

Work Makes Life Sweet, *or does it?*



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On the cover

Shocking grain near
Underwood, ND.
(Doris Johannes Leidholm)
p. 12

Marion LaQua Studnicka
at the Northwestern Bell
switchboard in Hankinson,
ND about 1909. (Catherine
Palmer)

Nora Pfundheller's home-
stead shack, 1913.
(Nora Pfundheller King,
Lenartz) p. 27

Wind turbine. (Minnkota
Power Cooperative) p. 70

Work Makes Life Sweet, Or Does It?

Introduction

“I think the best times of a man’s life are those years when he can work real hard.” (My grandfather, after his retirement from farming in 1950s).

“I think those people who write poetry about haying, have never done it.” (Young man in his early 20s who worked on a baling crew in 1950s).

These statements reflect two points of view, two ways of thinking about work. They illustrate our conflicted attitudes toward work. How do we define work? What part does it play in our lives? Today we are in the process of redefining our ideas about work. Matthew Fox, reminds us that, “We should not allow ourselves to be deceived that today’s crisis in jobs is just about more jobs...The job crisis is a symptom of something much deeper: a crisis in our relationship to work and the challenge put to our species today to reinvent it...Work comes from inside out; work is the expression of our soul, our inner being. It is unique to the individual; it is creative...”¹

The 21st Century requires all of us, in the United States and around the globe, to rethink our relationship to work. Consider E. F. Schumacher’s warning, “We are now far too clever to survive without wis-

dom.”² In other words, an abundance of information by itself does not guarantee wise decisions.

In a market economy, earning a living is essential for survival, but *work* involves more than simply finding a *job*. Fox points out, “Some politicians, looking for a quick fix, shout that we need ‘jobs, jobs, jobs.’ But such simplistic slogans simply do not cut deeply enough. They avoid the deeper questions that must be asked of work at this critical juncture in human and Earth history...the grave danger looms that we will seek jobs—jobs at any price—and ignore the deeper questions of work, such as how, why, and for whom we do our work.”³

In some respects, Americans have chosen to increase their hours of paid employment. Between 1969 and 2000 the average family added about three months of paid employment to their work schedules.⁴ In 1991, Juliet Schor brought to our attention this choice to spend more hours working for pay, in her best selling book, *The Overworked American*. According to Schor, we could now produce our 1948 standard of living (measured in terms of marketed goods and services) in less than half the time it took in that year. In other words, we could have chosen to work a four-hour day, six months of paid employment in a year, or take every other year off, and still maintain the same standard of living. Instead, we

decided to increase our consumption of material goods and step on the consumer treadmill, which significantly altered our way of life and way of thinking.⁵ Today, many people would not see this as a conscious choice because they are forced to work unwanted overtime hours often without compensation they consider adequate.

Working for pay is a relatively modern phenomenon. In the distant and not so distant past, slaves and captives performed much of the world's work. This was the case in classical Greece and Rome and continued with European expansion when millions of people were forcibly transported from Africa to work as slaves in the Americas. Agricultural production in medieval Europe was based on serfdom and compulsory labor.⁶

"In the early Middle Ages 'labour' was thought of exclusively as physical labour. It was therefore conventional to say that there were three orders of society: one that fought, one that prayed and one—only one—that worked, that is to say cultivated the soil. Only gradually did the concept of mental or intellectual labour develop..."⁷

This perception of work as effort done only by those of lowly status is far removed from attitudes today which elevate paid employment to an essential part of almost everyone's life. Occupations reflect social status. Upon being introduced to a stranger, the question, "And what do you do?" is often asked. Essentially, this means, "How do you earn a living?" If you are not a member of the paid work force your personal worth may be questioned, even by yourself as in the response of some homemakers, "I'm just a housewife."

Winston Churchill reflected the attitude that worthy citizens must be actively engaged in paid work when he stated in 1909, "There is no reason at all why people should wander about in a loafing and idle manner; if they are not earning their living they ought to be put under some control."⁸

In today's world, paid employment has become the measure of one's self worth. Concerns about how one will earn a living are paramount. College curriculums are designed to prepare students for careers. Politicians are continually promising to bring the "good" jobs to their communities. Community development "experts" are sought after to design plans that will increase the availability of "good" jobs.

In our popular culture, constant references to "good jobs" tend to overshadow how we *think* about work and the important underlying structures which encourage or restrict job opportunities. The focus on seeking "good" jobs provides a simplistic answer to a complex problem. Richard Farson in his book, *Management of the Absurd*, warns us to be wary of our quantitative, "quick-fix" or "techno-fix" outlook. "Thinking loses out to how-to-do-it formulas and techniques, if not to slogans and homilies..."⁹

The following photo essay presents a glimpse of people doing work over the past Century. This collection of images and ideas reflects our changing attitudes about work and its relationship to our lives. Critical issues concerning work face all citizens and policy makers of the 21st Century.

Man Carrying the Bale

The tough hand closes gently on the load;
Out of the mind, a voice
Calls "Lift!" and the arms, remembering well their work,
Lengthen and pause for help.

Then a slow ripple flows along the body,
While all the muscles call to one another:
"Lift!" and the bulging bale
Floats like a butterfly in June.

So moved the earliest carrier of bales,
And the same watchful sun
Glowed through his body feeding it with light.
So will the last one move,

And halt, and dip his head, and lay his load
Down, and the muscles will relax and tremble...
Earth, you designed your man
Beautiful both in labour, and repose.

Harold Monro, 1917¹⁰

Agriculture



Frank Larson, Henry Larson, William Larson and Albert Boots on a Flour City gas tractor pulling two 4-bottom plows, near Gardner, ND, 1910. (Charlotte Larson Owens, Dewey's Studio)



Fannie Overstreet Henry plowing on her homestead in McKenzie County, ND about 1914. (Pat Henry)



Feeding the chickens on the Jake Hepper Farm near Underwood, in McLean County, ND (Jessie Sinclair Hepper)

“So completely were chickens associated with women that older Open Country people frequently categorized chicken chores as housework...Although poultry raising was a common enterprise it was by no means simple or straightforward...young chicks should be started as early as possible in the spring...The baby chicks required a constant warm temperature and many women kept them in the kitchen by the stove at first...As the chicks grew, they were placed in a warm brooder that was heated with kersone—when it worked...Daily chicken chores consisted of feeding and carrying water and gathering eggs.”¹¹

“In the 45 years between 1929 and 1974, egg production in the United States shifted from being women’s work to men’s work. Once a dispersed, labor-intensive industry, it became concentrated and capital-intensive.”¹²



William Sinclair (second from right) owned and operated a threshing rig in Stutsman County, ND, 1912-1916. (Jessie Sinclair Hepper)

Cook car and threshing Crew, 1910-1909. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, Mss 296.200.9)



Hired men shocking grain
on the Milton Johannes
farm near Underwood, ND.
(Doris Johannes Leidholm)

“When men are at work threshing wheat they are like they are when they train colts for the races. They make funny remarks. They work like the very deuce for a while and then lay off and maybe wrestle around...Some women came along a lane bearing baskets and all the men went away from the machine to sit by the fence. It was in the middle of the afternoon but in the country when threshing is going on, people do like that. They eat and eat, just any time.”

Sherwood Anderson, 1926¹³



Raising the roof to a grain bin. Neighbors, Stan Swanson, Hank Wirty, Shorty Wirty, Harley Hassler, and Tracy Scott gathered to help Grandpa Jake Hepper, and his son Russell. "Very hot. Hoisted the roof on in the afternoon. The pole slipped and dropped the roof to the ground. Almost overturned the tractor." (Personal journal, July 23, 1963.)



Lunch time. Grandma Mary Hepper helped Jessie prepare the lunch and dinner. (Jessie Sinclair Hepper)



Milking time. Ted and Sever Rustad on farm in Williams County ND, 1951. Charles Zell probably took the picture to show to his friends in Washington, D.C. Ella Rustad usually did the milking. "Mom always said she enjoyed milking. I suppose it gave her a chance to sit down during her busy days! I remember there was a swing hanging from the rafters in the barn and many times my little sister and I would take turns swinging while Mom was milking. It was a cozy time." (Marlene Rustad Slaaen)



Livestock scale being balanced for accuracy at the West Fargo Union Stockyard, 1950s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 2036.41.2)



Dust rises from a drill seeding dryland grains in the Lincoln Valley area of the Garrison Diversion Unit, North Dakota, 1973. (Garrison Conservancy District, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Department of the Interior)



Egg factory probably in Fargo in the 1930s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 2023.71.2)



Original milk bottling machine at Cass-Clay Creamery, Moorhead, MN. Cass-Clay opened its doors in Moorhead with seven employees and one truck in 1935. (Cass-Clay Creamery, Inc.)



Unloading milk cans at the Cass-Clay Creamery, late 1940s. "That was hard work. We stacked them three-high in the truck." (Al Nielsen, Cass-Clay Creamery, Inc., H. S. Gillespie Studio)

Lynn Boerger, USDA on site Federal grader conducting the core butter test to determine the quality of the butter, late 1960s. (Cass-Clay Creamery, Inc)



Deliverymen, 1942. In 1955, Cass-Clay moved its operation from Moorhead to Fargo. (Cass-Clay Creamery, Inc.)

Checking the milk cartons. In 1952, Cass-Clay introduced the first wax-free milk carton to the region. (Cass-Clay Creamery, Inc.)

Research



“I delight in this slow stepping towards truth. Search after truth by the careful measurement of facts is the enthusiasm of my life... It has been enriched by the consciousness of the supreme unity of science, art, morality; the eternal trinity of the good, the beautiful and the true; knit together in the ideal towards which humanity is constantly striving...”

Beatrice Potter, diary, 17 August, 1889
My Apprenticeship, 1926¹⁴

“One insults the business executive or the scientist by suggesting that his principal motivation in life is the pay he receives. Pay is not unimportant. Among other things it is a prime index of prestige. Prestige— the respect, regard, and esteem of others— is in turn one of the more important sources of satisfaction associated with this kind of work. But in general, those who do this kind of work expect to contribute their best regardless of compensation. They would be disturbed by any suggestion to the contrary.”

John Kenneth Galbraith,
The Affluent Society, 1958¹⁵



Forerunner of the present-day research scientist, 1910-1919. (Fred Hultstrand History in Pictures Collection. IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 2028.374)



Tara Rheault at nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer, NDSU chemistry lab, 2000. (Dan Koeck, NDSU)



Karen White, process engineer at The Center for Nanoscale Technology, Fargo, 2002. (Dan Koeck, NDSU)



Dr. John Weiland inoculating a sugarbeet plant with bacterial pathogens to test for disease resistance, 1998. (Sheila Degrugillier, Hanson Photo)



Dr. Heldur Haak injecting chemical samples into a liquid chromatography machine to identify sources of dioxin contamination in the food supply, 1998. (Sheila Degrugillier, Hanson Photo)

Construction



Students from North Dakota Agricultural College and employees from Fargo Stone and Sand Company standing on a conveyor belt and platform above a gravel sorter, 1918. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 51.22.1)



Laying concrete on either side and between street car rails in Moorhead, MN, 1920s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 2063.29.29)

Works Progress Administration (WPA) project in the 1930s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, Mss 296.205.1)



Constructing 4th Street dam, Fargo, 1930. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 2022.4.1.





Concrete work on the McClusky Canal, ND, 1972. (Garrison Diversion Conservancy District, Bureau of Reclamation, Department of the Interior)

Marvin Anderson, North Dakota Metal, now Johnston Fargo Culvert, Inc., 1984. "He rolled a million of them. He worked as shop forman for nearly forty years and made culverts into an art." (John Anderson, Adella Pandorf Anderson)



Crew sandblasting the interior of eleven-foot steel liners at the Snake Creek Pumping Plant, 1972. (Garrison Conservancy District, Bureau of Reclamation, Department of the Interior)





Constructing an addition to Dakota Hospital, Fargo, 1992. Meinecke-Johnson Company and Ames Sand & Gravel, 1992. (Ames Sand & Gravel)

Construction worker walking the steel girders of the future Fargo Public Library, 1967. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, Folio 78.5)



Raymond Pfundheller (brother) and Henry Pfundheller (father) of Nora, building her homestead shack, 1913. (Nora Pfundheller King, Lenartz)



Retail trade



The itinerant photographer displaying his wares, 1900s. (Fred Hultstrand History in Pictures Collection, IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 2028.381)

“There was a good deal of outdoor singing in those days. Workmen sang at their jobs; men with horses and carts sang on the road; the baker, the miller’s man, and the fish-hawker sang as they went from door to door; even the doctor and parson on their rounds hummed a tune between their teeth. People were poorer and had not the comforts, amusements, or knowledge we have to-day; but they were happier. Which seems to suggest that happiness depends more upon the state of mind, and body, perhaps, than upon circumstances and events.”

Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, 1945¹⁶



Selling candy and cigars,
1900s. (Fred Hultstrand
History in Pictures
Collection, IRS, NDSU,
Fargo, 2028.380)



Manufacturing cigars in the Sulzbach factory in Fargo, about 1907. (IRS, NDSU Fargo, 51.19.2)

Loading 100# bags of potatoes in the truck for delivery. Reuben Scholl & Sons raised potatoes, sorted, stacked, and sold them wholesale during the winter. Washburn, ND, 1949. L/Top, Floyd Thyberg, L/Bottom, Reuben Scholl, R/Top, Charles Scholl, R/Bottom, Leonard Scholl. (Wanda Scholl Tjenstrom)



Dollar Days at Herbst Department Store in Fargo, 1922. Waiting for the doors to open. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 2043.47.23)



Taking a break at the Herbst Department Store, 1940s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 2043.14.25)



Checking out customers at the Red Owl Supermarket, Moorhead, MN, 1930s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 2023.91.4)



Packing department at Northern School Supply, Fargo, 1920s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 2062.5.2)





Will Hoglund in front of Tochi Products during 30th anniversary celebration, 2001. (Louis Hoglund)



Aaron Hart and Joe Hoglund checking out customers at Tochi's, 2001. (Louis Hoglund)

Manufacturing

Where the Sexes Meet

The metal shop whiffs of grease, old handrags.
We arrive here dressed as ourselves and button up
uniform blue overalls to hammer, weld, strip down,
bash out conveyors that line the factory floor.

Foremen are brown coats. Managers swank
in spotless white, fierce with creases, prowl
the yards, the cubby holes to catch you out.
Think they're up to all the dodges.

Women are wrapped and knotted in white aprons,
packed in rows across the factory, seated
at belts that never stop while their overseer
scans them from a platform made by us.

The air's chocolate over there, butter, jam.
That's where the sexes meet when machines break
down, where you chat each other between ovens,
across conveyors, when backs are turned.

Glyn Wright, 1995¹⁷

“Now one of the very first requirements for a man
who is fit to handle pig iron as a regular occupation is
that he shall be so stupid and so phlegmatic that he
more nearly resembles in his mental make-up the ox
than any other type. The man who is mentally alert
and intelligent is for this very reason entirely unsuited
to what would for him, be the grinding monotony of
work of this character.”

Frederick W. Taylor,
The Principles of Scientific Management, 1947¹⁸

“Repetitive labour—the doing of one thing over and
over again and always in the same way—is a terrify-
ing prospect to a certain kind of mind. It is terrifying
to me. I could not possibly do the same thing day in
and day out, but to other minds, perhaps I might say
to the majority of minds, repetitive operations hold no
terrors.... The average worker, I am sorry to say, wants
a job in which he does not have to think....”

Henry Ford, *My Life and Work*, 1922.¹⁹



Blacksmith shop of Sam
Sansburn (right) and
Robert Pratt (left)
Cooperstown, ND, 1900s.
(IRS, NDSU, Fargo, Mss
296.130.19)

King-Burns Auto Repair Shop, Cooperstown, ND, 1920s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, Mss 296.130.18)



Blacksmithing, 1950s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, Folio)



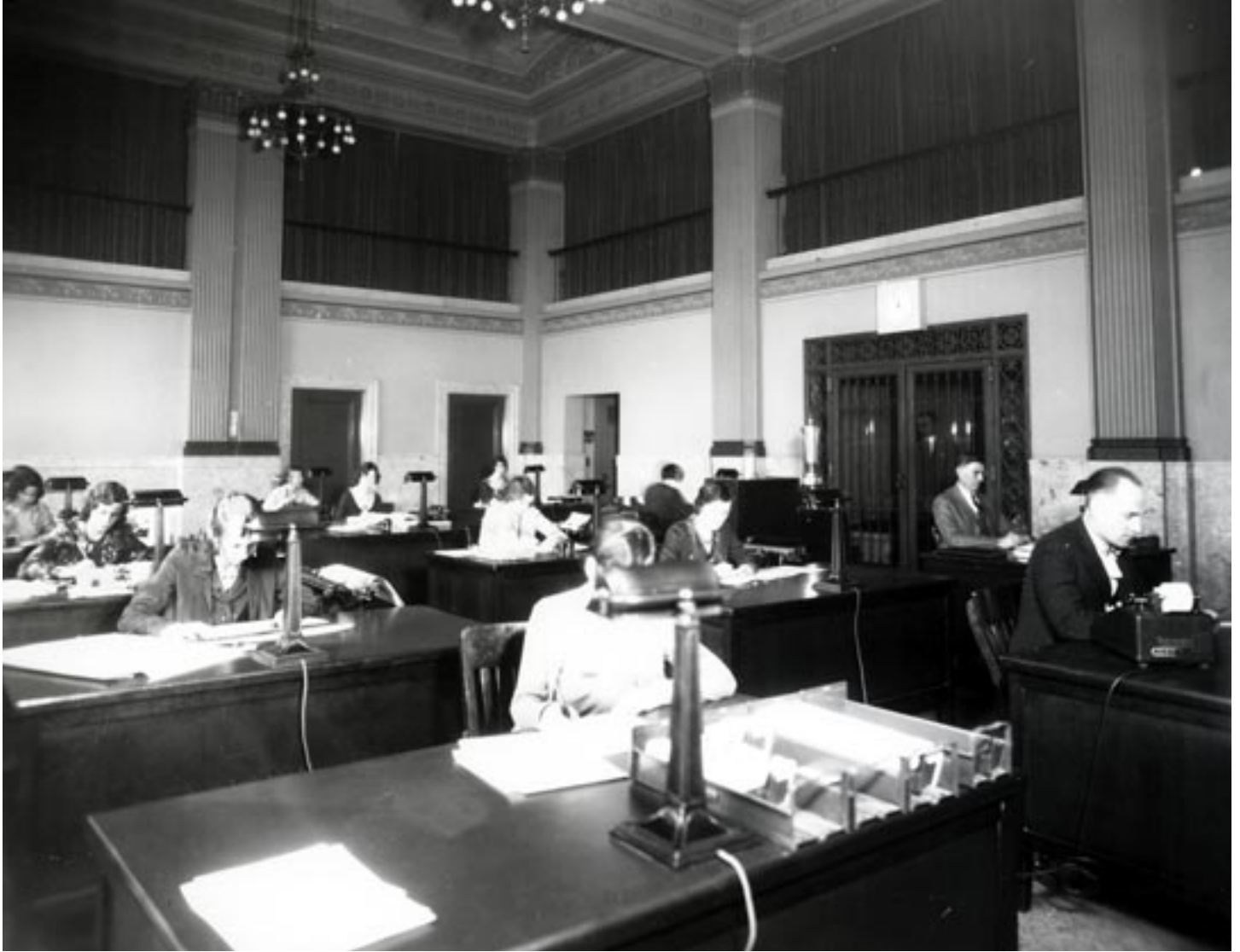


Sioux Manufacturing plant, Devils Lake, ND, 1970s. Workers are making camouflage covers. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 2045.58.1)



Mid America Steel, Inc. plant (formerly Fargo Foundry). Mike Heger sanding the weld smooth on a metal handrail for a power plant located in Washington state, 2002. (Kenneth Price, Mid America Steel, Inc)

Office Work



Office workers, 1930s.
(IRS, NDSU, Fargo,
2023.4.4)



Office workers at Cass-Clay Creamery, Inc., 1967. (Cass-Clay Creamery, Inc.)

Service



Maud Brown, director of health education for the Fargo public schools, at her desk at demonstration headquarters, 1920s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 51.150.3)

Peeling potatoes for the North Dakota 188th Field Artillery at Fort Lewis, Washington. Walter Ulmer (l) and Richard Brock (r), 1943. (Kate Ulmer)



“I scrape on again. Now I look to the other side, where Daddy is sitting; for him scraping potatoes is not just a little odd job, but a piece of precision work. When he reads, he has a deep wrinkle at the back of his head, but if he helps prepare potatoes, beans, or any other vegetables, then it seems as if nothing else penetrates. Then he has on his ‘potato face’, and he would never hand over an imperfectly scraped potato; it’s out of the question when he makes that face.”

(Anne Frank (1929-45), *The Diary of a Young Girl*, 18 Aug. 1943, published 1947).²⁰



Police officers patrolling flood waters in front of the Red Owl supermarket, Fargo, 1952. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 51.34a.6)

Dr. Stanley Reisweg, Turtle Lake, attending patient Olga Shook after flying to her home in his airplane, 1988. (Dan Koeck)



Politics

Governor Frazier signing
bonds, 1917-1921.
(IRS, NDSU, Fargo,
402.2.4)



The duties of a politician are many and varied. Ceremonial duties and campaigning must be fitted into the rigorous schedule of meetings and decision-making.

...

“The citizens must not live the life of mechanics or shopkeepers, which is ignoble and inimical to goodness. Nor can those who are to be citizens engage in farming: leisure is a necessity, both for growth in goodness and for the pursuit of political activities.”

Aristotle *Politics*, c.335-322 BC²¹



The 2000 U. S. Census classified 16.5% of the population of North Dakota as government workers.²²

Fargo Mayor, Jon Lindgren (at podium) and Moorhead Mayor, Morris Lanning (right) at the Grand Opening of the Radisson Hotel, 1985. (David T. Baihly)

Governor Arthur A. Link campaigning, 1970s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, Portrait Collection)

Ruth Meiers, 11th governor, presides at North Dakota Legislature, 1984. (State Historical Society of North Dakota, 0659-12)

Aloha Eagles, Grace Stone, Fern Lee, Brynhild Haugland, Helen Claire Ferguson, North Dakota legislators, 1967. (State Historical Society of North Dakota, 0659-03)

Hospitality



“...white-collar man has no culture to lean upon except the contents of a mass society that has shaped him and seeks to manipulate him to its alien ends...No product of craftsmanship can be his to contemplate with pleasure as it is being created and after it is made.... He is bored at work and restless at play, and this terrible alternation wears him out. In his work he often clashes with customer and superior, and must almost always be the standardized loser: he must smile and be personable, standing behind the counter, or waiting in the outer office....”

C. W. Mills, *White Collar*, 1956.²³

“McDonaldization has swept across the social landscape because it offers increased efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control. Despite these assets...McDonaldization has some serious drawbacks. Rational systems inevitably spawn irrationalities that limit, eventually compromise, and perhaps even undermine their rationality.” In other words “rational systems are often unreasonable.”

George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*, 2000.²⁴

Preparing meals for guests likely taken in the Gardner Hotel, Fargo, 1930s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 2023.78.3)



Serving customers at the Powers Café, Fargo, 1930s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 2023.90.1)



Arts & Entertainment



Manager of the Graver Inn, Bernie Ness, greeting guests, Jim Pollard and George Miken of the Minneapolis Lakers who were in Fargo for an exhibition game in 1950. (Homer S. Thune)

“Each day men sell little pieces of themselves in order to try to buy them back each night with the coin of fun.”

C. W. Mills, *White Collar*, 1956²⁵

False arrest, publicity stunt to advertise Jack Dempsey's boxing exhibition at the Avalon Ballroom in Fargo, 1950s. (Homer S. Thune)



George Schoen's Orchestra, Fargo Elks Club, 1957. Back row l-r: Stan Chap, Joe Casey, Mel Eidsmoe, Walt Seeba, John Gwyther. Front row: Bill Watson, George Schoen, and Dale Howard. (Walter Seeba)



Artist, Professor Richard Szeitz (right) working on the fountain (lower right) to be installed in the West Acres Mall, Fargo, 1972. (Colburn Hvidston III)



Sheila Sears Degrugillier beading a baby amulet (Sioux) at the Log Cabin Folk Arts Center, Moorhead MN, 2000. (Sheila Sears Degrugillier)



Advertising

“Sit Down And Eat!”
Advertisement for Kroll’s
Diner, Fargo, 2000.
(G.L Ness Agency, Inc.)



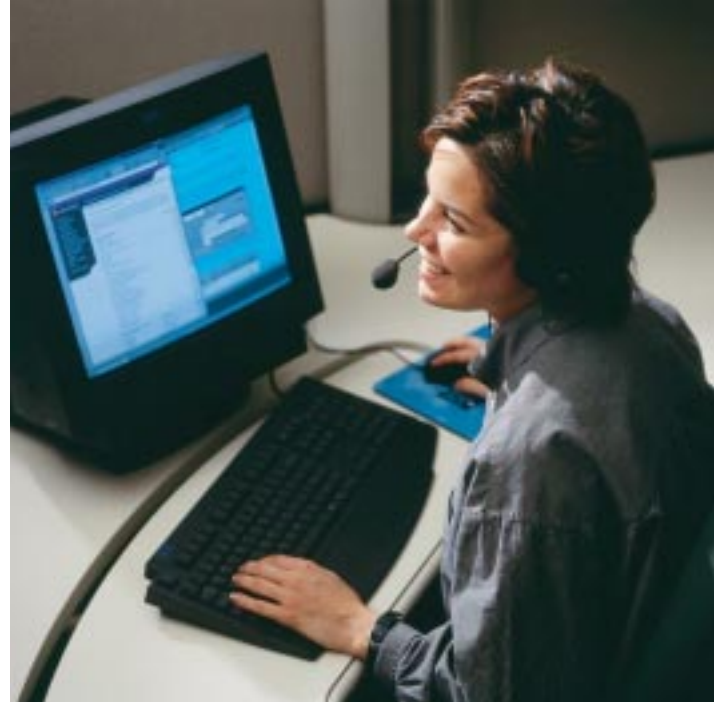
The Seal King Twins adver-
tising the Twin Pack milk
cartons for Cass Clay.
Dalles Henning, far right,
1957. (Cass-Clay
Creamery, Inc.)



Computer Technology



Using the personal computer to expand business, 2002. (MicroSoft/Great Plains Business Solutions)



Technology can be used in a variety of ways. For some it means expanded opportunities, but for others, it means eight hours a day in front of a computer. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, by the mid 1990s more Americans were working in computer-related businesses than in automobile-related businesses, more in biotechnology than in machine-tool industries, more in surgical and medical concerns than in plumbing or heating.²⁶

Some economists have even argued that when all the costs of computerizing work are added up, technology has actually shown a productivity deficit.²⁷

Invisible Work



A lesson in spinning, demonstrating with an Icelandic spinning wheel, 1900s. (Fred Hultstrand History in Pictures Collection, IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 2028.206)

“How shamed ladies’d be to have hands and arms like mine and how weak they’d be to do my work and how shocked to touch the dirty things even what i black my whole hands with everyday—yet such things must be done and the lady’s’d be the first to cry out if they was to find nobody to do it for ’em—so the lowest work i think is honourable in itself and the poor drudge is honourable too providing her mind isn’t coarse and low as her work, both cause its useful and for be’en content with the station she is placed in.”

Hannah Cullwick, *Diaries*, 1864²⁸

KP at YMCA Camp,
Cormorant Lake, MN,
1924. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo,
2022.8.1)



“But the quite happiest bit of manual work I ever did was for my mother in the old inn at Sixt, where she alleged the stone staircase to have become unpleasantly dirty, since last year. Nobody in the inn appearing to think it possible to wash it, I brought the necessary buckets of water from the yard myself, poured them into beautiful image of Versailles waterworks down the fifteen or twenty steps of the great staircase, and with the strongest broom I could find, cleaned every step into its corners. It was quite lovely work to dash the water and drive the mud, from each, with accumulating splash down to the next one.”

John Ruskin, *Praeterita*, 1885-89²⁹



Inga Arlien fetching water from the windmill, 1922. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, UA ExFa81-IV.1)

Lineage

My grandmothers were strong.
They followed plows and bent to toil.
They moved through fields sowing seed.
They touched earth and grain grew.
They were full of sturdiness and singing.
My grandmothers were strong.

My grandmothers are full of memories
Smelling of soap and onions and wet clay
With veins rolling roughly over quick hands
They have many clean words to say.
My grandmothers were strong.
Why am I not as they?

Margaret Walker, 1942³⁰



Washing dishes after a family Thanksgiving dinner. Hilda Sears, Jessie Smith, and Ivy Hunt Sears, 1962. (Sheila Sears Degrugillier)

“Americans need time for unpaid work they call their own. They need the time to give to others. Much of what will be done was the regular routine in the days when married women were full-time housewives. And it is largely caring work—caring for children, caring for sick relatives and friends, caring for the house. Today many haven’t got the time to care. If we could carve the time out from our jobs, we could prevent the current squeeze on caring labor. And this time around, the men should share the load.”

Juliet, *The Overworked American*, 1991³¹



Peeling apples, 1940s.
(IRS, NDSU, Fargo,
2023.51.4)

“In modern times there are still many people who, without being slaves, nevertheless work for little or no payment: for example, housewives, schoolchildren, the so-called ‘unemployed’ and the retired...It seems odd to regard a house-painter as working when he paints other people’s houses for money, but not when he paints his own in his spare time; or to say that writers have ceased to work when they leave their word-processors and go to do some overdue digging in their gardens.”

Keith Thomas, 1999³²



Washing dishes, 1920s.
(IRS, NDSU, Fargo, UA
ExFa77-II)



Sheila Sears Degrugillier
reviving the art of tanning
hides. Rubbing mashed
brains into the hide to ren-
der the hide soft and fluffy,
1995. (Sheila Sears
Degrugillier)

Volunteerism



Bird watching can provide hours of enjoyment as well as valuable environmental information. (Garrison Diversion Conservancy District)

As we become more and more absorbed with paid employment, activities that depend on volunteers become less effective. Workaholics are the only addicts that receive public praise. Yet they are the ones who often shirk their civic and caring responsibilities....

“We begin our listing of good life attributes with our four-four-four formula: four hours of bread labor; four hours of professional activity; and four hours dedicated to fulfilling our obligations and responsibilities as members of the human race and as participants in various local, regional, national and world civic activities.”

Helen and Scot Nearing *Continuing The Good Life*,



Rehabilitate is a local, private, non-profit organization that renovates older homes with volunteer labor and the sweat equity of low-income families who will ultimately purchase the homes from Rehabilitate. Begun in 1999 by Fargoan, Don Kounovsky, with the support of local churches, this organization continues to coordinate volunteer efforts from the community to create accessible low-income housing. (Don Kounovsky)



“But I do know a regime which provides human beings no deep reasons to care about one another cannot long preserve its legitimacy.”

The Corrosion of Character, Richard Sennett, 1998.³⁴

Children and Work



Feeding the chick-ees.
Rustad Farm in Williams
County, ND, 1951.

“When the chicks hatched, Mom put them in those little A-frame chicken houses (made by Dad). These little chicken coops had no floors so they could be moved along on the ground each day to clean grass. We fed the chicks fresh grain, oats mixed in water. It was put in little feeders, those upside down canning jars that drained into metal trays.” (Marlaine Rustad Slaaen, Charles Milton Zell)

Where do Children Fit In? Why do we need a, Take Your Daughter or Son to Work Day?

...

“Later, as Gwen and John show me around their home, John points out in passing an expensive electric saw and drill set he bought two years earlier with the thought of building a tree house for Cassie, a bigger hutch for her rabbit, Max, and a guest room for visiting friends. ‘I have the tools,’ John confides. ‘I just don’t have the time to use them.’ Once, those tools must have represented the promise of future projects.

Now they seemed to be there in place of the projects. Along with the tools, perhaps John has tried to purchase the illusion of leisure they seemed to imply...There were, in a sense, two Bell households: the rushed family they actually were and the relaxed family they imagined they could be if only they had time.”

Arlie Hochschild, *The Time Bind*, 1997³⁵

“When the director of a day care center was asked what kind of a day she thought would most benefit a child,...she replied that on average most three-and four-year olds should have ‘an active morning, lunch, a nap and go home after their nap, ideally six or seven hours.’ Though she, like her colleagues at the...Center, felt that most children did well under her care, nine hours, she remained convinced, was generally ‘too long...’ It’s enough to observe that children say they want more time with their parents, and parents say they regret not spending more time with their children.”

Hochschild, *The Time Bind*, 1997³⁶



Helping Grandpa put a door on an existing bin in Divide County, ND. Ellis Berg, 54, and his grandson, Walker, 1, 2000. (Carol and Ellis Berg)

Transportation

“There’s a good feeling when I’m out there on the road. There ain’t nobody looking over your shoulder and watching what you’re doing. When I worked in a warehouse, you’d be punching in and punching out, and bells ringing all the time. On those jobs, you’re not thinking, you’re just doing what they tell you. Sure, now I’m expected to bring her in on time, but a couple of hours one way or the other don’t make no difference. And there ain’t nobody but me to worry about how I get her there.”

28-year old truck driver, quoted in Lillian B. Rubin, *Worlds of Pain*, 1972³⁷

In the year 2000 twenty-four percent of the households in North Dakota owned three or more vehicles.³⁸

78% of ND workers drove alone to work in a car, truck or van, 5% walked to work, 10% carpooled.³⁹



Interchange by West Acres,
1970s.

Pride in one's work. Street car conductor, 1900s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, Mss 1970.43.3)



"My dad had a special interest in cars and taking care of them." Myron D. Scott, 63, Williston, ND, 1970. (L. Joyce Krabseth)





Alice Royce posing with one of the many truck drivers who stopped for gas and food at Sinclair 24 Hour Service Station (site of the famous Can Pile) in Casselton on their way to the West Fargo Stockyards. The station opened in 1933. Alice and Isolia Loe were the first women to work there when the lunch counter opened in 1935. (Alice Royce)



Trucking has remained an important industry although the size of the trucks has grown. Andy Olson hooking up a trailer, 1996. (Andy Olson, Carol Gonzales)



Tragedy on the tracks

Railroads provided essential transportation of goods and people. Occasionally they came in conflict with livestock. Harold A. Anderson was hired to clear the tracks when on March 1, 1949, 93 head of cattle were killed by a train near Halliday. Others had to be shot bringing the death toll to 110. Fog and darkness prevented the engineer from seeing the animals.

(Beverly Pugh
Leo D. Harris)



Communications



“They’ve given us the name ‘telecommunication.’ Real fancy. To us, though, it’s still the Phone Room...Think about it. We’re saving lives! You figure EMS calls us, they need to get the ER to let Alie know that they’ve got a gunshot coming in. If somebody is calling Dr. Rose because they have a heart in another state, we get the call. We give it to Dr. Rose. He gets the heart. But it came through us first. So, we’re it! We’re really where it starts from. The central unit that makes this place go. I’m telling you. People might not think of us that way, but it’s true. We’re the heart of this hospital.”

Annamarie Feci: Page Operator, 1988⁴⁰



Irene Clancy (left) telephone operator, Kensal, ND, early 1900s. (Catherine Palmer)

Setting type in a newspaper office, 1900s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, Mss 296.213.14)

Energy



The Washburn Lignite Coal Company was founded in 1900. By 1910, it was by far the largest mine in the state employing 200 men and producing an average output of 400 tons of coal a day.

More common were the small family mines with as few as one, two or three workers. In 1910, 103 mines were listed in the Report of the State Engineer. At this time mine safety was not well understood as the report noted: “Due to the entire absence of explosive

gases which necessitates an abundant supply of good air, ventilation is sometimes neglected and the air furnished is not sufficient. Although this condition imposes no danger it sometimes reduces the efficiency of the miners....”⁴¹

Working inside a coal mine, 1910s. (IRS, NDSU, Fargo, 2038.8.3)



“North Dakota ranks first among the states in its potential for the production of wind energy. Expansion of this industry would have considerable impact on the development of jobs related to a sustainable economy and in the repopulation of rural areas.”

Lester Brown, 2002⁴²

Minnkota Power Cooperative currently has two working turbines, one near Valley City and other near Petersburg. Each turbine is expected to produce about 2.5 million kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, which is the approximate annual electrical usage of 200-300 homes.⁴³

Construction of the wind turbine. Tower height: Approximately 230 feet. Blades approximately 85-foot long. Cut-in wind speed: 8 miles per hour, Cut-out wind speed 56 mph. Project cost: \$1 million per turbine. (Minnkota Power Cooperative)

Reflections on Issues Related to Work

Seeing people actively engaged in work in a variety of settings reminds us that reassessing our relationship to work and figuring out where we go from here is a complicated matter. Many serious issues must be considered. Among these issues is the concern for low-wage, low-skill workers. Barbara Ehrenreich points out in her book, *Nickel and Dimed*, that low-wage workers work hard often to the point of severely damaging their health. These workers are routinely forced to endure humiliating working conditions. Yet, even under these circumstances most workers remain committed to their jobs.⁴⁴ Ehrenreich remarked, “I never met an actual slacker or, for that matter, a drug addict or thief.”⁴⁵

In a market economy, earning a living is essential for survival, but current trends would suggest an increasing number of workers may be forced to accept a job that is below their expectations and educational level. Consider the following statements:

- Beginning in the 1970s in the United States a number of organizational changes have occurred which have greatly strengthened the control of a small, privileged superclass of leaders over the working class.⁴⁶
- In 1965 CEOs made 26 times more than a typical worker; by 1989 the ratio had risen to 72-to-1, and by 2000 it was 310-to-1. This level of executive pay is a

distinctly American phenomenon: U.S. CEOs make about three times as much as their counterparts abroad.⁴⁷

- The willingness to lay off workers has become a sign of managerial ability known as job shedding.⁴⁸
- In the United States, an average of more than 90,000 college graduates each year will continue to enter positions that do not require skills learned in a bachelor’s degree program.⁴⁹

More specifically, Table I shows job projections by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for 2000-2010. The occupations listed are those that are estimated to show the largest increase in terms of numbers of jobs available.

Only one occupation of the ten, general and operations manager, requires a Bachelor’s degree while seven require only short term on-the-job-training. The trend for these, “top-ten,” occupations reflects the broader job market as well. Although political rhetoric might give the impression that high paying jobs will be available for all, this is largely an illusion. Unless we significantly alter the way we structure work, many individuals will be stuck in low-wage, low-skill jobs which offer few, if any, benefits. This dilemma cannot be considered a problem only for the United States but is a concern for the rest of the world as well.

Table 1. Occupations with the largest job growth, 2000-2010

(Numbers in thousands of jobs)						
Occupation	Employment		Change		Quartile rank by 2000 median hourly earnings (1)	Education and training category
	2000	2010	Number	Percent		
Retail salespersons	4,109	4,619	510	12	4	Short-term on-the-job training
Cashiers, except gaming	3,325	3,799	474	14	4	Short-term on-the-job training
Office clerks, general	2,705	3,135	430	16	3	Short-term on-the-job training
Combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food	2,206	2,879	673	30	4	Short-term on-the-job training
General and operations managers	2,398	2,761	363	15	1	Bachelor's or higher degree, plus work experience
Registered nurses	2,194	2,755	561	26	1	Associate degree
Janitors and cleaners, except maids and housekeeping cleaners	2,348	2,665	317	13	4	Short-term on-the-job training
Customer service representatives	1,946	2,577	631	32	3	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	2,084	2,373	289	14	3	Short-term on-the-job training
Waiters and waitresses	1,983	2,347	364	18	4	Short-term on-the-job training

¹The quartile rankings of Occupational Employment Statistics annual earnings data are presented in the following categories: 1=very high (\$39,700 and over), 2=high (\$25,760 to \$39,660), 3=low (\$18,500 to \$25,760), and 4=very low (up to \$18,490). The rankings were based on quartiles using one-fourth of total employment to define each quartile. Earnings are for wage and salary workers.

Occupations with the largest job growth, 2000-2010 in "Occupational employment projections to 2010," published in the *November 2001 Monthly Labor Review*, Table 4.

All human beings should have the opportunity to find meaningful work. Let us look again at Henry Ford's elitist perspective. His assumption that there was a major difference in the abilities of managers and workers was probably never an accurate reflection of our working society and is less so today.

...the doing of one thing over and over again and always in the same way —is a terrifying prospect to a certain kind of mind. It is terrifying to me. I could not possibly do the same thing day in and day out, but to other minds, perhaps I might say to the majority of minds, repetitive operations hold no terrors.... The average worker, I am sorry to say, wants a job in which he does not have to think....⁵⁰

More than ever before, it is crucial that we take time to think about how, why, and for whom we do work. Providing meaningful work for all people is not only about enhancing paid employment.

It also means building sustainable and humane communities where jobs are an integral part of a larger picture which includes civic and family responsibilities.

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