

U.S. Work Ethic Takes Wrong Turn

IT'S official now. A survey being made by a University of Oklahoma researcher shows that a lot of people don't want to work any harder than is absolutely necessary and many don't want to work at all.

Dr. George W. England is finding that jobs no longer are "central to people's lives," workers don't want to produce any more than others in their groups, and they want "job autonomy."

These findings are contrary to the traditional work ethic that, until recently, enabled this country to lead the world in productivity and in standard of living. Employers have been aware of these circumstances for a long time.

Jobs and responsibilities come last among priorities for many in this changed direction of politics, way of living, recreation and business. People no longer have to make a choice between working or starving. If they don't like their jobs or bosses, or if they want a vacation, they can quit or get themselves fired.

Being fired may bring unemployment aid faster. Those who might

not qualify immediately for unemployment pay can get food stamps. These benefits, combined with welfare payments or other aid, may approach what transient, low-producers may earn in take-home pay.

Two years ago a \$60 million study authorized by Congress in 1971 was completed. The not-startling conclusion was that people who get a guaranteed income work less than people who don't.

Those who enjoy generous largess for being non-producers have generated what seems to be a growing demand for "redistribution of income." This refers to a federal system for taxing away earnings or profits of producers and dividing them among non-producers.

Labor and management have been blamed for helping spread this idea by "passing along" exorbitant costs to consumers. This creates an illusion that the "profits pie" never stops expanding.

Automobile workers laid off their jobs because the public has been buying fuel-efficient foreign-made compact cars may draw unemployment compensation as well as spe-

cial government payments because their industry has been hurt by competitive imported products.

Of course, money to pay for these benefits must come from those who are producing, with high taxes making these firms and workers more susceptible to competition.

Productivity is affected also by too-common employee attitudes that they don't want to bother to be trained for jobs they are hired to do, that they want to determine their own work schedules, and that they have little ambition to become proficient, productive or permanent employees.

"We have become so concerned with problems of redistributing wealth that we've forgotten all about creation of wealth," said Reginald H. Jones, chairman of General Electric Co., in a recent interview.

England says work is "much more central" to the Japanese, Yugoslavs, Belgians and Israelis than it is in the United States. Could this mean they are not as rich, fat and lazy as we have become?