

Labor, Leisure Blamed for U.S. Drag in Economic Supremacy

By ELMER C. WALZER
UPI Financial Editor

New York—UPI—Labor and leisure are blamed for America's lag behind Europe.

Economists hold that Europe's industrial machine is racing ahead of ours and challenging our economic supremacy.

A forum of 11 economists conducted by the National Industrial Conference Board

finds the U.S. almost at the bottom of the list of major nations in terms of its annual rate of economic growth.

S. J. Capelin, head of the firm of international industrial engineers that bears his name, notes that continental European manufacturers are no longer behind the times.

"In a good number of cases," Capelin says, "not only are they ahead of the times in relation to U.S. plants but their workers frequently surpass manufacturing goals higher than those set by American manufacturers."

Capelin singles out "union shackling" in the United States as one of the prime reasons for the upsurge in European competition.

The forum at the NICB notes that in the U.S. we have continued to preserve or expand the leisure of the individual while raising his material standards.

"The American preference for more leisure may be among the factors contributing toward a lower rate of economic growth in this country than in others during the past decade," the forum agrees.

"For generations, Americans have made a similar choice - preferring more leisure to more goods - and it is possible that something must give in the U.S. structure of wage and capital costs that will improve our competitive position in world markets."

Capelin says European plants are less developed than American but "this is compensated for by the eagerness with which plant management there approaches its problems and the ability to see quickly the high rate of improvement once scientific manufacturing

processes are adopted."

Europe Trying Piece Work

He finds Europe swinging to piece work to increase production, and employee earnings.

He cites a case of a hosiery manufacturer where an average seaming operator originally processed 20 dozen pairs a day. In the U.S. under ideal conditions, he says, an operator of this type will seam 25 to 30 dozen a day. In the European plant, under discussion, each seaming operator today averages 55 dozen a day, with some workers as high as 70 dozen.

The NICB forum, noting that per capita output in the U.S. has shown little rise during the past five years in contrast to vigorous growth elsewhere, holds that if this nation is to grow faster, and to have more leisure without weakening national security, the answer lies in raising the annual rate of productivity.

Unander Rumored For Federal Job

Portland—UPI—State Treasurer Sig Unander had "no comment" today on reports that he may accept a position in the Eisenhower administration.

He was replying to a query about reports that he planned to leave his state position for a federal job. "I have no comment whatsoever on these reports," Unander said.

Unander, a Republican, is in the third year of his second term as state treasurer.

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