

The Old & New Work Ethics

In *Person/Planet* Theodore Roszak characterizes the old work ethic as follows:

1. "Children play, grownups work. Work is what makes you officially grown up...
2. Work is something you have to go looking for out there in the world. You apply for it and compete for it...
3. Work is what fathers go away in the morning to do all day. It is very serious, because it happens far away--at someplace called the office or the plant or the shop. Most mothers work at home, but that does not count as real work.
4. Work is not something you are supposed to like.
5. People who do not work are either very poor or very rich. Poor people who do not work are lazy and contemptible.
6. Losing your job is one of the most shameful and terrible things that can happen, because then you have to ask for handouts and people will think you are a freeloader."

By reversing these values in meaning, we can get a fairly good picture of the new work ethic as it is unfolding. Michael Phillips points to this shift of values in the *Briarpatch Book*: In the past it was considered reasonable for people to develop a marketable skill and pursue a career that would earn them enough money to do the things they really wanted to do. People worked at their jobs so they could do the things they wanted on weekends, go where they wanted on vacations and, in some cases, earn enough to retire "early" and THEN do what they wanted. Now our peers are saying, "that's nonsense; why should I do something I do not like 70% of my life so I can do what I want 30%?"

The old wage-slave mentality of renting ourselves to our jobs for eight hours a day to cover the essentials of life is giving way to the awareness that work is an integral part of our lives. Therefore the quality of our lives and the quality of our work-time are one and the same. [From *Chop Wood, Carry Water*, by Rick Fields, with Peggy Taylor, Rex Weylor, and Rick Ingrassi, Jeremy P. Thatcher, Inc., 1984, pp. 108-109.]