

ORIGINAL TEXT:

The present-day industrial establishment is a great distance removed from that of the last century or even of twenty-five years ago. This improvement has been the result of a variety of forces- government standards and factory inspection, general technological and architectural advance by substituting machine power for heavy or repetitive manual labour, the need to compete for a labour force: intervention to improve working conditions in addition to wages and Hours.

However, except where the improvement contributed to increased productivity, the effort to make more pleasant has had to support a large burden of proof. It was permissible to seek the elimination of hazardous, unsanitary, unhealthful, or otherwise objectionable conditions of work. The speedup might be resisted to a point. But the test was not what was agreeable but what was unhealthful or at a minimum excessively fatiguing. The trend toward increased leisure is not reprehensible but we resist vigorously the notion that a man should work less hard on the job. Here older attitudes are involved. We are gravely suspicious of any tendency to expand less than the maximum effort, for this has long been a prime economic virtue

In strict logic there is as much to be said for making work pleasant and agreeable as for shortening Hours. On the whole it is probably as important for a wage-earner to have pleasant, working conditions as a pleasant home. To a degree, he can escape the latter but not the former- though no doubt the line between an agreeable tempo and what is flagrant feather-bedding is difficult to draw.

Moreover, it is a commonplace of the industrial scene that the dreariest and most burdensome tasks, requiring as they do a minimum of thought and skill frequently have the largest number of takers the solution to this problem lies as we shall see presently in driving up the supply of crude manpower to the bottom of the ladder. Nonetheless the basic point remains, the case for more leisure is not stronger on purely prima facie grounds than the case for making labour-time itself more agreeable.

The test, it is worth repeating, is not the effect on productivity. It is not seriously argued that the shorter work week increases productivity those men produce more in fewer Hours than they would in more. Rather it is whether fewer Hours are always to be preferred to more but pleasant ones.

PRÉCIS (CSS - 1976)

Beyond Productivity: The Ethics Of Pleasant Work

Effective governance, technological advancement, increased competition and the demands of labour unions for pleasant working environment, fair salaries, and limited working hours have greatly improved ^{the condition of factories} in the last few decades. However, the demands that do not directly contribute to productivity are hard to justify. The old school thought considers maximum hardwork compulsory for financial gains. A favourable work environment along with more free time is not too much to ask for. The workplace, being unavoidable, should offer the comfort of home. Nevertheless, it is hard to distinguish between working at a comfortable speed, and ~~just~~ ^{prefer} being lazy. Moreover, majority of people ^{prefer} works requiring least mental effort. Hence, the base-level unskilled workforce should be increased. In a crux, more free time and better working conditions stand on equal ground; the measure lies beyond productivity. Infact, reduced work hours boost efficiency.