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RECREATION FOR THE RICH AND POOR, A CONTRAST.

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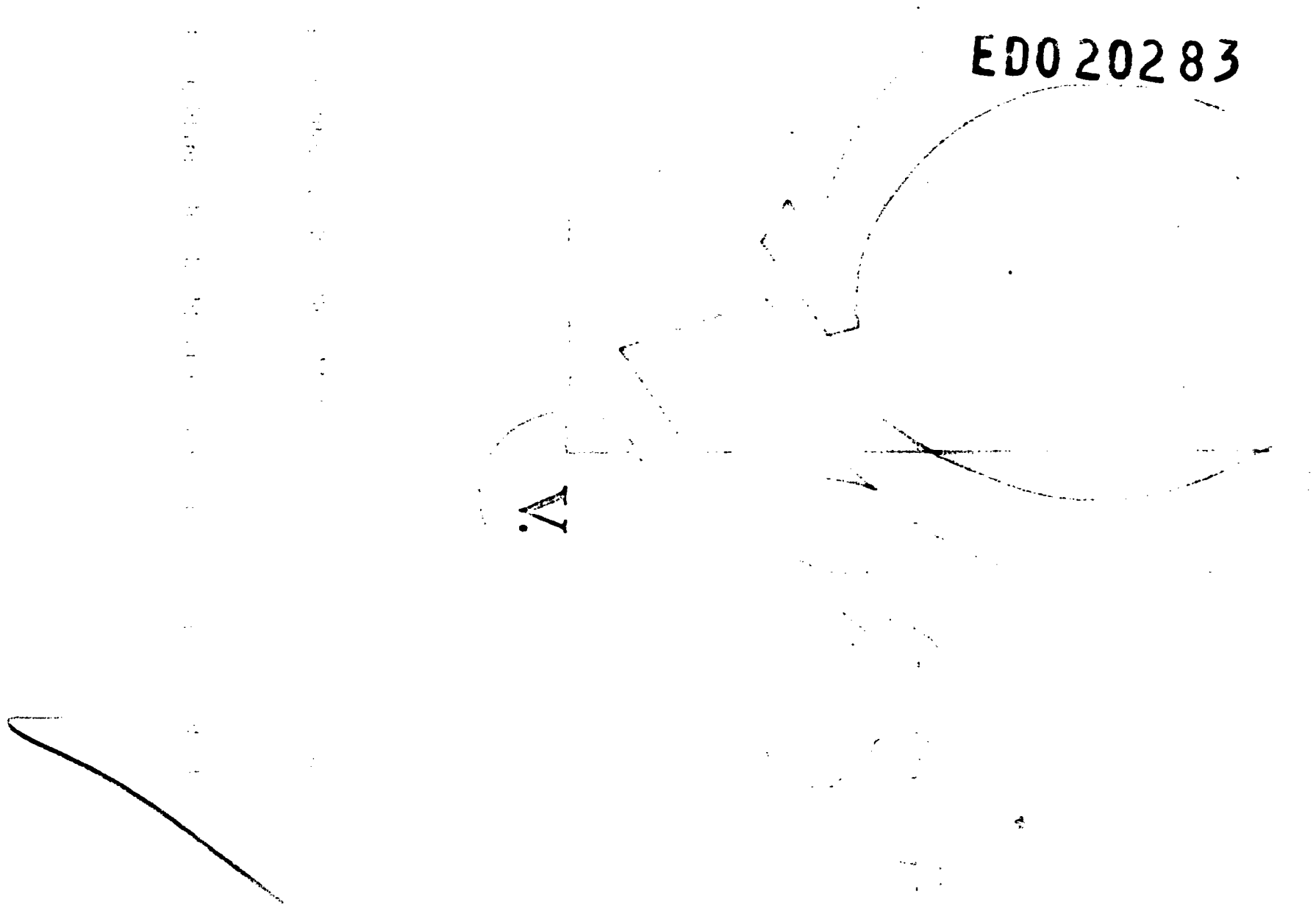
THE DIVERGENCE BETWEEN THE LEISURE ACTIVITIES OF AFFLUENT AND POOR AMERICANS IS DISCUSSED. PARADOXICALLY, THOSE WITH THE GREATEST AMOUNT OF FREE TIME--THE POOR--HAVE THE LEAST MONEY WITH WHICH TO ENRICH THEIR LEISURE TIME. WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT AN EXTRAORDINARY VARIETY OF LEISURE ACTIVITIES ARE NOW AVAILABLE, ONLY THE MIDDLE AND UPPER CLASSES CAN MAKE USE OF THEM. NOT ONLY ARE THE POOR ECONOMICALLY UNABLE TO ENJOY MOST OF THE RECREATION FACILITIES WHICH ARE AVAILABLE, BUT THEY ARE FURTHER RESTRICTED BY NOT KNOWING HOW TO USE PERSONAL LEISURE CONSTRUCTIVELY. THE RECREATION AND LEISURE NEEDS OF THE POOR, THEREFORE, SHOULD BE MET BY FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND BY VOLUNTARY AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS WITH SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED SERVICES AND PROGRAMS. THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN "QUEST," MONOGRAPH 5, WINTER ISSUE, DECEMBER 1965. (NH)



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ARTICLES

CUES TO READING

ALSO

Recreation for the Rich and Poor: A Contrast

By RICHARD G. KRAUS

Traditionally the provision of organized recreation services in the United States has been based on a middle-class value system. Although a number of sociologists[1] have identified marked differences in patterns of leisure participation based on socio-economic class or ethnic affiliation, most authorities in the field of professional recreation service have not been concerned with these differences. Similarly, when American prospects with respect to leisure and recreation are described by educators and writers in this field, it is done in optimistic and uncritical terms. Thus, in a recent article, the following factors were cited as contributing to the boom in recreational participation: more people, greater mobility, increased amounts of leisure, better education, more money to spend and more favorable attitudes toward leisure and recreation.[2]

Certainly, these factors all exist. But do they represent the full picture?

As a nation, we have more money to spend each year, and we are spending vast amounts of it on recreational activities. The Gross National Product climbed from 100.2 billion dollars in 1940 to 284.6 billion in 1950 and 585.1 billion in 1963. The amount of money listed as "personal consumption" which was spent on recreation was 11.3 billion dollars in 1950, 18.3 billion in 1959 and 21.6 billion in 1962.[3] The categories of recreational spending, involving billions of dollars spent on boating, bowling, spectator sports, T.V. and radio purchases and maintenance, cultural activities, gardening and travel, are too familiar to be cited here. Depending on the source of the statistics, estimates of annual recreation spending range as high as 70 or 80 billion dollars a year.

Nor can one question that a vast amount of time has become available to this increasingly affluent society, for leisure uses. Recognizing that the term "leisure" may be variously defined as an attitude, a life-style, a state of being, a value system, or a bulk of time, this author uses the word in its commonest and simplest sense, that of unobligated time. Leisure is time about which one has a choice. It is time free from work or work-connected responsibilities. Its growth, caused by labor legislation, unionization, retirement programs, labor-saving devices, mechanization and automation, has been widely documented. In 1965, the Deputy Associate Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics wrote:

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> Over the years, the acceptable standard for working time has been reduced drastically. The most marked reductions occurred between 1900 and 1930, when average weekly hours dropped from about 67 to 55 for farm-workers and from 56 to 43 for those in industry. Since 1940 there has been more widespread adoption of the 40-hour workweek. In a number of industries and in offices in many large cities, a 37½ or a 35-hour workweek has become standard. . . .[4]

Recently, however, the rate of decline of the workweek has leveled off. Today the most significant factors in the growth of leisure seem to be extended vacations (some major industries are experimenting with three-month sabbaticals for older workers), an increased number of days off built around holidays (including newly acknowledged holidays and in some cases the employee's birthday), and earlier retirement attached to increasingly attractive pension plans.

Thus, the rosy picture painted earlier of a "recreation boom" is documented. We have more money, more time, more activities, more recognition of the value of recreation—and a great willingness to take part. Within this picture, there is usually little to suggest that all Americans are not equally enjoying the benefits of our new leisure. Indeed, the comment is frequentiy made that leisure is contributing to the growth of a classless society. The working man today owns his own boat, plays golf and tennis, attends concerts and the theater—activities formerly enjoyed only by the wealthy. The same mass media, toys, games and hobbies, are available cheaply to all. In mass produced sports clothing, we all look alike. Kaplan writes, ". . . in no area of American life more than in its leisure activity is the outdated concept of class made apparent."[5]

But is this a valid view? Might one instead suggest that we have become a nation of leisure "haves" and "have-nots?"

Today, those with the most money and personal resources to invest in leisure have the least amount of time. Those with the most free time have the most limited resources to spend on it.

Class Differences in Leisure Availability

There has been a striking turnaround in the availability of leisure. In the past, the landed aristocracy had the greatest amount of free time to spend on entertainment, travel, the arts and the graceful pursuit of pleasure. The craftsman or farm laborer usually worked from dawn to sundown. Once the Industrial Revolution had fairly gotten under way, the managerial and ownership class possessed vast amounts of leisure. Indeed, they were identified by Veblen as the "leisure class." In contrast, Dickens' Bob Cratchit, who worked in an office in 19th Century London, had only one day off a year —Christmas.

What reversal has taken place?

The unionized white-collar, blue-collar or service employee has now achieved through negotiation a workweek which may be as brief as 25 hours (electrical construction employees in New York) or four days (rub-

ber workers in Ohio). That he often does not know how to deal with this leisure and must resort to "moonlighting" is another matter.

Those who belong to the upper socio-economic class—the professionals, the business executives, the successful entrepreneurs—continue to work longer and longer hours. De Grazia points out that the average executive spends a total of 55 hours a week on work-related activity, including time spent at home on business matters, and business entertaining. This does not include commuting time (averaging slightly over 5 hours a week) or business travel which, for many executives, can run as high as 30 hours a week.[6] Add to this the fact that the professional or business executive is also likely to accept various posts involving civic responsibility. He serves on civic or school boards, assists voluntary agencies and welfare drives, and provides lay leadership in his church or temple. While such tasks may have a strong sense of obligation about them, they tend to eat up hours which otherwise would clearly be considered leisure.

Thus the working man in the lower income brackets and socio-economic classes tends to have the greatest bulk of free time, and the wealthier individual in the upper classes, the least.

Leisure Pursuits for the Upper and Middle Classes

How is leisure spent, in terms of class? While there has been no comprehensive recent study, it is safe to say that the upper and middle classes participate in all the activities we read about in statistical reports: they pursue outdoor recreation, watch television, join social and civic organizations, garden, travel, engage in water sports, bowling, and a host of culturally-oriented pursuits. Among the very rich, those who have career commitments may have to cram their recreation into concentrated, short periods of time. For the few surviving members of the wealthy class who have resisted other forms of social involvement, fun may be pursued compulsively, in endless entertaining and being entertained, expensive travel with the "jet set," and a wearisome circuit of the night clubs, country clubs and resorts that cater to the rich.

It is worthy of note that recreation has become an essential part of the packaging through which many goods and services are offered to the well-to-do. This is particularly true of real-estate. To illustrate, a major apartment house developer in New York City recently advertised:

> PREVIEW TODAY: EXCITING NEW RESIDENCE . . .
>
> "The Happy Life!"
>
> Your fourth dimension in apartment living. A totally new approach to total living, the Wellington '66 premieres all new design and appointments plus a galaxy of *happy-life* innovations: heated indoor swimming pool, saunas, squash courts, health spa, gymnasium, clubrooms, discoteen, arts and crafts, nursery school . . . even a new public school on the premises.
>
> . . .
>
> Add these happy-life rewards of total living: on-site shopping, theatre,

> playgrounds, tennis courts, outdoor adult and kiddy pools, ice-skating rinks, restaurants, cocktail lounges, snack bars, room service. And total security and safety: round-the-clock gatehouse guards, private security force, doormen, mobile scooter patrol, supervised play, 1966 push-button, all-electric safety kitchens. A token 15-minute subway ride to Manhattan. . . .[7]

Similarly, in California, there has been a developing trend toward communal developments built on the condominium principle (residents share in the ownership of common facilities, and maintain ownership of their own dwelling units, which are usually interconnected "town houses"). In a *New York Times* article these developments are described as having an "aggressive new form of social togetherness."

> . . . (unlike retirement communities) residency is open to any age group. The recreational facilities may include swimming pools, clubhouses, artificial lakes, saunas, marinas, and horse stables.
>
> The new condominium communities, which are walled and have 24-hour guards, are alive with canasta tournaments, ceramics classes, karate societies, mother-daughter softball games and other forms of organized gregariousness . . . the activity director in one such development offers as many as 20 social and athletic activities within a single day.[8]

Two elements are striking in these descriptions: the wide variety of recreational services provided for all age groups and tastes, and the shutting off of the well-to-do in self-sufficient, protected communities from the rest of the city. They are walled, have 24-hour guards, private security forces and scooter patrols, and sometimes even their own school. One can hear the happy cries, "Close the gate, tell the guard to admit no one, and let the fun begin!"

But who is being shut out?

The Poor Are With Us

In our affluent society, characterized by a climbing rate of production and a high level of employment, we tend to forget that there is a sizable element of the population existing under the most extreme poverty conditions. Michael Harrington, author of *The Other America, Poverty in the United States,* wrote in 1963:

> . . . based on a cutoff of somewhere between $3,000 and $3,500 for an urban family of four . . . the culture of poverty would be roughly defined in the United States as composed of around 50,000,000 people.[9]

While other figures may be cited, based on varying definitions of poverty, income level, family size and location, there is widespread agreement that the poor represent a sizable proportion of our population.

Who are these people? They are often out of sight, in the slums and ghettos of our great cities and the valleys and hills of rural areas, in pockets of poverty throughout the land. They tend to represent the extremes of age; over 8 million are 65 years of age or older, and an even larger number are under 18. They are politically

and socially inactive; by and large they do not belong to unions, fraternal or social organizations or political parties. They tend to be lonely, uninvolved, apathetic people. They are hard to reach through social services and they do not know how to help themselves. They are reluctant to use public or private facilities. Often they are members of minority groups. They have a higher rate of illness, of mental disturbance, of delinquency, of illegitimacy and other social ills than the rest of the population. Today then, while a majority of the people enjoy the benefits of our flourishing economy, the poor exist as a class apart.

What do we know about the way they spend their leisure?

Again, there has been no across-the-board research with a focus on leisure and recreation, although a number of poverty groups have been studied separately. A few facts are self-evident. The poor are automatically prevented from enjoying most of the forms of private or commercial recreation which are available to the rest of society. The urban family living on less than $3,000 or $3,500 a year does not usually own a car, and vacation travel by other means would be prohibitive. Spectator events, social functions, hobbies, cultural activities, games and sports—participation in all of these is restricted not only by the lack of financial means, but because the poor tend to lack a constructive concept of personal leisure. The Gluecks have pointed out that pre-delinquent youth in Boston (drawn heavily from the lower socio-economic classes) tended to reject constructive organized recreation activities that were available through public or voluntary organization. Their families did not share recreational interests and hobbies. Often, within the slum environment, the kind of leisure involvement which is most available and attractive is of a pathological type: criminal or delinquent activity, alcoholism, drug addiction, vice and gambling.

Harrington writes about the urban Negro, a major component in the poverty group:

> . . . Harlem is distinctive because it lives so much of its life in the streets. The statistics on Negro unemployment may be abstract and distant. An afternoon block of milling, waiting men is not. The rooms of Harlem are, more often than not, small, dingy, and mean. Everyone wants to get out, to get away. Work is harder to get in Harlem than anywhere else in the city. So the bars are doing a good business in the early afternoon, and there are men on the streets, simply standing and talking. One might walk into a sidewalk crap game . . . or there will be violence. Many of the fights of Harlem, or of any slum, are the consequence of mass enforced idleness, of life in the streets.[10]

Similar comments might be made about other categories of the poor—unemployed mine workers or farm laborers in disadvantaged rural areas, aged poor living alone in our large cities, or any of the other groups that happen to be "in the wrong place in the economy at the wrong moment in history."

Since the constructive use of leisure

has become widely recognized as an important element in modern life, one must ask, "How are the leisure needs of the poor to be met?" Recognizing that commercial opportunities are not available to them, the answer is: through the organized recreation services that are provided by government and voluntary agencies. These may be examined in three categories: a) *federal and state governments,* b) *local governments,* including municipal, county or school authorities, and c) *voluntary agencies and organizations.*

Federal and State Services. The major thrust of both the federal and state governments, with respect to the provision of recreational opportunity, has been to provide outdoor recreation areas and facilities for unsupervised participation by those who are able to get to the site independently. Hunting, fishing, camping, picnicking, sightseeing and boating are the common activities. The bulk of federally-owned lands are at a considerable distance from the masses of population in our cities—particularly along the Eastern seaboard. Even when outdoor recreation resources are somewhat closer to urban centers (as in many state parks), it is not easy for the urban poor to make use of them. Particularly in the case of ethnic minority groups or those speaking another language, they tend to lack the transportation, the needed skills, and the incentive and confidence required to travel out of their restricted neighborhoods.

Yet the bulk of federal legislation over the past few years which may be related at all to the support of recreation services has been geared to the beautification, conservation and development of outdoor recreation resources and areas. The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, the Wilderness Act and the Appalachian Regional Development Bill are based on this emphasis. While these are important national concerns, it must be stressed that only a minimum of attention has been given to the needs of the mass of urban poor, with respect to recreation, by federal and state governments. A hopeful factor is that all state plans to be submitted to the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation for participation in federal outdoor recreation grant programs must now include proposals to serve urban areas.

Local Government Services. Although the provision of recreational services to meet the needs of all classes of society has always been an important criterion for the evaluation of local public recreation departments, it is a fact that few programs have been specially and thoughtfully geared to meet the needs of the poor. Analysis of the content of the offerings of public recreation departments suggests that they are chiefly based on middle class interests and values, with the understanding that all who wish to participate are welcome. When more specialized needs are to be met, social agencies that are geared to do the job in terms of the philosophy and training of personnel are expected to undertake the assignment. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that participation by minority groups of the lower socio-economic class is more difficult to

achieve and more expensive to maintain, than for the population at large, in public programs.[11]

It is also a fact that the trend within public departments has been toward the establishment of fees and charges for the use of recreation facilities (such as tennis courts, golf courses, aquatic centers, special zoos, etc.) or involvement in programs involving special instruction. In some communities, "fee day camps" which provide services superior to those found in free playground programs have proliferated. There has been a basis for the development of such policies; Twardzik writes:

> . . . as demand persistently increased for all types of public recreation opportunities, and as legislators and city councils failed to appropriate sufficient funds, entrance fees and special charges were looked to . . . as a source of revenue. This type of public funding to meet public recreation wants in "painless fashion" . . . threatens to destroy the concept that public recreation . . . benefits all of society and should therefore be free to people . . .[12]

When fees are charged, those who cannot afford to pay are usually excluded from participation, although token scholarships may be offered or in some cases demeaning arrangements made for the admission of the poor. In New York and Connecticut, a number of public recreation departments have actually taken over existing private country clubs and are now running them as multi-use recreation centers—on a graduated fee basis for those who wish to participate. They are open to the public residing in the community; that is, the portion of the public that can pay its way.

Again, what about the poor? It is worth noting that in the savage race riots of the summer of 1964, in which impoverished Negro youths and adults violently exploded in a number of metropolitan areas, one of the underlying factors was the availability of recreation opportunity. As a single example:

> Three recreation centers are being reopened today in the riot-scarred Negro areas of Jersey City as the start of a civic effort to ease racial tensions there. . . . The playgrounds opening today are at housing projects which were at the center of several riot incidents. They were among several the city had decided not to open this summer for economy reasons. Lack of recreational facilities was one of the grievances cited by Negro leaders as contributing to the bitterness behind the rioting.[13]

During the same summer, several hundred recreation centers in New York City which served half a million children were shut down by the mass resignation of recreation workers. Why? They were being paid $2.58 an hour compared to $8.00 an hour paid to teachers in summer remedial programs, although both groups were employees of the same Bureau of Community Education.

The degree of economic support offered to the recreation function is one way of assessing its effectiveness as a form of social service for the poor and deprived in our cities.

Voluntary Social Agencies. What role is played by voluntary agencies, such as settlement houses, churches or religious organizations, community centers, the Y's, the Children's Aid Society, the Police Athletic League, the Boys' Clubs of America, and similar groups? Clearly, recreation is viewed as one of their functions, along with social case work and group work, family counseling, health and vocational services. Too often, agencies of this type are hampered not only by lack of funds and facilities, but by unwillingness to develop programs to serve the poor. Sidney Lutzin states that profound changes have occurred in our cities which have affected the function of voluntary social agencies:

> . . . as family after family pulled itself up the economic and social ladder, the movement from the old established neighborhoods became a mass migration to the suburbs and new sections of the cities. The physical vacuum left behind was soon filled with new immigrants, the inept, the indigent. However, the social vacuum remains, sizzling and sputtering with spasmodic, volcano-like eruptions of violence, crime, and gang warfare. . . . Where is the neighborhood house, the boys' club, the YMCA, the Jewish community center which once flourished in the old neighborhood? Moved out with its former clientele to the new neighborhood—the suburbs. . . .[14]

Lutzin comments that even when agencies remain in the same setting, often they are unable to satisfy the needs of the new population groups around them. Instead, they continue to serve the old members, who come from a distance, with essentially middle-class programs. The poor child, the pre-delinquent, receives only the shallowest token of services from organized recreation in his neighborhood.

This view is strongly supported by the findings of a recent study, *Comparative Recreation Needs and Services in New York Neighborhoods*, published by the Community Council of Greater New York.[15] This report, which analyzes the work of both public and private agencies in the New York Metropolitan area, makes clear that: a) recreation and group work services are unevenly distributed throughout the city; b) due to population shifts, a number of new neighborhoods have developed which have an extreme need for community-supported recreation services; and c) a relatively small proportion of the population is actually involved in major recreation programs. The basic conclusion is that for large elements of the population who are *dependent* on non-profit, public recreation services, there are inadequate opportunities.

Focus on the Poverty Population

What is the rationale for providing intensive and specially designed recreation programs for the economically and socially deprived in our nation? Genevieve Carter, Director of the Division of Research of the U. S. Welfare Administration, suggests that there are several ways in which recreation may contribute to the national poverty program. These may be to

bring recreation seekers into depressed areas in order to stimulate a low economy, to provide jobs for indigenous non-professional leaders drawn from the poverty group, to reach and change the values of underprivileged youth, and to act as a testing group for civil rights and minority-group progress. She writes:

> Organized recreation in urban areas has a first-line opportunity to engage the disadvantaged in its programs. Many good recreation programs have no barriers which hold off the uneasy underprivileged. No membership card is required. . . . The "low organization" philosophy of recreation has a reaching out power for the poor whose unpredictable lives are full of daily crises and problems.
>
> Recreation could offer a first experience in purpose for those who have become submerged and apathetic. The feeling of powerlessness is often used to describe the poor and disadvantaged. . . . There is a new era for the direction of recreation as a vehicle for reaching the isolated or withdrawn and bringing them back into the mainstream of society. . . .[16]

Significantly, during the summer of 1965, a number of urban communities throughout the nation were given multi-million dollar federal grants under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, to provide "crash recreation programs" in poverty neighborhoods. These Community Action Programs were intended not only to meet the needs of children, youth and adults for recreational experience, but to stimulate new processes of community organization among those served. Self-help and the hiring of indigenous personnel were stressed, and recreation came to be viewed as a "threshold experience" which helped many poor families become involved in other forms of social service. In addition, many thousands of Neighborhood Youth Corps trainees were employed in recreational settings, thus gaining a sense of responsibility and community service.

Of course, this kind of program is an expensive one—and must be measured against many other public services which compete for the tax dollar. Can we afford to provide the poor of our nation with intensified and specially designed leisure services?

Galbraith points out that the inevitable alternative to providing adequate public services in the form of good schools, recreation and social services, parks, highways, police, recreation and other needed programs, is to spend more later for corrective and remedial services in the form of prisons, hospitals and similar institutions.[17] He comments too that Americans have been traditionally willing to spend great amounts on private needs, but unwilling to support vitally needed public services. Interesting contrasts may be drawn between parallel forms of private and public spending.

In 1961, Americans spent almost 2 billion dollars a year *privately* to seed and maintain their lawns.[18] In 1960, they spent 1.15 billion dollars publicly to support outdoor recreation programs and services.[19]

In 1964, Americans spent 13 bil-

lion dollars *privately* on alcoholic beverages of all kinds.[20] In a report issued in 1964, but applying to 1962, the Office of Education pointed out that 17.5 billion dollars was spent *publicly* as direct local expenditure for education.[21]

Perhaps the question should not be, "Can we afford to provide adequate leisure services for the poor?" "Can we afford not to?" might be more appropriate.

A final point to be explored is concerned with the future. What if the problem of meeting the needs of our present day poverty population is compounded by a vast new unemployment brought about by automation? While projections vary, one authority declares that automation is eliminating 3 million jobs a year, not only through the direct displacement of workers but also through the "silent firing" of workers who would have been employed had not their jobs been wiped out.[22] Government economists suggest that in the period immediately ahead, we can expect a growth in white-collar and service employment, but a continuing steep decline in the number of farmers, farm laborers and unskilled labor generally. The expectation is that many of the persons displaced or not hired when they leave school will simply remain on the nation's relief rolls as non-employables.

Whether such projections can accurately be described as contributing to the nation's leisure is, of course, a grim question. Is it possible to enjoy idle hours, or to be enriched by recreative experience, when one has no job at all, and no likelihood of obtaining one?

Carter asks:

> What does a highly developed society do when its lower-level jobs disappear and when millions of people are not prepared for occupations requiring a high level of education. . . . What would be the public attitudes and reaction if recreation or constructive use of leisure were provided for able-bodied youth and adults who have no place in the free market of an employment picture. . . . The reason this sounds so strange is because recreation, like other good things, is generally considered to be a reward for worthy work and thrift. The problem ahead is either to create new jobs for this low-skill group, or to find a socially acceptable purpose for the use of this leisure. . . .[23]

Here is the paradox that confronts us. As our economy continues to boom, and as the upper and middle classes continue to make use of their affluence in pursuing varied forms of leisure, can we come to grips with the leisure needs of those who cannot help themselves—the marginally employed and the unemployed? As we move toward constructive solution of this problem, we may incidentally be establishing policy that will ultimately be useful in serving a much wider segment of our society in the years ahead.

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"The major conclusion that underlies all else is that leisure, however it is defined and analyzed, is not a peripheral phenomenon, extracurricular to life and its value systems; its social and psychological roots arise from the culture; the criteria of its judgment are imbedded in the culture; indeed, what people do in time free of commitment to work is a valuable clue to the directions of the culture itself."

—Max Kaplan