THE WEEK-END HABIT
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THE CHANGING SCENE

The year is 1912—The time is Sunday morning—The scene is any suburban home:
Mrs. Howard sipped her third cup of breakfast tea slowly and surveyed her family of three sons with considerable satisfaction. Their suits were neatly pressed and their whole appearance suggested her own efficiency and capabilities as a housewife and mother. Shortly, they would all accompany her to church and return to that pleasant ceremony—the Sunday dinner. She looked forward to that event as today she had some extra delicacies on her menu—red currant jelly for the saddle of mutton and extra special cream for the apple pie that was to follow.

The rest of the day she also anticipated with pleasure. Her husband had hired a cab to take the entire family to her sister’s house in North London, where they would stay for tea and supper.

Her pleasure at this outing was increased threefold by the knowledge that her family enjoyed visiting their aunt, and meeting their cousins and their friends.

The evening would be a pleasant one for everyone, reflected Mrs. Howard, as she rose to organize the family for church.

The year is 1948—the Time and Place are the Same

Mrs. Howard rose hurriedly from her bed as the last peal of her new electric alarm clock died in the morning air. There was no time to waste, if she and her husband were to reach Southend in their pre-war Austin Seven before lunch. There was the breakfast to see to, the sandwiches to make for their picnic lunch and more than likely she would have to help to start the car.

Thank goodness the family were also going off for the day, and, other than breakfast, meals would not trouble her further. John, her eldest, had already gone very early for a day out with his cycling club.

Arthur and Jim were spending the afternoon at Richmond ice rink and were taking their latest young ladies to the local Odeon in the evening. Now they were both working they could afford to lunch out. Yes! Breakfast was her main worry. To brighten the morning gloom Mrs. Howard switched on the radio—she found a little music in her background helped her work. The voices of the male choir in the morning religious service were not to her mood; she quickly switched to the light programme and found the sentimental strains of the Geisha Girl more to her liking.

These two fictitious episodes serve to illustrate the change of background which has affected all but a very few of the inhabitants of this country. It is not alone the very young who have undergone this metamorphosis, but their parents and grandparents alike.

The older conception of Saturday and Sunday has gone. No longer are they days when, “the whole family are at home”—no longer are they times for family relaxation and visitation. They are days when the family, as a
unit or as individuals, is pleasure bent and carefree. "Mother's day" has changed to "holiday" and mother insists on her fair share of what pleasures are going.

This general change must be considered when discussing the effect of the week-end habit in any group or groups of the community.

The Army Group.—In common with all other members of the community every individual in the Army today has been changed in outlook by this altered background.

The older regular officer and regular N.C.O. has changed gradually, and has come to accept new week-end habits as he accepts his motor-car or motor-cycle. He has changed without knowing it. The young national service man, born in the late 1920's has known no other week-end than one devoted to pleasurable relaxation. His attitude is further encouraged by the present trends in social developments—shorter working hours, fixed holiday periods and increased payment for overtime work.

The Effect on the Group.—It is only too obvious that week-end freedom is a habit acquired in the family circle and in early upbringing. It is not peculiar to the Army as a group but touches all sections of the community—the professional man, the industrialist, the technician and the artisan.

What then is the effect of this new habit on the structure and function of the Army. It is accepted by most military planners that the success of any army or fighting service can be directly measured by the morale and discipline of that army or service. If one can prove that declining morale and lessening of esprit de corps is in part attributable to the spending of week-ends out of barracks, it may then be said that the week-end habit is deleterious. On the other hand, if this is not so, can it be said that the function of the Army is upset, whether this function be a primary fighting role or the establishment of a highly trained nucleus capable of transmitting its experience to others?

Morale, therefore, forms a useful yardstick by which effect can be measured.

The Analysis of Morale.—A prominent wartime Army psychiatrist defined the maintenance of morale as: "The satisfaction and balance in the human personality of five basic needs—Physical, Security, Competition, Recognition and Creative Activity."

Where one or more of these needs is lacking or where their balance is upset, a breakdown is likely particularly in the weaker types of personality.

Physical Needs.—Every normal personality demands four basic requirements for normal mental health—on which morale is directly dependent. These represent the necessities of life—water, shelter, food and a healthy balanced sex life. Normally the first two are provided whether the soldier be at home or in barracks and in the present argument can be dismissed.

Food may vary much. We all like a change of diet and in particular we like to escape from time to time from the unaviodable monotony of "bulk" or "communal" feeding. In this respect the week-end provides the ideal opportunity for change and, in many cases today, supplies additional calories also, made available by self-sacrificing mothers and families.
The sex life of the individual may seem quite outside the province of, and to be unrelated to, week-end custom. Yet, on considering the prevention of venereal disease, a normal healthy home background is a factor recognized by most authorities.

Better the young soldier finds his social relationships in or near the home, than among the cheap and only too obvious facilities of the average garrison town on a Sunday afternoon.

Security.—In this need the personality demands continuity and prolongation of tenure in work and recreation. It is found in its highest degree in every normal home and is expressed by the mutual trust between child and parent.

When the young leave home they experience for the first time "worldly" insecurity. This feeling is further increased by unexplained or unreasonable changes or actions. Today the young national service soldier suffers much from insecurity; often his chosen career, technical or otherwise, has been interrupted by his period of national service and he fails to offset this seeming disaster by appreciation of the facilities for broadening the personality which Service life presents.

Can we deny him opportunity for periodic return to the security of the family circle unless we can offer something more concrete in its place?

Competition.—It is in competition that the mind finds outlet for the relative power gained by experience. The demand for this may be satisfied at work or play—and it is allowed for in all aspects of Service life from the system of promotion to organized games.

Relaxation and rest are essential if the self-appointed competitor is to remain in condition—the change of atmosphere and background provided by the average week-end allows this rest.

Recognition.—In its need for recognition the personality demands satisfaction of its sense of worth—it asks for appreciation, affection and companionship. To the man who is outstanding at his work or in his play this factor is supplied automatically, to the plodder it comes slowly and sometimes not at all.

Paternal or maternal affection and pride may be the only source of recognition, from which the less brilliant and intelligent individual can draw.

A working week of comparative mental loneliness may well be compensated by a short visit to family, relatives, or friends. Such a visit will do much to satisfy this longing, no matter how good are the man management standards of the particular Army unit.

Creative Activity.—Creative activity allows opportunity for the personality to develop and broaden its outlook. The fortunate individual finds this in his normal work, the less fortunate may have to seek it elsewhere—in hobbies and recreational activity. While admittedly it behoves a well-run unit to supply and cater for the recreational needs of its members, many national service men may have made strong contacts with recreational clubs and groups before entering the Service. He will reap more enjoyment from these familiar out-
side contacts, and further they provide material for comparison and discussion in groups of a similar nature, which may be run within the unit.

Conclusion.—If morale can be accepted as a means of measuring the effect of the week-end on the function of the Army, it appears from our analysis that the total effect is one of benefit and not hindrance to the man's working capacity.

If the habit is discontinued we must be prepared to supply unit week-end activity which will fulfil all the basic needs demanded by the personality—it is difficult to see how this can be done.

Much has been done in recent months about restoring the week-end habit of peacetime—there is doubt in many minds on what this habit was.

Listen, for a moment to this actual conversation which took place recently between the writer and a regular soldier of some twenty year's service. A man who started in boys' service and who was commissioned during the war years.

Writer: What did the peacetime week-end consist of in 1930?
Regular Soldier: We played organized games on Saturday or attended outside matches in organized parties.

Writer: What about the people who did not play or attend a game?
Regular Soldier: They were free to leave barracks provided they were back by 10 p.m. on boys' service and 11 p.m. on regular service.

Writer: What about Sunday?
Regular Soldier: We attended compulsory Church Parade and after were free to leave barracks provided we returned by 10 p.m. or 11 p.m. and were granted a pass for this purpose.

It appears from this conversation that the old week-end was little different from the present week-end, except that the individual had the frustration of compulsory confinement to the barrack area.

A Final Reflection.—The changing social background of the British People has been discussed at some length. One factor which has not changed is the spirit of the people in the face of urgency or danger. A man will work well at all times, week-end or not, provided he feels that there is a need for that work and that its nature is constructive.

It is constructive, well-planned employment only which will keep the individual mentally happy during a week-end in barracks, not an air of forced gaiety and enjoyment produced by the compulsory organization of amenities.

Such employment, whether in connexion with his own training or Territorial training, must be provided if the individual is retained in barracks.

His morale will suffer if he is offered routine, badly organized, non-creative activity. It is a characteristic of our nation that we work well and hard when we are convinced, and then only, that we are well led and that the work is worth while.