

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Prime Time Radio

Washington

Ubiquis/Nation-Wide Reporting & Convention Coverage
22 Cortlandt Street – Suite 802- New York, NY 10007
Phone: 212-227-7440 ω 800-221-7242 ω FAX 212-227-7524

Host – Mr. Mike Cuthbert

[START TAPE 1 SIDE A]

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Hi everybody. I am Mike Cuthbert in Washington. Welcome to Prime Time Radio. Adjusting to the new demands of family, jobs, time and opportunity, the American workforce has changed drastically in recent years. Innovative employers have offered job sharing, part-time, flexible time and other innovations that have allowed productive workers to have more control over their hours and their work, and for imaginative employers to have a happier more workforce. Most of the innovative thinking in job creation and job alternatives were made to accommodate working mothers and fathers who wanted more family time. It's only recently that the question of flexibility began to include older workers, particularly those that who are nearing retirement age themselves, but with elderly parents to care for, as well as jobs to do. Joining us for a discussion of how the workforce is offering or can offer a greater flexibility is the Director of Workplace Flexibility 2010, Chai Feldblum, and the Director of AARP's Senior Community Service Employment Program, Jim Seith. Welcome to you both.

MR. JIM SEITH: Thank you very much.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Good to see you.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: Thank you.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Why the focus on the year 2010, as in Workplace Flexibility 2010, Chai?

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: Well, we are a policy project. We are a project about getting public policies to support employers that want to offer more flexible workplaces. Right now in Washington there's pretty much a stalemate about workplace flexibility. You ask a one group of people, National Partnership for Women and Families ask me and they say we believe in flexibility and it means having paid sick leave.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Yeah.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: It means having paid family leave. And business just fights them to a stand still. You ask the National Association of Manufacturers or the Chamber of Commerce, do you believe in workplace flexibility and they say absolutely. And it means amending the Fair Labor Standards Act to allow compensatory time instead of overtime pay. And the Unions and the Family Groups fight them to a standstill.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Yeah.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: So what we have in Washington is a very restrictive image of what flexibility means. It either means paid sick leave or overtime instead of comp time and stalemate. So our project is intended to be something of an intervention. We want to come in and say lets think about flexibility more broadly, both in terms of what it means, like it might mean good part time jobs with benefits, as well as sick leave. Um, and lets think more broadly in terms of who it encompasses, hence our interest with older workers as much as young parents. But we recognize someone who has lived and breathed Washington politics for 20 years that

one doesn't break stalemates easily. So in our name we put in the year 2010, and our goal by the year 2010 there is an understanding that there's a problem out there that requires policy solution in some consensus across range of groups, labor unions, business, older workers, young moms and dads, that we need to work together. By 2010, I hope we have helped bring about this consensus that will then get reflected in policy.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: It's not coincidental, perhaps, that by 2010 1/3 of the workforce will be at least 50, which is an astounding number. What other trends, Jim, and what, what is the nature of the workforce in terms of its age?

MR. JIM SEITH: Well, the workforce, as you said, is aging. One-third will be over 50 by 2010, but more importantly what this really means is that we're going to have actual multi-generational issues around a single mature workforce. What I mean by that is you're going to have people in their 50s with children at home, children in college and those needs. Their parents are still going to be working and they'll be in their 80s. And the requirements of their mature parents, in terms of what they want to do for work and the needs they have for work will be radically different than the children, and yet all are now part of that mature workforce. So for us the whole issue of workforce flexibility comes down to the needs of employers to recognize that if they don't find ways to change, re-design, re-structure the workplace they will be unable to take care of the needs of what is in essence three generations of workers all of whom fall under this rubric of

mature worker. By changing and redesigning the workplace around things that may not be all benefit driven, by absolutely fall out by bounce, if you will, it's going to improve the workplace for everyone. Because workplace flexibility doesn't just affect mature workers, it affects all workers.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: I don't know if this is even possible to assess, but in thinking about this subject, preparing for this interview, it seemed to me a lot of the problem, if we want to put it that way, of an aging workforce is the fact that people who are now 65 and 70 are not even remotely considering retirement. They're planning their next career or planning how they can restructure their job. From their point of view they want the flexibility. They have made up their mind; they're going to continue working. What's the evidence, Chai, that the companies recognize that more and more of their workers are going to want to work later and that are starting to accommodate that inevitability?

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: Your point is correct and I think we're seeing that employers are wanting for some employees to enable them to work more. I hope that as we continue this conversation, we also are careful not to assume that that's necessarily the best thing. That what we really want to do is set up a world where people are expected to work past a certain age. We need to figure out why, are people working because it's better for them health wise, mental health wise, as well as physical? Yes, let's make sure we help those folks. Are people needing to work because they need more money? Well, that's a reality, not necessarily something to celebrate.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Right.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: Let's not set it up so that there's an expectation so that those who can't work are suddenly, why aren't you in a flexible work. So its, its--we're in an interesting moment in history here, where there is going to be a desire to work more. Let's set it up so that employers can do it without being hurt by legal structures, but lets not have an end result of forcing people to work who should be, you know playing golf if that's what they want to do.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Chai Feldblum is our guest. She's the Director of Workplace Flexibility 2010 and Jim Seith is Director of AARP's Senior Community Service Employment Program. Let's turn the spotlight around, Jim, and let's take a look at some of the companies that have already joined an alliance with AARP in working on workplace flexibility issues, if I can be forgiven for reading a very quick list. Home Depot, a couple of years ago we talked with you and their - [INTERPOSING]

MR. JIM SEITH: Right.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Their Chairman at the time about what they were doing. Deco Allied Barton Security Services, Borders Group, Express Personnel Services, Johns Hopkins Health System, Kelly Services, Man Power Incorporated, Met Life, Pitney Bowes, Principal Financial Group, The Home Depot, we mentioned, Universal Health Service, and Walgreen's. What are these companies doing, both with you and with their workers that are innovative that may be a model for the future?

MR. JIM SEITH: Well, the first thing that these companies have done is they've recognized that in the businesses that they happen to be in right now that their economic well-being in the next 10 years requires them to find ways to recruit and retain mature workers. As you mentioned, that's a very, very large and growing cohort. If everyone that can and wants to retire, retires, especially right now in areas such as health, retail, transportation and education, and it varies by sectors of the country, we're going to see a 5 to 10 million worker shortfall by 2010. These companies have looked out at those trends, have looked at their own internal needs and they've said, not only just mature workers, but non-traditional workers of all kinds, we've got to find ways to do things a bit differently if we're going to be competitive in the future. They came to us when we began to kick this thing off with Home Depot and said, what do we do to begin to create a workplace that will be attractive for mature workers so that we can remain competitive as a business. We kicked this thing off February 28th and amongst a number of good things that we had happen on that day was a very, very active and interesting panel. All 13 CEO's sat up front and talked with the Dean of the Yale School of Business, Jeffrey Garten [phonetic], about things they'd thought about, things they'd done, why they did it. And at the end of that one-hour session Garten said to all of them, the thing that strikes me about this conversation is that while all of these companies are, of course, altruistic and while all of these companies, of course, are concerned about their communities, the decision to lean

forward in this issue around mature workers is an economic decision. Do any of you disagree? And none of them did. Bob Nardelly [phonetic], who's the CEO of Home Depot, looked them all in the eye and he said, look, in four to five years we're all going to be scrambling to find the same people to do the same things and if you're not prepared you're going to lose. So, in fact, demographically the country is at a crossroads now, we've got to do something. And we're not the only one, Japan's doing it, Finland's doing it, a number of European countries are looking at it as policy. Finland and Japan, as government policy are attacking this problem because there it's so severe that the government can't be hands off.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: What is the government role here, particularly in a "free market economy", in which there's a pretty much, as much as possible a Laissez-faire attitude towards business? And yet, as we're seeming to develop here, this is going to be a national economic problem.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: Right. There's definitely a role for government policy. I think we need to figure it out carefully, strategically and in collaboration and in conversation between employers and employees, instead of through an adversarial mechanism.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Yeah.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: So when I hear this, I think this is fantastic, in terms of potentially breaking a stalemate in Washington. Because the fact is all of us, employers and employees, need to work together to create

flexible workplaces because that's what our current workforce needs. Mature workers need it because of care giving responsibilities they have or because they just don't want to work so much. Younger workers need it because they might be taking care of kids or doing something else. The need will now drive, I hope, a change in the stalemate. But we have to recognize that we are the United States of America and not Finland. Right? That we have an approach of private contract, ordinarily, not government mandate. So I, to me the best public policy, and it's the best both in terms of substance and in terms of politics, is policy that is derived through a conversation between employers and employees. What do we need from government and what don't we need?

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Okay. What do we need in terms of flexibility? We're using this term, but what are some examples of how it's accomplished? For example, we've all heard of job sharing. One person will take three days a week, the other two and the next week they alternate, or hours, or whatever. What are some of the other elements of flexibility we're talking about?

MR. JIM SEITH: Let me talk to you about an extraordinary one we learned about from Borders on February 28th, and it's about workplace flexibility. And I might add that when Borders' CEO began talking about this all of the other CEOs surreptitiously began to take notes but pretended they weren't. They have created something called Passport to Work, where an employee, and it doesn't have to be a mature worker, an employee of

Borders can get a passport to work and if they leave upstate Michigan in the winter and go down to Florida, they take that passport to Borders in Florida, they will have a job. And they take that passport back to Michigan with them six months later. This is the ultimate in geographic workplace flexibility. So Borders has already begun that type of process. Borders has done studies and one of the things they learned is that while younger workers work for pay, many older workers, not defined older, but older workers work because they want to be part of a team first and pay second. So they're looking at teams. They're looking at ways to figure out how to put teams in charge of the day to day scheduling and those kinds of issues. And we actually talked to Sloan Foundation the other day on this very issue around workplace flexibility and that's one of the things they're very excited about. How can teams take over the responsibility for making sure that "X" percentage of a factory floor, or that "X" percentage of a retail outlet's coverage is done by the team and the team decides that if a young lady has to leave because she has children at home, one of them gets sick, the nanny doesn't show up, daycare falls apart, things that have happened to all of us as parents, the team figures out how to cover, not store management. That way the team becomes part of the solution for the store. Those are two things that I've heard about already in these discussions we've begun to have.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: That sounds also like the team could adapt to older workers, handicapped workers.

MR. JIM SEITH: Absolutely.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: A variety of different functions within a team.

MR. JIM SEITH: Within a team.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: So let me--I agree. Let me also add some stuff in terms of defining flexibility.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Uh huh.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: And then once we do that give you a sense of where policy can then come in to make it difficult. So we've defined flexibility in three ways. And by the way, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation is the reason I'm sitting here today.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Yeah.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: I was not in to workplace flexibility. I'm not a parent. I'm actually very happy I'm not a parent. And so I'm not, I haven't really been passionate about this issue in a way that, I think, a lot of parents have been. But when my dad was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer three years ago, I was able to go to Israel where he lives; I was there for the four weeks that he lived before he died. There is nothing that can match that, in terms of making a difference in your life, right?

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Uh huh.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: So when the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation came to me and said, would you get involved in this issue? That's why I got involved. And Kathleen Christiansen, who's the project officer, really worked with me and others to develop what we now call a three-part

definition of flexibility. Its flexibility in the scheduling of your hours, you're working full-time but some flexibility in when you work, right, in those full-time hours. Flexibility in the amount of hours you work. So that's you want a part-time or a part-year job.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Uh huh.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: Or career flexibility over a life span. That sometimes you're actually out of the workforce completely for a year or two and then you have flexibility to come back in. So it's flexibility in the scheduling of your hours, the amount of your hours and over a life span. And across all of, well, at least across the first two, flexibility in dealing with emergency stuff that comes up. So teams seems like a great way to do that. Let's have the team figure out instead of the store manager. Well, we do have a law though, the National Labor Relations Act, which says that when you have a union you can't be negotiating with individuals, you've got to be negotiating through the union. So if you have unionized workplace, how does that work with teams? It can certainly be made to work.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Yeah.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: It's just how do we do it? Now, the National Labor Relations Act also says that even if you're not unionized yet, you can't do things to stop unionization and joint management employee conversations - [INTERPOSING]

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Oh, gees.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: Right? Now, no one intended this.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Yeah.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: There's a bill pending in Congress called the Team Act, to amend the NLRA to "fix this".

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Yeah.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: None of the unions support it. I wouldn't support it if I were the unions because that hasn't been developed through conversation. It's just been business [unintelligible].

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Yeah.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: So here's a problem. Let's fix it but let's fix it in a bipartisan, non-ideological fashion.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Our guests are Jim Seith, Director of AARP's Senior Community Service Employment Program and Chai Feldblum, who's the Director of Workplace Flexibility 2010. I must say, in all honesty, as I ran through that list of companies that have joined your cohort that not many of them, if any, are involved in blue collar work, construction, that area of manufacturing and so forth. Is--are we talking, primarily, about flexibility in white collar occupations or, and how does it extend to the blue collar occupations?

MR. JIM SEITH: It has got to extend in the same way. There's no reason why, and again, I have not done near as much research, as I'm sure Chai has, but in the end the good news about this campaign that we're on, this trend that we're seeing and the impudence that we're seeing is that its

being driven by the market and market forces are going to force things to happen that have never happened before. The bad news is its being driven by the market and until the market begins to hit some companies, literally, between the eyes with the realities of what's happening to their bottom line, they're not going to come to the table. But we need to be prepared, and I think 2010 is the answer, in terms of philosophically; this isn't going to happen over night. We've talked to literally hundreds of companies and of the hundreds we talked to, both in terms of logistics and in terms of their interest, when you really to get in to the issue and tell them that in order for them to be one our hiring partners, our featured employers they're going to have to list all the factors that we consider important on our web page, in terms of do they have part-time benefits, do they offer flex-time, do they offer shared jobs? And some companies, quite frankly, large companies balked at that and decided they'd wait a little while before they came on board. I have absolutely no doubt they'll be back. In fact, one already is because the marketplace is beginning to push this issue onto employers whether they're ready for it or not.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: But you know - [INTERPOSING]

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Just, I have a quick break to do, Chai. I'm Mike Cuthbert in Washington inviting you to visit our website, www.AARP.org/radio. Click onto to hear previous broadcasts of our program. You can get information on our guests and who they represent. You can contact us by e-mail. A busy site, indeed. You can make

comments on this program at that site. This Prime Time Radio. By the way, before I forget it, the Workplace Flexibility Website is www.law.georgetown.edu/workplaceflexibility2010.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: Okay.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Is there a simpler one?

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: Yes, a much simpler one. Should I just say it and then you'll - [INTERPOSING]

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Sure.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: So its www.workplaceflexibility2010.org.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Org. Okay. Very good. Pardon me if I get philosophical for just a moment, because a lot of what we're talking about is a change in the American work ethic. The work ethic was you work eight hours a day and you work 40 hours a day or more, you get paid overtime and you get a gold watch. And we know that work ethic is gone. But the ethic of work is good and the more you do, the better American you are is still with us, which I wonder if it effects both workers and companies when they look at this thing, flex-time, virtual work. Oh my gosh, how can I trust a woman working in her house coat or a guy in his exercise suit at home? He can't be as productive as he can be at the office. How much change do we need in the work ethic to make possible what we're talking about at this table today?

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: I love that you asked that question because it's so key. Because it doesn't matter what the market says. It almost doesn't

matter what the law says if you haven't changed social norms. Now, social norms can change based on what the law says and what companies start to do.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Yeah.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: We have a very inter-active, almost dialectical process of how that happens. There is no doubt that there is a problem right now that people think that a good worker is a worker who is always present. That's not good for people's families when they need to be there for them. That's not good for communities that used to have people volunteering in the community and ultimately it's not good for the employer. I mean some of the research that the Sloan Foundation has funded demonstrates that between ages, between the time of 3:30 and 5:30 in the afternoon, if you're don't really quite sure what's going on with your kids or your elder parents, you may not be as productive. So given that we have technology and given that we have the capacity to be flexible. It is worth it to try to change the social norm so that you can be considered a good worker even if you're not working 60 hours a weeks. You can be considered a good worker, even if you're not present in that location.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: We have been part of this intimidation though, I think. And that is that we've talked a lot on this program about older workers and technology and how, like it or not, they're going to have to adapt. They're going to have to learn at least basic computer skills if they want to maintain flexibility. Are we lying to them or is that really a demand

of the society now, in order to get full workplace flexibility, is it vital for all workers to be somewhat technologically literate?

MR. JIM SEITH: Yes. I just don't think, when you say all, I certainly would never argue that if 100% of every mature worker wasn't computer literate, but the fact of the matter is that the more computer literate one is, the more opportunities one has. I will give you a perfect example of the kind of thing that's happening. And it's an outstanding of public, private partnership that's working well and can work even better. We're talking to a company right now who is the largest company in the country right now, in terms of customer service representatives on the phone in support of organizations all from home. All that's necessary is a computer and the ability to access the internet. And lest one think that this is fly by night, this particular company is the landing page, or I'm sorry the landing customer service telephone number for IRS this year. So -

[INTERPOSING]

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: They're not in India or Ireland?

MR. JIM SEITH: They are not in India or Ireland and they are, they're all over the United States, and they're in their bedrooms, and they're on that computer, and it's fully scheduled, they're fully trained. And they have come to us because for a non-traditional market, mature workers, any non-traditional market this is an outstanding opportunity. They pay wages, they have benefits and they have contracts and they're scrambling, they're growing so fast to fill those contracts

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: Jim, let me, just, not disagree but add a little bit of a gloss.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Sure.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: That actually picks on your question about blue collar workers. Because I think it does show sometimes the limits of the marketplace. Yes, you'll be better off if you can get comfortable with technology as an older worker to be able to then benefit. But a lot of people didn't have that access. Are we going to say now we're leaving you even further behind?

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Uh huh.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: No. We have an obligation as a society to make sure that everybody, whatever type of job that they are in, blue collar or white collar, manufacturing or service, can have flexibility during the time that they're working, right, even if it's going to be something where technology's not going to give you the flexibility.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: No.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: It's the company that says, yes, you can leave now to take your mom to the doctor. So technology will help significantly, doesn't help everyone. Blue collar workers might need more in terms of policy creating incentives for companies to do things before the market actually pushes them to do it, or maybe it might actually require a mandate. See, I'm not someone who thinks mandate is a bad word.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Yeah.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: I just don't think it's the only word. I think there's marketplace, there's incentives, there's ultimately mandates if that's necessary.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: It seems from what you both have said, and I wish we could go on longer, that it is obvious to me that any demands for workplace flexibility for the older worker are going to have to include all workers.

MR. JIM SEITH: Absolutely.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: Yes.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: That if we don't make this broad and include everybody we have no chance of getting companies to respond.

MR. JIM SEITH: Absolutely.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: And certainly not government.

MR. JIM SEITH: But the good news is though, what's good for a mature worker, is good for a young mother, is good for a young single man because workplace flexibility effects everybody's well being. One of the major issues here, if you affect someone well being their health stays better. Given healthcare costs for companies, this is another way to begin to off set some of those healthcare costs. Happy employees are healthy employees.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: A nice message to send to the government.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: And to business.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: And to business.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: And to business. Our guests have been Chai Feldblum, who is the Director of Workplace Flexibility 2010 and Jim Seith, he's the Director of AARP's Senior Community Service Employment Program. Where on the AARP website would they find out about what you're doing, Jim?

MR. JIM SEITH: It would be on the AARP.org/featuredemployers.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: And we thank you both for joining us. Keep flexible.

MS. CHAI FELDBLUM: Thank you.

MR. MIKE CUTHBERT: Thank you at home for joining us. We invite you to call our toll-free number with reactions to our shows. You might have some questions we can answer. The number is 1-800-424-9343. As we mentioned earlier, previous broadcasts of Prime Time Radio, as well as information about our guests online at www.AARP.org/radio. Prime Time Radio is a production of AARP. Our producer is Genelle Haskell [phonetic], our associate producer is Rachel McCarthy [phonetic], our engineer is Bruce Youngblood [phonetic]. I'm Mike Cuthbert in Washington.

[END TRANSCRIPT]