



Illustration by Harry Witt

By Terry Keefe

A few years ago people began talking about the four-day work week. Businesses considered the possibility of replacing eight-hour with ten-hour days four days a week. It seemed then that it would become the trend.

Today, for the most part, people still are only talking about the four-day work week, or 4-40 as it is called.

In 1973, 575,000 of the full-time wage and salaried workers in the United States were on 4-40. By 1975 the number had increased to 771,000, but that still represented only 1.3 per cent of the total pool of full-time workers.

Originally, the 4-40 was envisioned to improve employee morale and increase production. But most Lincoln employers interviewed don't think there is sufficient evidence that 4-40 does either.

Dick Whitcomb, director of human research at Hygain Electronics, Lincoln, said his company has considered 4-40 for several years. But Whitcomb said he sees few advantages to it. Everybody would like the additional leisure time, he said. But his company does government contracting work, which means that any time an employee works beyond eight hours in a day must be paid for as overtime.

Management personnel at Hygain work ten hours a day already, he said. On 4-40, they probably would work 12 to 13 hours, he said.

Although not feasible now, if other businesses switch to 4-40, and the law concerning overtime pay were changed, Hygain would seriously consider a four-day week, Whitcomb said.

Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. has never considered using 4-40. A spokesman said he thinks it would increase employees. Whether Goodyear ever uses it will depend on "how much production and how many people are working," he said.

Some observers fear the 4-40 would lead to the 32-hour week. Many point to the auto industry. Last week the United Autoworkers reportedly took a major step toward that in their tentative settlement with the Ford Motor Co.

Ed Gass, personnel director at American Stores, said since the idea of 4-40 came out his company has tried to keep informed. Gass saw little advantage in 4-40, however. Many American Stores' employees work six- or seven-day weeks. American Stores *must* stay open more than four days a week, because the stores they deal with are open more than four days a week, he said.

One more day on the shelf for a product is one less day in the life of that product.

Gass said he is certain 4-40 will get into the meat packing industry in the near future. The Amalgamated Meatcutters Union is working for it.

"Before World War I, a seventy-hour factory week had been common; in 1920, the average was sixty hours; in 1929 just before the Crash, it would be forty-eight. The Saturday half holiday was becoming a part of American life; the full holiday was becoming more common. . . Before the eyes of America a bright new world of mass leisure was unfolding."

—Robert A. Caro
The Power Broker

Employers shun the 4-40 for other reasons. Businesses would have to keep buildings heated and cooled longer. Places which have direct contact with the public cannot feasibly close an extra day. If a full staff is needed all the time, a switch to 4-40 would mean more employees and probably no production increase.

On the other hand, some companies that have used 4-40 claim drastic drops in absenteeism and tardiness. Construction companies would be able to take advantage of longer daylight hours in the summer.

Allan Henk, secretary-treasurer of the Amalgamated Meatcutters and Butcher Workmen of America (Local 106) listed more time off and a decrease in unemployment as two advantages of 4-40.

"We brought it up at our last convention," he said. "But it didn't get very far."

Henk said it probably will be brought up again next year. "Most people follow the pattern of the auto industry," he said.

Gene Landkamer, manager of the Nebraska Job Service, had a different view. Landkamer, 49, said, "Most people my age can't afford the extra leisure time."

Younger people would cherish the extra day off, he said, but he would spend more money if he had an extra day. Unless he is busy and has something planned for the weekend, he gets bored, he added.

Landkamer is certain the four-day work week will come about, first on the East and West coasts. It might be quite a while before it reaches Nebraska, he predicted, because Nebraska "is not a leisure state". Some states in the East are experimenting with 4-40, he said.

One place in Lincoln was found to use 4-40. Bill Warren, director of food service at St. Elizabeth Hospital, said that "one segment of our kitchen help has been on 4-40" for a couple of years.

Warren said he felt the extra day off is an advantage, but he couldn't say if 4-40 cuts down on sick leave or increases production.

Warren has seen drawbacks to 4-40.

"Working ten hours in one day gets one more tired," he said. Also, if someone calls in sick the hospital pays 20 per cent more in overtime for someone to take their place. The director said there is "difficulty in getting people to work" as galley technicians, the position scheduled on 4-40. But he didn't know whether it is the type of job or the ten-hour days.

Warren said the food service will continue to use 4-40, but modified. He wasn't sure just how. Warren also said they don't plan to expand 4-40 to include other food service employees.

Both employees and employers have reservations about a switch to a four-day work week. Some aren't willing to predict if 4-40 will definitely become the trend, but none are willing to predict it won't.

\$uccess story

By E. K. Casaccio



Photo by Ted Kirk

Jim Pittenger, Jr., bond broker, a graduate with a job that "mits my personality." Students need more practical experience, he says.

Jim Pittenger, Jr. describes himself as "the world's best."

He didn't say at what he was the best, but it's possible he meant his job as a bond broker with Dean Witter and Co.

Pittenger, 28, a 1970 UNL graduate in business administration and marketing, said his college career was "very average, if not a little below. I maintained a low profile. It would be very flattering to say my average was about a 3.0."

He is the son of UNL Athletic Dept. ticket manager Jim Pittenger and his wife Barbara. He was born in Lincoln and attended Sheridan Grade School and Lincoln Southeast High School.

During college, Pittenger had no long-term plans, he said.

"My ambitions were to stay in school, graduate without going into the Army and then to work," he said.

After graduation Pittenger went to Hawaii for three months.

"I was going to go over there and find the promised land," he said. "I didn't like living on an island, so I came home and worked at Whitehead Oil Co. driving a truck."

"I was starving to death driving the truck, and the diesel fuel made me sick, so I started applying around town."

He got his first white-collar job in February, 1971 in the investment department of the First National Bank of Lincoln. In July, Pittenger said, the Army decided "they were going to give me an opportunity to serve."

"If you'd like a legion of men moved anywhere I'm your man," he said he told them.

He served his ROTC commitment of three months, returned and worked at the

bank until he accepted his present job in January, 1976.

Pittenger worked in Omaha until May, when he and fraternity brother Gary Meyer opened an office in Lincoln.

The office on the fourth floor of the Cooper Plaza is gold-carpeted with pale yellow walls. Pittenger sits in his black swivel chair with one leg propped on the desk.

On the left wall is a 12-ft. long, 3-ft. wide board ticking off orange symbols representing the latest activities of the New York and American Stock Exchanges.

Pittenger, wearing a light blue shirt, dark blue tie and tan pants and vest, said he is making "considerably more" than the \$18,000 a year he made at the bank.

He says he likes his job of buying and selling municipal bonds for Lincoln and the state.

"It's very interesting," Pittenger said. "I enjoy coming to work in the morning. It's rewarding, fast-moving and competitive. It suits my personality."

Pittenger might still pass for a college student with his wavy, sandy hair and blue eyes framed by gold wire-rimmed glasses.

He said that when he graduated he wished he had more practical knowledge of the business world. The university is sheltered from the real world, he said.

Students need more practical experience, and Lincoln businesses should help by hiring college students part-time, he said.

Pittenger said his advice to the graduate in his field is "to look for situations which tend to be slow-developing and would produce long-term security, rather than trying to sell himself for the highest dollar."