as a magazine supplement to the Daily Nebraskan, UNL student newspaper. Third Dimension welcomes freelance submissions.