

## Part II: Historical Perspectives: Less Time "WORKING"\*

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Leisure time – as previously noted in the initial article in this two-part series – benefited from health and medical advances and a host of other life-extending developments that increased longevity. Other time savings resulted from a staggering array of labor saving technologies involving personal chores and household maintenance. This section reveals how "free time" was won by reductions in working time required to sustain individual basic needs. Mastery of new ways to get tasks done has contributed mightily to securing more time to move beyond enormous time commitments to sate personal needs. Throughout history humans have continuously honed their mastery of technologies that enable prodigious increases in output with less and less human input.

Historical timelines highlight the growing salience and significance of leisure time that grew as society progressed through previous eras of dominant economic activity. Some of those important trends will be described here. Tracking and pacing parameters of most any problem or issue reveal patterns that make it possible to plot and project on-going developments and outcomes. The "handwriting is on the wall" as the saying goes.

### **Doing Things Faster and Reaping Time Savings**

There have been and continue to be many major turning points along the route toward a new economy where the major part of persons waking moments can be devoted to perusing "free time." Subsistence based existence steadily found new ways to relieve physical needs, thereby enabling more personal interests to flourish. To begin with, capitalizing on naturally occurring resources – pebbles, stones, and wooden clubs, for example – were among the earliest efforts to enhance personal physical power. Flint hand tools enhanced and advanced those capabilities around 1.3 million years ago. During these first millions of years of human history the struggle for survival and subsistence basically required fulltime effort. "Leisure time" was virtually nil.

Things began changing for the better around 100,000 years ago. Taking advantage of animal horn, bone and shell added incremental improvements. Less than 50,000 years ago chisels, drills, scrapers, and gravers relieved more everyday tasks and burdens. Rudimentary organizational arrangements including specialization of labor and crude production began to emerge. Specialized

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efforts such as those provided by skillful stone hewers and chippers enhanced both the quality and quantity of output. Such changes may have enabled as much as five percent of activities to be dedicated to leisure pursuits.

Conditions began moving more rapidly about 10,000 years ago when agriculture began to develop. This landmark accomplishment greatly reduced time-consuming demands entailed in hunting and gathering forays. Instead of spending nearly every waking moment foraging and hunting for food and eking out a meager survival, the productive output of agriculture freed nonfarm workers to pursue other interests. Nomadic movement began to wane and settlements developed. New living arrangements eliminated time consuming disruptions of clans and tribes constantly on the go. These achievements opened up perhaps 10 percent of lifetime activity for leisure activities.

Later on, division of labor among craftsmen enabled less talented to sidestep time-consuming tasks that third party experts could perform more quickly. Between 6000 BC to AD 1500, craft specialization involving time-consuming fabrication of "things" by adept artisans began to flourish. This speed up in providing basic needs might have enabled as much as 17 percent of a lifetime to be devoted to leisure time activities.

By the 1600s, simple machines, mass production, and rudimentary automation freed humans from still more drudgery. Working time waned, and more free time – perhaps 18-23 percent of a lifetime – opened up for leisure pursuits.

By the 1770s, water- and wind-powered machinery, including primitive steam engines, got things done quicker. Less human time and labor was needed to achieve myriad tasks. As a result, leisure time might have increased to over 23 percent of a lifetime.

During the 1990s, electrically-powered machines, at work and in households, further reduced time required for both personal chores and work. Automation and true mass production lopped off still more working hours. These accomplishments enabled persons in post-industrial societies to enjoy as much as 41 percent of their lives in pursuit of other pastimes.

The year 2015 likely will mark a pivotal turning point. In less than a decade, 50 percent of the average American's total lifetime activity – directly or indirectly, one way or another – will be available to pursue leisure time interests.

### **Incremental Onset of a New Era Dominated by Leisure**

Historic momentum of technological, physiological, social changes and institutional developments come together. By extending lives, and reducing both time at work and in the household a greater portion of a lifetime becomes available for pursuing other interests. In a few years America's economy will be dominated by providing goods and services to sate leisure time undertakings. In other words, a new "economic era" – the leisure time era – is about to befall this nation. All of this means that travel and tourism, hospitality, recreation, entertainment and so many other pastime activities and diversions assume increasing national economic importance and will eventually attain economic dominance. Time-savings overall provide opportunities to spend "free time" to pursue personal interests.

Reviewing trends, many of them long underway, reveals how this turn of events will come about. Major increases in life expectancy, fewer hours working to make a living, earlier retirement, less time devoted to rearing fewer children, and a lengthy list of other developments do, in fact, open up opportunities for over 50 percent of a lifetime to be spent, one way or another, pursuing leisure interests.

### **Jobs: Doing More With Less**

Review of just how jobs have shifted over thousands of years may sound a bit pointless if not downright boring. Reviews of the successive economic eras that have coursed through history provide some perspective on how leisure time has been won. Sector ascendance and growing dominance in the overall economy is dramatically illustrated by reviewing the changing distribution of workers that have transformed agri-business.

Soon after the founding of this nation, as many as 90 percent of all workers were engaged in producing and gathering crops (tobacco, cotton, hemp, etc.), animal products, forestry products (timber, flora, plants), and seafoods. By 1880, less than 49 percent of U.S. workers were so engaged. The percent plummeted to 27 percent by 1920, to 6 percent by 1960, 2.5 percent by 1994, and less than 2 percent by 2001. By 2010, as little as 1 percent may be directly engaged in farm operations. Nonetheless, productivity will be so prodigious that as much as 60-80 percent of some key crops will be exported. That's only a part of an unfolding story.

What's happening on the farms and feedlots is only a small part of the story. Beyond the farm gate, radical changes have taken place among the businesses organized to process and manufacture, distribute and sell, and provide food services. Each one of these sectors enjoyed a period of time when it was the predominant provider of jobs for the agri-business sector of the economy.

Agricultural producers, once the dominant activity in the food sector, have been replaced by far more numerous workers engaged in getting food to consumers. During the Industrial Era, grocery manufacturers dominated the post-farmgate sector. Shortly thereafter, Service Providers (retailers and wholesalers) topped the list, only to be surpassed years later by Food Services. A harbinger of the growing salience of the "Leisure Era" is the current predominance of the food service providers. This specialty currently dominates agri-business employment by providing meals away from home. In years to come, the emerging life sciences sector – "pharming" and bio-engineered food production – may become the dominant factor in agri-business production and income – although likely employing a mere handful of workers in highly automated production facilities.

Looking further into the future, and more speculatively is the possibility of sector dominance based on the newly emerged meta-materials sector. These capabilities, including synthesized foods "customized" to meet food and fiber unique needs of particular individuals, and food "replication" using robotics and nano-technologies. Bio-reactors and hydroponics for growing key crop components or nutrients will figure prominently in these transformations. Eking foodstuffs from the soil is likely to become merely a food production niche.

Still more speculative is the possible outcome of yet another oncoming Era – the New Space Age. At this stage, agri-business needs might come from extra-terrestrial sources produced on orbiting space stations or other planets. Around-the-clock solar radiation, shorter crop maturation cycles, and multiple cropping on a year-in and year-out basis will add immensely to increase yields.

It is quite possible that in a utopian situation people will vie for meaningful jobs. This turn of events may occur because virtually every need or desire is fulfilled. Output could become so enormous (and effortless) and human participation so minimal that very few workers are likely to be needed. There might be so few "jobs" that some individuals will want work to keep themselves occupied with something interesting and important to do!

Patterns of change for other business sectors highlight similar successions. The key point is that business activities and institutions do not remain static. They respond to changing business environments, especially the prevalent technologies of the time. Remaining viable requires both anticipating and taking steps necessary to accommodate coming change.

### **How Reduced Time has Come About**

Most everybody has to work in order to earn their keep. Next to sleeping, work hours spent in gainful employment and on the job – 35-40 years, on average – impose the greatest demand on an average lifetime (averaging 75 years, or so). The years spent gaining an education (the first 18-25 years or more), essentially the ticket for determining the kind of work pursued, can be attributed to time "on the job." That 53-65 year span – including education and gainful employment -- constitutes (directly or indirectly) at least two-thirds of waking time.

Coming generations are likely to choose more years of schooling and enter the workforce later than their predecessors. That means fewer years actually "on the job." Technological advances demand an ever keener skilled workforce. As a result, learning and education are fast becoming an essential investment in gainful employment. Simply put, Americans start working later in life, and they retire earlier (at least for the immediate time-being). Both the delayed entry and earlier exit from the workplace result in more time for doing things other than working.

Most casual observers are likely to dismiss out of hand any notion that fully one-half of their entire lifetime is becoming, one way or another a domineering factor in their lives. However, the outcome is implicit in trends long underway. In recent years, time spent on the job and working has dramatically and steadily declined. The end of that trend is not in sight. Overall, life revolves less and less around work. Two aspects of work – more time off and increased pay – will continue to be the on-going pattern.

Looming in the workplace are shorter workweeks, more holidays, additional time off and leaves, and longer vacations than ever before. Toward the end of the working years, options for early retirement will lop years off time spent on the job. It is not all one way. One counter-trend to the shrinking amount of time spent in working, is the phenomena of individuals electing to work on into their golden years as life expectancies continue to grow longer and longer.

## Shorter Workweeks

Workweeks declined from 72 hours during the late-1700s, to 69.8 hours in 1859, dropped to 37.5 in 1969, and stood at 33.7 hours in 2005. The exact numbers depend on what is counted, as well as how the count is ascertained. Different hours of work apply to various categorizations: nonfarm and farm; males and females; age differentials, and so on. US Bureau of Labor Statistics (covering private production worker employment in mining, manufacturing, construction; nonsupervisory workers in services, transportation and public utilities, wholesale and retail trade; finance, insurance and real estate), report the following long-term decline in weekly hours worked: 37.7 – 1969; 36.9 – 1971; 35.0 – 1983; 34.6 – 1998; 33.7 – 2005 (for nonfarm; 40.4 hours for farm).

Continuing reductions in the workweek are a virtual certainty in the foreseeable future. There are constant pressures and trends toward that end. US organized labor has pursued 30-35 hour workweeks for many years. Several European nations already have enacted laws establishing 35 hour workweeks in efforts to spread available work among the entire labor force, thereby minimizing unemployment during recent economic recessions. In the U.S., the AFL proposed a 30 hour workweek during the Great Depression for these very same reasons. Political discussions in Europe had, by the 1980s (if not before), advocated to proposals for a 20 hour workweek.

Surveys based on diaries recording how daily time is spent provide the most accurate accounting. These logs reveal that individuals greatly overestimate work time. One such enumeration asserted that the number of hours worked per week for average full-time workers, actually rose from 43.6 to 47.1 hours between 1989 and 1999. Other observers contend that E-mail, voice mail, cell-phones, personal digital assistants, portable PCs, faxes, pagers, and all other manner of electronic equipment tethering workers to their jobs wind up prolonging work time.

There are many other "straws in the wind" suggesting impending reductions in the work week. One leading-edge indicator of change involves reduced workweek patterns that typically commence with hazardous, arduous or demanding jobs, and to accommodate working mothers. Swedish law (1979) provides a 30-hour workweek for working parents of young children. Coal miners working under harsh conditions have been entitled to a 30 hour workweek in the Soviet Union since the early-1980s. Sweden's governing party, the Social Democrats, called for a 30 hour workweek in their 1970 party platform. Collective bargaining contracts covering some Swedish workers specify 25 hour workweeks.

## Longer Vacations, Leaves, Holidays, Time Off

Americans, averaged 8.8 vacation days during 1986, 9.3 days in 1997, and 12 days currently. Workers in Finland, since the early-1970s, received 37.5 vacation days. Other Western European nations enjoy 2-3 times more vacation days than Americans (1994).

US paid vacation time varies widely. Variables include: length of employment; union and nonunion; full time and part time; white collar or blue collar; industry (service sector, manufacturing, professional, etc.) size of establishment; geography; and so

on. BLS data (March 2006) reveals that for all worker and nonunion workers, only 8 vacation days yearly are provided. Unionized workers, on the other hand, enjoy 10 days. Lengthy European vacations are increased by collective bargaining contracts, as well as by seniority. Workers with 25 years on the job earned a mean average of nearly 25 vacation days yearly. BLS data for workers with 25 years or more of service as of March 2006 show the following averages: 24.0 days for union workers; 20.8 days for white collar workers; and 18.7 days for non union workers. Prospects in America are for a slow, but steady increase in paid vacation time.

Many leave arrangements require an annual "use it or lose it" approach. Even when allowed, there may be a cumulative "cap" beyond which unused time would be forfeited. To overcome this eventuality, a Swedish Royal Commission put forward 1989 recommendations advocating accumulating and "banking" unused leave and drawing them any way an employee wanted – a straw in the wind.

Paid holidays also have been growing more numerous. U.S. Federal holidays totaled ten days in 1998. State and local jurisdictions observe a few more – a trend certain to be bolstered by the growing diversity and demands of racial, ethnic and religious groups. Other nations provide up to 18 annual holidays. This disparity suggests that more holidays are in the offing for US workers.

Leaves of absence become more generous. Provisions for time-off, with or without pay, include a huge and growing number of occasions. Among them: voting, military or reserve/duty/call-up, jury duty, funerals and bereavement, personal leave, maternity leave, parental leave, sabbaticals, rest time, restroom breaks, lunch time, coffee breaks, on-site recreational facility workouts (gyms, wellness centers, indoor pools), to name a few.

Incidentally, Americans don't actually take a "lunch hour." In fact, a 2006 report specifies that only 31 minutes were actually taken for lunch. The study noted that the mid-day break declined by 5 minutes in just the past 10 years!

Sick leave time, including medical appointments, hospital and stay-at-home leave, is a big enough item to warrant considering it separately. Employees with longest service received more generous treatment: 21.1 days for >25 years; 11.2 days for >1 year. Professional, technical and related employees with >25 years were allotted 28.0 days; those with >1 year, 13.3 days. Blue collar and service workers fared less well: 7 days for those with >1 year service; 14 days for >25 years of service. Where one stands in the job hierarchy clearly affects time off. Persons entitled to fewer days will pressure for greater parity.

### **Maternal/Parental Leave**

Maternal leave, originally directed solely at the mother, has been extended to include both partners. Length and terms of paid leave were parsimonious to begin with. In pace-setting countries, such as Sweden, the amount of time permitted is 51 weeks or more – with pay! German law subsequently provided 14 weeks maternity leave at 100% of salary; France 16-38 weeks at 84% of salary; and Italy 20 weeks of pay at 80% of pay.

Sweden's pace-setting laws embrace natural birth offspring, plus step children, adopted youngsters, and children in care or custody. The law also was expanded to

include leave time to care for ailing parents or partners. Provisions in the US vary widely by business firm or employer. Congress enacted a law in 1993 providing for up to 12 weeks unpaid leave from work. Employers with fewer than 50 workers were exempted. Coverage embraced newborns as well as sick family members. A growing number of states also provided widely varied coverage provisions and payment arrangements. Parity of treatment to that provided elsewhere will prompt expansion of those benefits.

### **"Keeping Noses to the Grindstone" with Job-Site Services**

Stressed US employees harried by fast-paced job environments welcome time-savings made possible by a growing array of on-site services. Such arrangements ease helter-skelter trips to off-site providers and minimize leaving the job early to get to stores or services before closing times. The array of on-site services caters to diverse needs:

- automotive repair and fueling
- child daycare centers
- dry cleaning and laundry
- take-out (including gourmet-class) meals
- infant breast-feeding facilities
- automatic bill payment services
- group-leveraged discounting (home and automobile insurance, veterinarian care, pet-sitting, pre-paid lawyer services), mostly through on-line arrangements
- physician and nursing care
- massages
- barber shops and beauty salons
- event planning services (marriages, anniversaries, birthdays, etc.)
- general concierge services (ranging from restaurant reservations, travel arrangement, hotel accommodations, gift selection and delivery, florist services, etc.).

Not lost sight of is the fact that many of these services enable workers to stay longer on the job, work harder. The long and the short of it is that these "perks" wind up boosting productivity.

### **Earlier Retirement**

Earlier retirement trends, underway for many years, have reached a turning point. In the US, retirement dropped from 67 years during the 1950s to a mode of 60 years in 1994. Retirement age is likely to decline to 55 years for many – an average level already reached by males in The Netherlands. After a slight dip, life expectancy increases will prompt retirement age to rebound. The nettlesome question to ponder is this: if a person retires at age 55-60 and lives to 120-160 how will those individuals sustain themselves in retirement for up to 100 years or longer? Evidence indicates that continuing to work into life's late-years contributes to longevity – just another inducement for continuing to "hang in there."

Demographic projections involving the 76 million baby boomer bulge of workers poised to exit the workplace will result in labor shortages of up to 10 million by 2010.

Job lures will be offered to retain productive retirees. Such dynamics contribute to rebounding and further extension of retirement age. As retirees ease themselves out of the world of work, growing numbers of them opt for "bridge jobs." This status change involves part time working arrangements usually limited to less than the first ten years after moving out of the full time jobs.

Life expectancy increases prompted Social Security statutory adjustments raising retirement eligibility from 65 to 67 years by 2022. Some policy makers point to life expectancy advances since 1940 when retirement age was set at 65 years, and suggest advancing retirement age immediately to 70 years. Others suggest indexing retirement age eligibility to steadily advancing life expectancy. From an actuarial standpoint, these changes make sense. From a political standpoint, they are unlikely to come about anytime soon.

### **"Technological Unemployment and "Temps"**

Does less work but greater output mean fewer workers? Getting caught up with the potential end results and exhilarating effects of new inventions, outcomes often get overstated. As "automata" (robotic) inventions were introduced, an 1853 magazine (United States Review) predicted that within 50 years "...machinery will perform all work – automata will direct them. The only tasks of the human race will be to make love, study and be happy." Such overly optimistic projections – although they could be a long way off – may not be totally out of line. Industrial robots worldwide rose from none in 1900, to 400,000 in 1992, to as many as 1,090,000 in 2003. Step-by-step nations move along ever closer to automated processes that could help bring along such visionary perspectives.

Growing numbers of workers work only when they wish to do so. Reports place the number of "temps," part-timers, and contingent workers at about one-third (43 million) of the US workforce. Another tabulation – including temps, part-timers (voluntary and involuntary), contingent workers, guest workers, consultants, and sub-contractors – asserts that one-fourth of all employed Americans work part time. Lifestyle choices, such as a "simpler life" will add to leisure.

### **Speedier (but Longer) Commutes**

Getting around in earlier times mainly involved walking. Travel to and from a 4-5 mile distant local jobsite or shopping at a remote local village store may have taken as much as one hour both ways. Now round-trips of that kind – involving considerably longer distances in most cases – may take mere minutes by motor vehicle. Speedier motor cars, busses, mass transit, aircraft, and hydroplanes reduce commuting time. Or, at least, they should do so. The irony is that they may not! During 2006 it is estimated that nearly 10 million workers still drive one hour each way to and from their job sites.

Motor vehicles, although they speed up getting to and from jobs, tend to cover much longer distances. Bigger homes, more land and better scenery prompts movement into areas outside the urban core. New development rings of property tend to

cluster in a growing series of rings around urban centers. Workers in urban centers shift outwardly to these further and further distant concentric rings. Moves that commenced in close-in suburbs tend to spread into further distant outermost rings. The trend of moving to outermost suburbs helps fulfill the American dream. An offshoot is how this shift impacts time use.

Stop-and-start and bumper-to-bumper commutes day-in and day-out often bring speed of travel to a standstill. Most drivers would rather avoid or, at least minimize this drudge. Traffic gridlock in congested urban areas imposes a huge toll on leisure time. Lost man-hours due to traffic jams and urban gridlock reportedly zoomed from 1.6 billion hours in 1989 to 8.1 billion by 2005. These problems are continuing to grow – fast. That time, at-home advocates assert, could be recouped by simply working at home. Sounds easy. Not everybody is able to operate that way.

If you think the motor vehicle traffic congestion now is a problem, a host of factors guarantee that it will only worsen substantially. Population growth per se, is an obvious factor influencing things like traffic gridlock. During 2006 there were 226 million cars and trucks on the road. This is more than four times the 59 million about a half century earlier. More people, more cars and motor vehicles, more drivers, more miles driven, better roadways = more congestion, gridlock and delays. That's the long and the short of it all.

Next to consider is the pesky parking problem. The vexing part is the time wasted just looking for a place to park. A recent ad declared that 420 hours per year are spent just searching for a place to park one's car (2005)! Worse, is the situation where absolutely no parking spaces are available nearby and you have to extend your search further and further away from destinations. These developments impose an additional time burden of walking back or otherwise getting transportation to intended destinations.

Licensed drivers provide another indicator of just how crowded roadways are becoming. As of 1980 licensed drivers in the U.S. totaled 145,295,000 and rose to 196,166,000 in 2003 (Federal Highway Administration).

The number of motor vehicles per U.S. household rose from 1.28 in 1969 to 1.68 in 1983. Recently the number of personal vehicles owned or available per household reached 1.9 – a turning point that exceeded the number of drivers per household. That pattern is expected to continue. It is projected to pass 2.0 by 2020.

Carpooling, of course may cut individual driving time by spreading it among participants. That allows commuters to spend more time reading, visiting or just enjoying passing views (if any). The shortcoming is relatively few commuters actually do carpool. Carpooling actually has declined. It dropped from 19 million vehicles in 1980 to 15 million in 1990, followed by a slight rebound to 16 million in 2000. High gasoline costs in recent years may tend to boost these numbers.

High speed mass transit stands poised to enable longer and longer distant commutes "in a flash." Speedier mass transit systems boost this prospect. Existing rapid mass transit trains already are capable of reaching top speeds of 361 mph. Such high speeds portend the possibility of mass transit systems whisking commuters living 100 miles distant from urban core locations in a matter of minutes! One empowering inducement for rapid development of outlying hinterlands is the lower cost of land,

making housing and bigger spreads of space possible for more persons of average means.

Another time-savings development based on communications era developments enables employees to work, at least some of the time, out of their own homes. This change reduces the drudge of ever-longer commutes. Over 50 percent of all workers in Information Era societies may be working some of the time out of their home or from office locations remote from central offices beyond 2006.

### **Some Concluding Thoughts**

This review highlights on-going developments and impending trends that reveal how time use is changing. Timing for the projected "paradigm shift" to an economy predominated by leisure type activities stands in the offing. The transformation is coming along more rapidly than most Americans perceive. In the US this dramatic turning point will come about around 2015. That is the date in time when it is most likely that over 50% of every Americans lifetime will be available to devote to leisure. The overall review describes a variety of developments focusing on how advancing economic eras alter employment and jobs, and ultimately dominate economic periods of time.

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