

# The Gazette

Saturday March 9, 1996



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**Jeremy Rifkin**

## 30-hour week the answer to downsizing?

U of I conference looks at overwork, lack of jobs

By Lynn Feuerbach  
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IOWA CITY — A 30-hour workweek is part of Jeremy Rifkin’s solution to the forces threatening to unravel the fabric of American life.

Rifkin, president of the Foundation on Economic Trends and author of “The End of Work,” is speaking tonight at a University of Iowa conference examining the culture of work and the decline of leisure time.

Other speakers at the national conference, titled “Our Time Famine,” include Betty Friedan, women’s rights activist and author; Eugene McCarthy, poet and two-time Democratic presidential candidate; and Ellen Galinsky, co-founder and co-president of the Families and Work Institute. The conference concludes Sunday.

Increasingly sophisticated technology was to have made lives easier, but the average American is working up to 20 percent more than 20 years ago, while leisure time has declined by up to 37 percent, according to research by Louis Harris & Associates.

What’s happening, Rifkin said in a telephone interview from his Washington, D.C., office, is that technology is taking away jobs, forcing people to take more than one lower-paying job to make ends meet.

“This downsizing is not cyclical,” Rifkin said. “It’s going to continue on, decade after decade. We’re moving out of the Industrial Age into the Information Age.”

The challenge facing corporate executives, government leaders and representatives of social organizations is to find ways to keep people working and to share the gains of productivity from new technology, he said.

Even assuming the impossible — that the entire work force could be retrained for Information Age jobs — there simply wouldn’t be enough jobs for everyone, he said. As technology continues to advance, less human labor will be needed and the remaining jobs will go to the best and brightest — “the elite labor,” he said.

A shorter workweek would allow parents to spend more time with their families and it would allow citizens to devote more time to civic and social organizations.

Hewlett-Packard in France and BMW in Germany have already made such moves, Rifkin said, allowing workers to work four-day weeks but to get paid for five. Running the technology 24 hours, but the people in shifts, increased productivity. “They’re making money,” he said, “and the workers are fresh and totally motivated.”

