

HOW MANY HOURS MUST A MAN WORK ON, BEFORE YOU CALL HIM A MAN

The report follows the latest job numbers released by the federal government. While many economists are trying to explain away the trend as a sign of confidence that the economy is bounding back, the truth is far from that. Statistics clearly show that the job market on an average has hardly recovered one-fifth of the number of jobs shed during the recession. That people are quitting, despite few jobs in the market, does not support a show of confidence in the economy, but a clear sign of distress, and evidence of burnout *en masse*. What is shameful about the recession is that while not all market sectors were hurt uniformly to the same level, employers across all sectors acted in a uniform manner to use the excuse of recession and cut down on jobs, salaries, amenities, and facilities of workers. In many cases, employers found it desirable to lay-off people, shed jobs, and cut salaries and amenities, rather than cut back on their own extravagant lifestyles. With the recession having devastated the overall job market and reduced the options of workers, many employers used the situation to maximize exploitation of employees. Faced with the choice between loss of livelihood and loss of dignity of labor, workers who still had their jobs chose to work for reduced rates and handle the work of multiple employees, rather than put the survival of their families at stake. Such decisions under distress can hardly be called voluntary, for the recession removed the scope of exercise of free will. But, one can do and take only so much and not more, for humans are bound by human limitations. Workers, who struggled through the recession to carry the nation's economy on their backs are buckling under the continued pressure and are calling quits. That is what the new trend of quitting jobs being higher than lay-offs indicates. It indicates loss of hope, and not sign of confidence in the economy. It indicates job burnouts, anger, and frustration. It indicates that workers have given up hope of the situation ever improving in their workplaces, and are refusing to accept exploitation any more. It indicates that the spirit of the American worker is breaking, and it indicates that we are not doing anything affirmative for those who are slogging away 24 x 7 working for a pittance. Efforts to pass-off this disturbing trend, as signs of a return of worker confidence in the economy, are an insult to the American worker, and indicate conscious effort to ignore the pains of those, who form the backbone of our nation, in spite of clear evidence to the contrary. A survey made by InterCall and published in April 2010 clearly indicated that a full one-third of American employees feel that lay-offs and other cost-cutting measures by their employers have resulted in each worker handling the workloads of two or more employees. At the same time, the same survey reported that a quarter of employees felt that their job security was threatened if they did not remain connected to the workplace after office hours, and some felt the same even on vacations. The readings from the report clearly indicate employers taking unfair advantage of American employees by using the recession as a lever. It is hardly surprising then, that government figures in June 2010 find employees quitting their jobs in larger numbers than being laid-off. The attempts to interpret the action of those bereft of hope and burnt out by exploitation, as a vote of confidence in the economy, are deplorable if not outright despicable. We should stand up and take note, the figures show a cause of grief and sorrow, of people giving up on the fight, and of American workers choosing to put their survival at stake, rather than accept further loss of dignity. It is time to save the souls of the workers in our nation. It is not a cause to celebrate.

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