

# Editorial

## Employment drops; economic reality rears its ugly head

It promises to be a pretty bleak Christmas for about 12 million Americans. That's how many of us are out of work this holiday season. The latest figure came out Friday: 10.8 percent — another post-Depression record — of the population is jobless.

The unemployment figure has been climbing all this fall. After July and August unemployment rates of 9.8 percent, 10.1 percent of us were without jobs in September and 10.4 percent were jobless in October.

As the rate has grown, it has cut into population groups untouched during previous employment slumps. Teen-agers and blacks aren't the only potential workers not working; November's unemployment rolls included "an increasing number of white-collar workers, according to the United Press International.

Meanwhile, the sectors traditionally hit hardest by unemployment continued to be hit in November: blue-collar unemployment increased from 15.9 percent in October to 16.5 percent last month; teen-ager unemployment climbed to 24.2 percent; overall black unemployment reached 20 percent and unemployment of black teens hit 50.1 percent.

With these facts, one would think the Reagan administration would pledge to do everything possible to get Americans back to work. But that has not happened.

President Reagan said Friday in Bogota, Colombia, that he would *not* support an emergency jobs program. Reagan has consistently opposed a Democrat-backed job-creation proposal and apparently plans to continue his opposition even though each month fewer and fewer Americans go to work each day.

The president's continued opposition to a jobs program is a political mistake, an economic mistake and a social mistake.

It is a political error because it gives unemployed Americans — the same ones who will be voting in the 1984 presidential election — the impression that their president cares little about their plight.

It is an economic error because continued unemployment means continued depression in consumer spending and continued reliance on unemployment benefit programs.

And it is a social error because massive unemployment has far-reaching psychological repercussions on unemployed persons and, in turn, on the morale and productivity of the nation.

Yet, with these mistakes apparent, the president is holding on to his pipedream — as he has since he took office — that cutting taxes and the national deficit is all that is needed to straighten out the economy.

Perhaps that was still valid as late as this summer. But after five months of rising unemployment, it should be obvious to Reagan and his advisers that the problem is not going to take care of itself.

Thus far, the president has taken a small step toward helping create jobs. He endorsed a 5 cent per gallon tax on gasoline; the program will create 320,000 jobs and will require dollars for repair of highways, bridges and urban mass-transit systems.

The gas tax is not enough, though. Even if 320,000 are employed under the program, more than 11.5 million will remain unemployed.

The Democrats in Congress are offering some job options. In early November, the House majority leader, James Wright of Texas, said the job program would come in three parts:

- a public works plan to be used when unemployment rises about 7 percent. This would provide federal dollars to states and cities for repair of highways, railroads, bridges and other public works.

- a job training program for the young and a retraining program for older workers laid off from industrial jobs with little hope of being rehired. This program would also establish a jobs bank to match available jobs and skills in demand.

- a program of low interest loan guarantees to stimulate private investment and revitalize industries. The loan guarantees would be available to firms modernizing their plants to become more competitive on the world market.

Senate Minority Leader Robert Byrd of West Virginia said the jobs programs would cost about \$10 billion. He said Democrats are going to push the program during the current lame duck session of Congress.

If members of the Reagan circle don't like the Democrats job plans then they should introduce some of their own. But perhaps first they must abandon their pride and admit that some federal remedy is needed to ease unemployment. They have to realize that 12 million jobless Americans won't just disappear.

### Editorial policy

Unsigned editorials represent the opinion of the fall 1982 Daily Nebraskan. They are written by this semester's editor in chief, Patti Gallagher.

Other staff editors write one editorial in her place each week. Those will carry the author's name after the final sentence.

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Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available in the newspaper.

Letters sent to the newspaper for publication become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication, and requests to withhold names will be granted only in exceptional circumstances.

Submit all material to the Daily Nebraskan, Room 34, Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb., 68588.

## Non-trads: There just isn't time

Lisa is in her mid-30s. She is recently divorced and has custody of her two children, aged 3 and 6. She has a part-time job as a sales clerk in a clothing store downtown, and on weekends she freelances as a graphic artist.

Karen is also in her 30s. She is single, shares an apartment with two other women and works the evening shift as a ward secretary in one of the local hospitals.



Julia O'Gara

Lisa and Karen don't know each other but they have something in common that makes them part of a small but diverse group of people: They are "non-traditional" students.

A non-traditional student is generally defined as an undergraduate student who is older than age 25. Many "non-trads" are working on a second degree, but most are either first-time or returning students. The number of men and women in this older student category is about equal. Some of the men are Vietnam Veterans taking advantage of the financial aid offered through the GI Bill, and many of the women are finishing an education they abandoned after marrying and starting families.

Many non-traditional students attend only part time, taking classes in the evening and working at full-time

jobs during the day. But some, like Lisa and Karen, are full-time students. Although many "traditional" undergraduates hold down part-time jobs as well as carry a full class load, most older students, especially those with small children, have added burdens.

"My schedule has to run like clockwork or it doesn't run at all," Lisa said. "I have to coordinate four time-tables every day: my classes, my kids' classes, my work and the babysitter. If one of those schedules gets screwed up, they all do."

But Lisa's biggest gripe isn't with schedules as much as with the attitudes of her non-student friends.

"There's very little of what I'd call 'peer support' for people like us. Friends who aren't students tend to give up on you after awhile because you have to spend so much of your free time studying instead of socializing with them."

Had she ever attended one of the Non-Traditional Student Association's weekly luncheons? Perhaps she could meet some other students who share some of the same problems. "I'd really like to, but there just isn't time."

Time — or rather the lack of it — is a problem for Karen, too. But for her, the hardest part about being a non-traditional student is coping with what she describes as a sort of bias against older students.

Continued on Page 6

## Pregnancy, abortion with 'facts'

On Tuesday, the lawyers came bearing precedents. They arrived at the U.S. Supreme Court prepared to argue, and argue they did. The question was whether a city or state has the right to limit a woman's access to abortion.

The briefs before the court originated in Missouri, Ohio and Virginia. But the decision, when it comes, will be felt all across the country. There are more than



Ellen Goodman

a dozen similar suits waiting in the wings, or the chambers, for the high court's opinion.

Three basic issues were put before the justices. Can a state or city rule that every second-trimester abortion must be done in a hospital? Can legislation prohibit any teen-ager younger than 16 from getting an abortion without the consent of a parent or judge? Can it force a doctor to present a prescribed set of "facts" to a patient in the name of "informed consent?"

The trio of concerns will be decided on constitutional grounds where the states' and cities' right to regulate such things as medical procedures will be balanced with

the woman's right to have an abortion.

But the most interesting issue is the one labeled "informed consent." Four years ago, the law being reviewed was dreamed up in Akron, Ohio, to force doctors to present their patients with a series of "facts." It didn't matter whether the doctors believed them or not. It didn't matter whether the facts were accurate or not.

They were instructed to tell women, "the unborn child is a human life from the moment of conception..." and that abortion "is a major surgical procedure which can result in serious complications including hemorrhage, perforated uterus... sterility... and can result in severe emotional disturbances."

Now this was a classic case of misinformed consent. Early abortions are not "major" surgical procedures by any medical standard.

Still, the more I think about it, the more I find something perversely appealing in the idea of legislating information.

What if we decided that no citizen should consent to sex without being properly informed about the risks? We might end up supporting something called sex education. The same people who want pregnant women to know about the development of the fetus might help tell pre-pregnant women how not to develop one.

Continued on Page 5