ATTITUDES TO LEISURE IN EDWARDIAN ENGLAND

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A Thesis

Submitted to

the Faculty of Graduate Studies

University of Manitoba

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by.

Patricia Jasen

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PREFACE

Victorian recreation has become, in the last few years, the
subject of a solid body of scholarly research, and this thesis
represents an attempt to carry forward the study of leisure attitudes
into the Edwardian years - a comparatively neglected period in British
social historiography. I was aware from the outset that it was desir-
able to establish a sense of context in relation to the history of
leisure attitudes; what also became apparent, when I began to see how
inter-related and complex were Edwardian social problems in general,
was that some space would also have to be devoted to discussing issues
which, while they seem at first to have little to do with the subject
at hand, influenced contemporary thinking to such an extent that they
became virtually inseparable from the leisure question. Of secondary
sources Samuel Hynes' The Edwardian Turn of Mind, while limited in
scope, was most helpful in illuminating the peculiarities and the con-
tradictions of the age, and in establishing its significance in relation
to the rest of the twentieth century. In his preface he defined the
period in this way:

> That time stands in an odd pivotal position between the
> nineteenth century and the twentieth: it was not quite
> Victorian, though conservatives tried to make it so; nor
> was it altogether modern, though it contained the begin-
> nings of many ideas that we recognize as our own. It was
> a brief stretch of history - but a troubled and dramatic
> one - like the English Channel, a narrow place made tur-
> bulent by the thrust and tumble of two opposing tides.
> That turbulent meeting of old and new makes the Edwardian
> period both interesting and important, for out of the
> turmoil contemporary England was made.

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The way in which changing ideas about leisure contributed to, and more significantly, were influenced by the anxieties of the Edwardian years, gradually became a central interest and focus in my research.

The subject of class, both with respect to differences in leisure attitudes and practices and to the role that leisure played in Edwardian class tensions, is the other major preoccupation in what follows. I have used the plural "working classes" and "middle classes" in recognition of the fact that neither was a homogeneous group, nor did they think and act as such. The working classes comprised the unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled workers and their families. With regard to their recreational experiences, they were associated en masse with no special activities exclusive of other social classes - except perhaps Association football; what most united these groups was that their leisure opportunities were largely determined by their financial limitations. The middle classes, for my purpose, included owners of production and marketing facilities, managerial and professional groups. Their leisure was circumscribed less by what they could afford than by what was considered respectable and morally defensible, but unlike the mid-Victorians, they displayed no consensus of opinion on what consti-tuted "rational recreation", or if, in fact, recreation must be "rational". This situation, while highly confusing for the historian, was one of the most important aspects of the intellectual and social atmosphere of the Edwardian period, for it documents the transition from a "closed", evangelical ethical system, in which leisure was judged mainly by its recreative function, to the twentieth century supremacy of the leisure ethic, and a world of recreation dominated - in Stephen

Yeo's words - by "morally neutral" market values.

Secondary sources have provided background information and influenced my interpretation of the period, but I have tried to rely as much as possible on contemporary evidence. The selection of primary sources has been determined almost entirely by their availability in the Elizabeth Dafoe and Winnipeg Public Libraries, with the result that this thesis is based to a large degree on the kinds of ideas and social analysis which found their way into the middle-class periodical press. These range from the very conservative, rather anti-intellectual Blackwood's Magazine and Spectator, through the surprising diversity of opinion that can be found in the Times, to the much more liberal and intelligent kind of writing often encountered in the Saturday Review. I have also made use of the volumes of information collected by the Edwardian social investigators - Charles Booth, Lady Bell and Seebohm Rowntree - and other widely-read analyses of contemporary conditions. The most serious deficiency in source material is the lack of first-hand testimony and observations by members of the working-classes, who were the subject of such extensive, and often misinformed, middle-class commentary.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: THE EXPANSION AND REFORM OF LEISURE
IN NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

Any aspect of Edwardian leisure is inevitably linked to ideas and
practices which originated in the previous century. This thesis refers
many times to the Victorian era in an effort to establish a sense of con-
text for particular problems in recreation, and it is perhaps worthwhile,
by way of introduction, to review briefly the broad development of leisure
in the nineteenth century. The following discussion focuses upon the role
of social class in attitudes towards recreation, reflecting the fact that
this kind of differentiation and basis of interaction was of central im-
portance throughout the Victorian and Edwardian history of leisure.

I

Leisure as an historical phenomenon really began with the birth
of "free time" as a by-product of the Industrial Revolution. Prior to
large-scale industrialization and urbanization, work and recreation were
not differentiated as separate and distinct segments of daily life, and
nearly all of men's activities were prescribed by custom and communal
controls. With the fragmentation of "traditional" society, behaviourial
restraints had to become internalized. Those who argue for the "rise"
of leisure in the nineteenth century are referring to the appearance of
segments of free time that were not claimed by work or any other socially

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compulsory activity - an open area of free choice which necessitated a
reliance upon the individual's responsibility for his own social beha-
viour. The tensions which surrounded the expansion of leisure opportuni-
ties derived in large part from this freedom of choice, and were expressed
through both middle-class self-consciousness about their own pleasures,
and in their considerable unease in view of the growing demand for amuse-
ment among the labouring classes.[1]

Organized recreations were few in the mid-nineteenth century.
Middle-class thought and behaviour were dominated by evangelicalism and
the strenuous application of utilitarian standards, a combination which
allowed little time or justification for indulging in unelevating and
unproductive amusements. "At that time," recalled Walter Besant, "great
was the power and authority of seriousness. To be serious was to be
fashionable."[2] With increasing prosperity and a corresponding relaxa-
tion of religious strictures, however, there gradually appeared a range
of "legitimate" pleasures - though sparse by later standards - to which
the middle classes were not unresponsive. A host of voluntary associa-
tions were formed to serve new recreational interests, especially the
rapidly spreading passion for organized team sports. Much of the new
recreation took place within the home; entertaining became more common,
musical or theatrical evenings were popular, and games were introduced
such as croquet, lawn tennis and bowls. Attendance at horse races and
the theatre became possible, if still of doubtful respectability in some
circles; the public house remained out of the question. The growth of
the railways permitted more convenient travel, and visits to seaside

watering-places initiated the habit of the annual holiday. Many of the new activities involved an unaccustomed degree of participation by women and greater freedom of association between the sexes. Formerly, respectable women had had to find their "entertainment" in the church or chapel.

The new pursuit of leisure was highly self-conscious. A belief in the primacy of work had resulted in sufficient affluence to allow some relaxation of the work ethic, but had left the middle classes singularly inexperienced in the art of enjoyment, and they were aware of lacking spontaneity and any degree of abandon in their leisure. The development of a more relaxed attitude was inhibited by the constantly felt need for moral surveillance and legitimization; there was uncertainty about when recreation was justified, and which recreations were morally "safe". A contemporary observer commented on the tendency to participate in leisure activities somewhat apologetically: "We take some of our more pleasant and more needful recreations with a half-expectation that they are only half-right."[3]

The question of leisure was much discussed in the periodical press from the 1860s onwards, and received additional coverage during the summer holiday season when "the correct disposal of such a conspicuous slab of free time called special attention to the ethics of leisure."[4] A variety of articles attempted to suggest a rationale for the growing habit of holiday-making, and to provide guidance in its use. Emphasis was often placed upon the desirability of achieving a total change from one's work habits and environment, not because such a contrast would

serve to maximize pleasure but in keeping with the idea that work and

play should function as opposite poles, in order that recreation might

serve its primary purpose of renewing one for work. Play was recognized

as the complement to work but in the subordinate position; pleasure,

while permissible, was still regarded as a by-product of recreation. A

point often raised concerned the difficulty and importance of making the

right personal choice, and the responsibility of each individual to judge

his or her own capacity for self-direction while participating in the new

leisure offerings. A sermon delivered by the Rev. W. J. Hocking captured

the tone of such advice:

> Whatever amusement recreates you, soothes you, invigorates
> you, and tends to fit you for duty, and <u>leaves no sting
> behind it</u> – be assured that that is safe . . . In the thing
> itself there is no absolute quality: it becomes right or
> wrong according to the influence it exercises on its votary
> . . . "All things are lawful, but all things are not exped-
> ient to all men" . . . Where there is doubt safety lies on
> the side of abstention. "Let every man be fully persuaded
> in his own mind."[5]

This capacity for self-induced controls was assumed by the middle

classes to be largely absent in the working population, although they

too, after a period of deprivation, were being exposed to a widening

range of new leisure possibilities. Traditional popular recreations had

been found incompatible with the new work discipline and suppressed in

the early stages of industrialization, and long hours and subsistence

living ensured that little in the way of amusement entered the lives of

the poor in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Improvements

in living conditions came with the passage of such legislation as the

Ten Hours Act, and by the 1870s hours had been substantially reduced in

many trades, while wages had risen. The working classes thus possessed

greater means to respond to whatever diversions presented themselves.

The rise of the music hall in the 1850s and 60s clearly illustrated

the fact that the working population's desire for entertainment could

and would be met without the sanction of the employing classes, and that

the urban masses too were experiencing a new independence in deciding how

to meet their own leisure needs.

This development in working-class life was acknowledged with some

trepidation by the middle classes, a portion of whom became actively

involved in an attempt to control the direction of popular recreation:

"Viewed from above, leisure constituted a problem whose solution required

the building of a new social conformity - a play discipline to complement

the work discipline that was the principal means of social control in an

industrial capitalist society."[6] The formula now was not repression but

a concerted campaign aimed at converting the masses to "rational recrea-

tion," and instilling in them the kind of internalized controls which

would help to effect a remaking of society in terms of middle-class

ideology.

II

Recreation reform was part of a broader middle-class, evangelical

movement aimed at Christianizing and "civilizing" the working classes.

The temperance movement, for example, in which the clergy were very active,

was moving away from merely attacking the public house and was concen-

trating instead upon improving the facilities and activities available

for leisure by creating "counter attractions". Aside from being a more

positive approach to the task of luring people away from drink, the
provision of amusement was a way of attracting the otherwise unresponsive
to the movement, and other voluntary associations with a "civilizing"
goal, including the church itself, began to regard leisure activities as
a means of making initial contact with the poor.

Helen Meller has shown that much of the reform activity drew its
ideology from the concept of "cultural unity," inspired by Matthew
Arnold's Culture and Anarchy. Arnold's idea was that "a group of dedicat-
ed men should work to bring a new cultural dimension to the lives of all
classes, since such a dimension would create a social consensus and vol-
untary social control, thus averting the otherwise certain prospect of
anarchy in the future." Culture was to be pursued as "a socially cohesive
force" as well as a means of individual fulfillment. Understandably,
support for cultural unity grew as social and economic change continued
to divide the classes. As Meller says, "The attraction of the idea . . .
was that if some compromise had to be made to secure a peaceful future,
then it should be made in the social and cultural sphere, rather than in
the economic." But the campaign for cultural unity was more than just a
way of ignoring the need for economic reform. First gaining currency in
the 1860s and 70s, it reached its fullest development in the 1880s:
"Under the influence of theories of social evolution, the idea of trying
to raise the level of cultivation as a means of solving the 'social
question' struck a deep chord of response" and permeated many social
organizations as an ideal.[7] Although its impracticability was illustrated
time and again, cultural unity continued to have a strong though dimin-
ishing appeal to reformers into the twentieth century.

One objective of the campaign was to expand the role of the municipality in providing leisure facilities, but the movement depended in a more basic way upon the system of private philanthropy. Central to the reform ideology was the active participation of the middle and upper classes, who were to make freely available their time, wealth and leadership abilities. Even more important was the civilizing and stabilizing effect which it was hoped would result from the very fact of achieving social contact between the classes – Canon Barnett believed that "association" was the "watchword of the future". Recreation would be taken communally, with the middle classes acting as "example-setters"; the difficulty, of course, was not only in overcoming the unease which attended most efforts to bring the labouring and employing classes together, but in arriving at kinds of entertainment which would have a mutual appeal. The tastes of the workingman could not be overlooked, as reformers soon discovered, if the movement was to have any success against the growing range of commercial leisure attractions.

Just as a high degree of middle-class involvement was a vital ingredient of the reform movement, its weakness was in large part a function of the general failure of these classes "to answer the reformers' call to community". Although there was considerable moralizing about the dissolute leisure habits of the working classes, there was widespread reluctance to furnish active assistance, in terms of time and money, in "improving" popular recreations. To some extent middle-class attention was focused on the concern to legitimize their own amusements, but another important factor which influenced both their selection of leisure activities and their attitude to reform was the relationship between recreation

and social status. The enthusiastic response to the revival of athletics

and games, for example, was stimulated not only by the fact that sports

could be morally justified, but also by the realization that they afford-

ed an excellent opportunity for socializing with one's superiors. Volun-

tary associations with a recreational aim did much to break down suburban

isolation, and provided an informal means of promoting oneself socially,

in business, or in politics, and in encouraging young people to meet and

make advantageous matches. Even for those not seeking advancement,

leisure choice was an important means of confirming their own social

standing.

In another respect the middle classes had little inclination to

serve the cause of reform by taking their recreation with the workers.

Social distinctions were especially vulnerable in the area of leisure,

and the suggestion of social levelling implicit in the ideology of cultur-

al unity could not have had much appeal for those already becoming uneasy

about what they sometimes referred to as "our new masters", the working

classes. Not only were the workers achieving major political and econ-

omic advances in the 1860s and 70s such as the franchise and trade union

organization, they were becoming increasingly conspicuous in their plea-

sures, and were exhibiting a tendency to adopt the amusements of their

betters like the sea-side excursion, which was causing the middle classes

to fear for all class distinctions:

> In such circumstances the middle classes stood ready to defend
> the line of their own gentility with a judicious mixture of
> discrimination and neglect, and the reformers found themselves
> pulling against the stream. The latter were proposing to
> alleviate the tension and degeneration in society through the
> fraternal association of all classes in leisure, at a time

when the middle classes were acutely concerned to re-
inforce, not reduce, social distance.[8]

By the 1880s there were visible changes in working-class leisure
habits; there was less drunkenness and violence, and pleasures were
taken at standardized times of the day, week and year, rather than in
sporadic outbursts of indeterminate duration. Part of the change can be
credited to the campaign for rational recreation, but as Peter Bailey has
pointed out, much of the "improvement" was due to a gradual process of
accommodation to the urban environment and modern work discipline: the
rationalization of popular recreation represented, to a considerable
degree, "an internal adjustment to the irreversible pressures on time,
space and energy brought by a modern industrial society."[9]

The reformers were not without influence, but they could not reg-
ulate the development of modern leisure as they had hoped. They had
assumed that success would be theirs if only enough effort were directed
into the cause, and their disappointment can to a great extent be
"attributed to the difficulty of realizing expectations that were marked-
ly at odds with the cultural process at work in urban popular society."
The reformers were willing to vie with the traditional attractions of the
pub, but they also faced the increasing commercial exploitation of
recreation which, ironically, they encouraged by helping to create a
demand for more frequent and varied entertainments. Competing with the
new leisure outlets was a frustrating experience; while the Church of
England reformers, for example, made a considerable effort in the 1870s
and 80s to understand popular needs, any concerted attempt to meet them
led to an ideological dilemma concerning the effect of competing with the

outside world on its own terms. A similar problem affected most volun-
tary organizations engaged in promoting rational recreation - once
lighter entertainments were permitted, there was the danger that they
would "dilute or obscure the moral message which lay at the heart of the
reform design."[10]

III

The question of morality continued to be of prime importance as
the leisure controversy entered a new phase towards the end of the nine-
teenth century. Although reform opinion and middle-class attitudes in
general were changing, they still displayed much of the ambiguity of the
previous generation. While unlikely to question the legitimacy of
amusement itself, many people were still confused as to which recreations
were suitable or respectable, and this kind of decision was further com-
plicated by the ever-widening array of diversions offered by the new
leisure industries which mushroomed in the last decade of the century.

The period from the 1890s to the outbreak of World War I was one
of very rapid change in the field of recreation. By the end of the nine-
teenth century leisure had become a major industrial enterprise, and a mass
leisure culture was emerging. A number of factors played a part in this
process. New forms of technology created an ever-widening array of
recreational activities and products which could be enjoyed by large
numbers of people.[11] The mass circulation of books and magazines was
made possible by cheaper methods of production; inexpensive, mass-produced
sporting equipment encouraged participation in a variety of sports and
games; cheaper train travel and the introduction of trams to urban

centres brought the short holiday excursion within the means of many more people; and before World War I the cinema had begun its meteoric rise to the dominant role it would play in the post-war entertainment industry. Perhaps the most striking change - certainly one which bewildered contemporaries - was the "rise" of the spectator. Very large-scale spectator activities, especially in the area of sport, developed rapidly from the late 1880s as business interests became involved in organizing, promoting, and providing facilities for such attractions. The best example, of course, was the rise of Association Football as a mass entertainment. Such innovations and developments would not have taken place without a market, and the proliferation of leisure outlets and commodities was in general a response on the part of businessmen, eager for new areas of investment, to an increase in free time and disposable income available for recreation in the population at large. Contact was made with this potential market through new techniques in advertising; as Marrus writes, "the leisure lifestyle was one of the principle creations of modern advertising."[12] Influenced to a considerable extent by the publicity surrounding recreation and entertainment in the early twentieth century, members of all classes were tending by this time to assume that they had a "right" to leisure. As James Walvin remarks, "Leisure as a natural aspiration of life became a major feature of English society."[13]

The anxiety felt by portions of the middle-classes with respect to the leisure habits of the lower orders did not diminish, however, during the late Victorian and Edwardian period. To a degree the focus and language of criticism remained essentially Victorian as critics

continued to interpret the problem of leisure primarily in moral terms, but there was a shift away from the desire to regulate or compete with commercial leisure suppliers and towards a critique of the consumer instead. The nature of the relationship between supply and demand was largely side-stepped; this is not surprising in view of the fact that the creation of a leisure industry was a logical and necessary step in the commercial expansion underway in England in the late nineteenth century, and like each new phase of capitalism was accommodated, at least initially, by an attitude of laissez-faire.[14] The process of "vulgarization" which accompanied the rise of a mass leisure culture and which drew such wide comment in the periodical press was attributed less to economic than social forces; specifically, the rapidly expanding social and political influence of the lower classes. Hence it could be concluded that democracy, not capitalism, debased culture; the mass spectatorate vulgarized sport, the mass readership, created by the Edwardian Acts, debased literature. In an altered context, class anxiety remained a vital element in the leisure debate.

NOTES

1. For the history of leisure attitudes in the early industrial era, see R. W. Malcolmson, Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850 (Cambridge, 1973). For the mid-Victorian period see Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England (London, 1978); Helen Meller, Leisure and the Changing City, 1870-1914 (London, 1976); M. R. Marrus, The Rise of Leisure in Industrial Society (St. Charles, Mo., 1974).

2. Reference mislaid.

3. P. W. Clayden, "Off for the Holidays: the rationale of recreation", Cornhill Magazine 10 (1867), quoted in Bailey, p. 65.

4. Bailey, p. 6.

5. The Rev. W. J. Hocking, "Amusement in the Light of Christian Ethics", in Religion in Common Life (London, 1894), pp. 158-9.

6. Bailey, p. 5.

7. Helen Meller, Leisure and the Changing City, pp. 49-50; p. 9.

8. Bailey, p. 105.

9. Ibid., p. 179.

10. Ibid., pp. 100-1.

11. For a summary of these developments see Asa Briggs, Mass Entertainment: The Origins of a Modern Industry (Adelaide, 1960).

12. M. R. Marrus, The Rise of Leisure in Industrial Society, p. 10.

13. James Walvin, Leisure and Society, 1830-1950 (London, 1978), p. 63.

14. Eric Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire (London, 1968). One of the few contemporaries to attempt to draw attention to this fact was socialist actor-producer Charles Charrington. In an article aiming to show that free enterprise should not determine the growth pattern of modern leisure, he wrote: "We are not far from the truth if we say that laissez-faire is our guiding principle in recreation as much as it was thirty or forty years ago in industry." "Communal Recreation", Contemporary Review 79 (1901): 839. The implications of this "principle" for the leisure culture of the twentieth century are explored in depth by Stephen Yeo in Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis (London, 1976).

Chapter 2

"THE CONDITION OF ENGLAND":
THE QUESTION OF NATIONAL DECADENCE

Class fears combined at the turn of the century with another kind
of uncertainty which is particularly associated with the Edwardian period.
Following the Boer War men and women of all political persuasions were
profoundly disturbed by developments in English life which seemed to
signify national decline or "decadence", and the confusion surrounding the
new social and economic phenomenon of commercialized recreation was greatly
accentuated by the apparent connection between the uses of leisure and
"the condition of England".

I

"Edwardians practised enjoyment the way Victorians preached self-
denial" is how one historian has summed up leisure attitudes at the be-
ginning of the new era.[1] While there was obviously more continuity than
this comment suggests, the near simultaneous demise of Queen Victoria and
the nineteenth century provided a climax to the desire for change and
liberation which had originated in the "fin de siècle" atmosphere of the
1890s. For Compton Mackenzie the sensation that remained from Coronation
Day was "the emotion of a new and boundless freedom", and Leonard Woolf
recalled "the feeling of relief and release as we broke out of the fog of
Victorianism".[2] Many more ordinary individuals also experienced a desire
for greater liberty and freedom of expression, and within some segments
of society - notably middle-class women and the young - there was a

repudiation of the belief that personal needs and aspirations must be sublimated in the service of "duty", respectability and conformity. "The idea of self-realization," as Holbrook Jackson wrote, "was at the root of the modern attitude."[3] What was taking place was a breakdown of the Victorian moral consensus, for the "modern attitude" was hardly adopted with unanimity by the middle classes, and involved instead an internal revolt more complex than a merely generational or sexual conflict. This is a fact which helps to explain the element of "advance and retreat" which characterized the continuing contest between the forces of liberation and reaction during the Edwardian years.[4]

In The Edwardian Turn of Mind Samuel Hynes has explained that this period, even more than others in history, was one in which "old and new ideas dwelt uneasily together". New attitudes generally met with an "arthritic resistance" from institutions and individuals who feared change or had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. The bulwarks of the existing order – the Church, the Tory party and the aristocracy – did not necessarily present a united front against progressive ideas, but what they tended to have in common was a conception of themselves as possessed of "special, sanctified authority beyond democratic mandates". Hynes writes:

> Members of secure, conservative, socially dominant groups
> in Edward's time certainly believed that they composed an
> established ruling class, and their behaviour is often com-
> prehensible only if one sees behind each action the assump-
> tion of the right to rule. This right to rule, whether as
> a cabinet minister or a bishop or a headmaster, or simply a
> leader of Society, was taken as extending in a generous, un-
> defined way from one established position to cover all
> society, so that bishops acted freely as literary censors
> and peeresses expressed their views on birth control with
> an air of fulfilling a social responsibility.[5]

But a considerable degree of insecurity underlay this self-assurance, and insecurity, rather than a confident optimism, was the dominant note of the Edwardian period. The aristocracy was vaguely aware that it had become anachronistic and could no longer wield its former influence; Sackville-West described The Edwardians as "clinging on, with a sort of feverish obstinacy, to something they no longer quite believed in . . . They were aware that rude, rough voices grumbled in the background".[6] The Church recognized that its role in English life was being steadily undermined, and the somewhat aggressive efforts of the clergy to reassert Victorian moral standards was in large part a reflection of the Church's diminishing importance as an institution. The Tory party, naturally, responded by defending the threatened strongholds of power and influence upon which its survival depended.

The atmosphere of insecurity was not, however, confined to the realm of the privileged; men and women of all classes were affected by the erosion of Victorian religious, political, social and economic certainties. The middle classes felt threatened both from below and from within. They became increasingly class conscious in reaction to the rise of labour and the blurring of social distinctions between them and the lower orders, but at the same time their former unity dissolved as members of their own class continued to produce and accept new ideas which challenged established notions of morality, religion, and even property. There was a rapidly expanding lower middle class who were making great gains in acquiring the "paraphernalia of gentility", and while they were more uniform in rejecting new ideas which menaced the standards they had so recently attained, they were characterized by a

sense of isolation and were preoccupied with a fear of slipping back into the "abyss".

The working classes had experienced a gradual but continuous improvement in wages and living conditions in the latter part of the nineteenth century, but were victimized by rising expectations when real wages stagnated in the early 1900s. There was increasing discontent with the tendency towards mechanization and the greater division of labour which undermined the former exclusiveness of skilled trades, and job insecurity led to a sense of rootlessness for many families. A high rate of migration to overcrowded cities resulted in a widespread feeling of urban alienation, and the segregation of classes into distinct residential areas caused a further breakdown of class relations. All of these factors contributed to the industrial and social unrest of the pre-war period. For many in the middle classes, the disharmony of the Edwardian years dealt a final blow to a lingering nineteenth century belief in their capacity to significantly influence, and in effect control, the course of English national life. As Standish Meacham has written, the period witnessed "the decline and fall of that ideal which mid-Victorians had hoped might make of England one sturdy phalanx of bourgeois aspirations and sentiments. All classes now felt threatened and went on the defensive".[7] Eric Hobsbawm captures the atmosphere when he writes that these were the years when "wisps of violence hung in the English air", and he concludes: "When the war came in 1914 it was not a catastrophe which wrecked the stable bourgeois world . . . It came as a respite from crisis, a diversion, perhaps even as some sort of solution."[8]

II

The apprehensions felt by all classes during this period were compounded by a deepening sense of national insecurity. The Boer War had a devastating effect upon England's self-confidence; it had been fought in the face of serious opposition at home, and it had damaged her international prestige and demonstrated her weakness in imperial defense. As H. G. Wells wrote in 1914: "The first decade of the twentieth century was for the English a decade of badly strained optimism. Our Empire was nearly beaten by a handful of farmers amidst the jeering contempt of the whole world - we felt it acutely for several years."[9] At the close of 1899 the Saturday Review expressed a concern which would be echoed many times during the Edwardian years:

> The events of the past two months have suddenly offered a test which the nation did not anticipate and even English critics feared to look forward to. It is possible now to hazard an answer to the inquiry whether or not our national organism is still capable of growth and expansion or has merely reached the highest point of an artificial development.[10]

The influence of social Darwinism is evident in many contemporary analyses of England's situation. The question of "decline" had been raised before - during the Crimean War for example - but never before with such urgency and genuine alarm. By the turn of the century it had become apparent that England's territorial and industrial supremacy could not endure, and the evolutionary model provided the theoretical explanation for such developments. Much was made of the similarity between individuals and nations; as one observer noted: "We are obsessed with the "social organism" theory, the idea that a people, like an

individual, has a distinct curve of life to follow - infancy, maturity and decay."[11] If "the survival of the fittest" applied to nations then England must be prepared to defend her superiority: "We have been lapped too long in the imaginary safety of our insular position," write The Times at the beginning of 1902. "It is slowly that our people have been to recognise the fact that this is an age of conflict and competition."[12] The recognised rivals were the obviously ascendant powers of Germany and the United States, and German progress in particular aroused a mixture of admiration and fear, with the latter rapidly becoming dominant as war became a definite possibility. At this point the long peace enjoyed by Great Britain itself appeared to be a liability. The Germans had recently been tested in major European wars and had triumphed, but as C. F. G. Masterman wrote, "no living observer has ever seen England in adversity: beaten to the knees, to the ground. No one can forsee what spirit - either of resistance or acquiescence - latent in this kindly, good-natured people might be evoked by so elemental a challenge."[13]

The idea that the English had become unfit to defend themselves was a fear that haunted Edwardians, and gave rise to endless comparisons between the condition of the British Empire and the decline of ancient Rome.[14] Similarities in leisure habits played a significant part in the analogy; the relationship between the growing devotion to spectator sport and military inadequacy in classical and modern times, for example, was a familiar theme. It was not only the physical ineffectiveness of the population which concerned England's leisure critics, however, but her moral shortcomings as well. The Edwardian years saw the various campaigns for public morality organize in the National Social Purity

Crusade, which aimed to reverse national decadence through raising and enforcing moral standards. Much of the Crusaders' energy was directed toward curtailing the circulation of "noxious" books, periodicals and plays which were seen as encouraging promiscuity. A considerable body of conservative opinion felt that the freedoms sought by some late Victorians which Edwardians were now beginning to enjoy, especially in their use of leisure, were leading to a deterioration in morals which paralleled the decline of earlier civilizations and would prove fatal to national survival.

<p style="text-align:center">III</p>

While the Edwardian preoccupation with degeneration focussed primarily upon the working classes, the language of decadence was also employed to condemn certain trends in middle and upper-class life. Critics noted a growing reluctance to take social and moral responsibilities with due seriousness, and they frequently charged members of their own classes with an attitude of "levity" and with falling prey to "materialism".[15] Much commented upon was a general "speeding up of life," accompanied by a new demand for pleasure and amusement. What most alarmed observers was the fact that this change in outlook and lifestyle coincided with a rapid decline in the birth rate, which was commonly regarded in Western nations at this time as a sure sign of decadence.

Edwardians of varying social perspectives were deeply concerned about the effect of birth control upon the future of the national life. The Bishop of London in 1906 warned that should this "evil" continue it would "eat away the heart and drain away the life-blood of our country,"

and in the same year the periodical <u>The Nineteenth Century</u> published an

article called "Malthusianism and the Declining Birth Rate" which indica-

ted the extent of the concern:

> Today dignitaries of the Church and of the State, both at
> home and abroad, lament the decreasing birth rate, as
> proof of a moral and physical degeneration that calls for
> general reprobation and menaces the future of the Anglo-
> Saxon race.[16]

Alarm about the birth rate was an important aspect of the Edward-

ian preoccupation with "the woman question". Far from being exclusively

a suffrage movement, early twentieth century feminism involved a rebel-

lion against a wide range of Victorian social and cultural restraints.

The freedom - and free time - to pursue the goal of "self-realization"

was a major aspiration, and was partially achieved through the exercise

of choice in child-bearing. The more reactionary critics associated

this development with a supreme selfishness on the part of women, as did

this writer in the <u>Hibbert Journal</u>:

> Woman will no longer abdicate her personality in the presence
> of the personality of man; from man she demands pleasure
> but will sacrifice nothing herself. This thoroughgoing
> individualism is perhaps the sign of a higher civilisation,
> but it is a fatal sign. If it marks a summit, it marks yet
> more surely the beginning of a decline; for a race in which
> women refuse to become mothers is a race which commits
> suicide.[17]

Conservative fears regarding birth control went beyond the racial implica-

tions of limiting family size; the sexual freedom it permitted was seen

as endangering morality and undermining the stability of the family as an

institution. But even some Edwardians who took a fairly liberal view of

the "woman question" felt it presented a real dilemma in terms of the

future of the race. An article in <u>The Times</u>, for example, prompted by

the Church Congress's discussions on women and sex in 1913, recognized

"self-expression and liberty" as two of the most important goals of

civilization and their pursuit by women as highly legitimate, but with

an over-riding qualification:

> There is an antecedent call on her for the maintenance
> and perpetuation of life, and the moment the new part clashes
> with the old it stands condemned. What shall it profit us to
> improve the quality of life if we let the supply fail?   Nor
> can it be said that the woman's movement involves no more
> than an imaginary danger of this result. To reconcile the
> two functions and give each its proper place is the great
> problem for women in this present stage of our civilisation.[18]

The trend toward smaller families also reflected a basic economic

fact of middle-class life, for in this period incomes did not keep pace

with the increasing number of ways in which money could be spent -

especially on consumer commodities and leisure - and the widening gap

between existing standards of living and middle-class aspirations prompt-

ed a voluntary restriction on family size. Masterman discussed this

process and its implications in his chapter on "The Suburbans" in The

Condition of England:

> The pressure is being reduced, not by any lowering of the
> standard of comfort demanded by the individual, for that
> is steadily rising in suburban England, but by the limita-
> tion of the family, pursued as a deliberate method of ad-
> justing expenditures to income . . . Here is a kind of
> ingenious method of turning the position, of climbing
> through the window when the door is closed . . . The nation
> must inevitably suffer from an artificial restriction of
> children amongst those very classes and families who should
> be most encouraged to produce them.[19]

The relationship between leisure and the concern over birth

control is indirect, but important nonetheless. Contemporaries correctly

viewed the desire for more free time to explore new opportunities for

self-development and pleasure through recreation as a motivating factor

in the limitation of births. Financial considerations also played a part

in such decisions now that holidays and the acquisition of various lei-

sure accessories, such as sports equipment, bicycles, and pianos, had to

be taken into account in the allocation of family income. The reason

that these facts alarmed Edwardians to such a degree was that the connec-

tion between a falling birth rate and national decline was taken for

granted in these years. On the other hand, various leisure activities,

such as the reading of certain novels or attendance at certain plays,

were seen by the more conservative social critics as encouraging greater

sexual freedom and hence the practice of birth control. The perusal of

"noxious" literature by members of the working classes was also viewed

as endangering morality and "degrading the racial instinct", but as

Masterman points out in the passage above, the greater decline in births

amongst the better classes posed the danger of a qualitative - as well as

a quantitative - deterioration in the national stock.[20]

IV

Such a prospect was especially alarming in view of the evidence

brought forth in these years that the working class population was in a

state of degeneration. The number of mental defectives was reported to

be increasing,[21] but the alleged physical deterioration of the English

people was the main source of concern. This fear had been stimulated by

reports that during the Boer War sixty percent of recruits to the armed

forces were being rejected as unfit. Current demands for increased

military preparedness gave this problem added significance; as an article

in the Contemporary Review in 1902 called "Where to Get Men" pointed out,

inducements to enlist were useless if "the great body of the nation it-self is decaying in health and vigour".[22]   Alarm was already widespread by the time the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration made its report in 1904, and although it was unable to point to any evidence of a general decline, these fears were not dispelled.

Speculation about the causes of this "decline" tended to centre upon the living conditions and habits of the urban working classes. City living, in fact, was held responsible for many of the social ills which beset Edwardian England, and individuals of highly diverse interests would have agreed with Ramsay MacDonald when he complained that "whenever we try to get to the root of our social vices we ultimately find ourselves contemplating the sad effects of the steady stream of population away from the green meadows on to the grey pavements".[23]   Max Nordau posed the dilemma that while urbanization was indispensable for progress, "there is no doubt that degeneration has its chief home in the large town, and that the population of the large town is condemned, as a whole, to degeneration".[24]

One of the most widely-read critics of the modern city was C. F. G. Masterman. A radical Liberal who had lived amongst the poor in the university settlement movement, he began his attack on the city even before the controversy over physical deterioration became a major issue. The Heart of the Empire, which he edited in 1901, consists of a series of essays by young radical Liberals on the social problems related to city life in England, and was sold out in the first month of publication. Most remarked upon was Masterman's own contribution to the collection entitled "Realities at Home," in which he developed his concept of the

"new City Type":

> Throughout the century the population of England has exhibited
> a continuous drift into the great cities: and now, at the
> opening of a new era, it is necessary to recognise that we
> are face to face with a phenomenon unique in the world's
> history . . . a new race, hitherto unreckoned and of incal-
> cuable action, is entering the sphere of practical impor-
> tance – the "City type" of the coming years; the "street-
> bred" people of the twentieth century; the "new generation
> knocking at our doors".[25]

The "new race" was characterized not only by a stunted physique, but

decaying moral standards and highly volatile behaviour as well.

Masterman's own reaction to the City type was a combination of compas-

sion, disgust and fear – fear not so much of the individual but of their

combination in another "new" phenomenon – the Crowd.

People were now massed together in cities to an extent hitherto

unknown, and Masterman stressed the fact that residential class segrega-

tion concentrated the working population in certain areas, and minimised

contact with other levels of society. Such a vast, unknown population

could hardly be conceived by the classes above in terms of individual

men and women, but instead was largely apprehended as a great horde which

tended to act in unison. This notion was popularized in the middle

classes by the events of Mafeking Night when the masses suddenly appeared

from "nowhere" to take possession of the city, and "Mafeking" entered the

English language as a verb denoting sudden, unruly and highly suggestible

crowd behaviour. Masterman declared that there was a danger of this kind

of behaviour becoming much more common, and that he could detect:

> The normal life of man becoming the life of the Crowd, with
> features intensified and distorted when collected in tumult
> or demonstration. We seem to see in the experience of a
> generation an increasing tendency to merge the individual
> in the mass . . . unless the life of the Crowd can be

redeemed, all other redemption is vain. Here is the
battle-ground for the future of the race and national
character.[26]

While Masterman was sometimes accused of exaggerating the forces

which threatened England's security, apprehensions about the "swarming

together" of the population in large towns and its tendency to increase

the "Mafeking element" in human nature was a subject of frequent discus-

sion in the periodical press, especially in relation to leisure. Politi-

cal demonstrations caused some alarm but were relatively infrequent;

urban working-class people were much more regularly brought together in

large numbers in their amusements. Sporting events attracted and could

accommodate the largest crowds and drew the most criticism. It was fre-

quently observed that the spectator-crowd was not merely a collection of

individuals; that it took on a new dimension - a sort of corporate

personality which was more volatile and primitive than its components.

Much of the commentary in conservative periodicals like Blackwood's

Magazine and the Spectator tended to assume that working-class people

have always preferred to be part of a mob, and references to their

"vulgarity" were seldom absent. This excerpt from Blackwood's was

typical:

> The men and women of today are so little masters of them-
> selves that they must always go in crowds. They are happiest
> when the largest number of them is packed into the smallest
> space. They take their pleasures, as they like to do their
> work, in common. Now, a crowd, as has often been pointed out,
> is always worse in manners and intelligence than the indivi-
> duals of which it is composed. These, massed together, are
> bolder in the defiance of law and order than they would be
> separate and alone. They exaggerate the tone of their neigh-
> bours, and are proud to outdo one another in noise and folly.
> And so they pack the football field or overcrowd the gallery
> of our theatres, and find their highest delight in insulting

the referee whose decisions do not please them, or in
shrieking applause at the actor whose lack of voice and
talent they mistake for genius.[27]

Middle-class feelings about democracy were not far from the sur-

face in such caustic observations of working-class leisure habits. To

judge from the periodical literature, as the lower orders gained in

political influence at the turn of the century, the frightening possibi-

lity of "rule from below" loomed large in middle and upper-class imagin-

ations. For many it seemed that England was being "taken over" by the

very people in whom signs of degeneracy - physical deterioration, immor-

ality, vulgarity and volatility - were predominant: a people suffused

with "the spirit of the horde". "At last we are all equal" announced

Blackwood's Magazine in 1905, "or rather it is the vulgar who dictate

the terms of life because the vulgar are more numerous than the others".[28]

To quite an extent, leisure served as a scapegoat in contemporary

efforts to explain the real or imagined defects of English society in

these years. "The spirit of the horde" gained expression most frequent-

ly in recreation, and thus a link was easily drawn between mob behaviour

and working-class amusements, such as spectator sports and excursion

holidays. The expansion of leisure opportunities through commercializa-

tion and the increased demand for amusement coincided with what appeared

to be rampant physical and moral deterioration, and it is not surprising

that many social critics believed they could detect a cause-effect

relationship. It is evident, however, that the question of decadence,

while founded in a genuine recognition of the growing challenge to

England's supremacy, also served as a veil for mounting class tensions

and as a rationale for criticizing the leisure habits of the people "in the national interest".

NOTES

1. Standish Meacham, "The Sense of an Impending Clash", American Historical Review 77 (1972): 1364.

2. Compton Mackenzie, Literature in My Time (London, 1933), p. 127; Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again (London, 1964), quoted in Meacham, op. cit. p. 1364.

3. Holbrook Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties (London, 1913), p. 131-2. For a more recent discussion see Hugh McLeod, Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City (London, 1974).

4. See Richard Ellmann (ed.), Edwardians and Late Victorians (New York, 1959); Samuel Hynes, The Edwardian Turn of Mind (Princeton, 1968); N. B. Reckitt, "When did 'Victorianism' End?", Victorian Studies I (1957-8): 268; Michael Rose, "Late Victorians and Edwardians", Victorian Studies XVII (1973): 319.

5. Hynes, op. cit. p. 6; p. 11.

6. V. Sackville-West, The Edwardians (London, 1930), p. 216.

7. Meacham, op. cit. p. 1352.

8. Eric Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire (London, 1968), p. 193.

9. H. G. Wells, The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman (London, 1914), pp. 258-9, quoted in Hynes, p. 7.

10. Saturday Review (30 December 1899): 823-4.

11. M. McIver, "An Effete Civilisation", in What the Worker Wants. The Daily Mail Enquiry, by H. G. Wells, Norman Angell, Lord Hugh Cecil and others (London, 1912). For a detailed exploration of the Edwardian preoccupation with decadence see Geoffrey Harpham, "Time Running Out: The Edwardian Sense of Cultural Degeneration" Clio V. (1976).

12. The Times (4 January 1902): 9.

13. C. F. G. Masterman, The Condition of England (London, 1909), p. 12.

14. For a classic example see Elliott E. Mills, The Decline and Fall of the British Empire (Oxford, 1905).

15. As an example see H. W. Massingham, "The Materialism of English Life" Contemporary Review 85 (1904).

16. Contemporary Review 89 (1906): 229; The Nineteenth Century 59 (1906): 80.

17. "Civilisation in Danger", _Hibbert Journal_ 10 (1911-12): 277.

18. _Times_ (30 October 1913): 7.

19. Masterman, op. cit. p. 86.

20. See "The Extinction of the Upper Classes", _The Nineteenth Century_ 66 (1909): 99.

21. _Report of the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded_, 1908.

22. _Contemporary Review_ 81 (1902): 85.

23. Ramsay MacDonald, "Gambling and Citizenship," in B. S. Rowntree, _Betting and Gambling: a National Evil_ (London, 1905), p. 131.

24. "The Degeneration of Classes and Peoples", _Hibbert Journal_ 10 (1911): 763.

25. C. F. G. Masterman (ed.), _The Heart of the Empire_ (London, 1901), The Harvester Press Edition (1973), pp. 7-8.

26. Masterman, _The Condition of England_, p. 141.

27. "Musings without Method", _Blackwood's Magazine_ (1905): 711-2.

28. Ibid.

Chapter 3

SOCIAL CLASS AND LEISURE ATTITUDES IN EDWARDIAN ENGLAND

This chapter will continue the study of changes in leisure
attitudes at the turn of the century, with an emphasis upon class dif-
ferences and upon the sources of both personal and social conflict. In
such an investigation a number of seeming contradictions or opposing
circumstances come into view. The middle classes were now much freer
in their use of leisure than earlier generations had been, but this
freedom was by no means accompanied by a reduction in anxiety or self-
consciousness about the problem of recreation. The workers were being
presented with a wider choice of amusements aimed specifically at a pop-
ular market, but for a large percentage such opportunities were still
financially out of reach. Resentment arose as a result of both this
continuing sense of deprivation and a deep misunderstanding of others'
leisure needs.

I

An account of early twentieth century leisure should refer at
least briefly to the class which gave the period its popular image as a
decade devoted to pleasure - "an age of fevered luxury", as Harold
Nicolson recalled it.[1] For the Edwardian rich leisure was an occupation,
and amusement was conceived by many as the prime "duty" in life. The
contrast between Victorian and Edwardian upper class life was consider-
able; attitudes were becoming more and more liberal towards the end of

the nineteenth century, but the change in monarchy produced a new atmos-
phere as leading members of Society now took their lead from a pleasure-
loving, self-indulgent king. The aura of restraint and sobriety which
had emanated from the court of Queen Victoria had evaporated; wealth
and the ability to amuse were what counted in Edwardian fashionable
circles.[2] Morality tended more than ever to be a matter of appearances,
and good taste was very loosely defined.

The composition of social leadership was changing as well - as
Blackwood's Magazine noted in 1902, "Society and the aristocracy, though
often confused, are now two totally different things".[3] The social pre-
ferences of the King played a part in loosening social barriers at the
top, as did the admission of wealthy Americans into Society on an equal
footing. An influx of new money was welcomed now that the aristocracy
was in reduced circumstances due to the depression in land values; not
everyone, however, was at ease with the way the plutocracy seemed increas-
ingly to be dictating the terms and setting the standards of English life.
Attitudes towards wealth, and in particular the display of wealth, were
being transformed. In 1904 the Spectator commented with disapproval upon
the growth of "a feeling which is in good measure new - the admiration of
possession. The rich man is now the man to whom . . . much is to be
forgiven."[4]

The habits of the king were generally left unremarked in the
Edwardian press, and conservative social critics were anxious to create
a distinction between the lifestyle of the plutocracy and the values of
the old aristocracy. They frequently discussed the vulgarity of the
nouveau riche, however - their ostentation, social pretensions and moral

laxity - and ascribed to them a leading role in the degenerative process at work in English society. C. F. G. Masterman devoted a chapter of The Condition of England to the plutocracy, and it was his contention that the "super-wealth" and conspicuous consumption of society's new leaders was having a serious effect on the nation as a whole, "setting a pace" for the classes below and "driving the whole of modern life into a huge apparatus of waste".[5] Left-wing reformers were particularly tempted to attribute much of what they deplored in working-class leisure habits to a desire to imitate the rich, as Ramsay Macdonald put it: "The grossness at the top percolates through to the bottom, and the plebeian in his own special heavy-footed style dances to the same sensuous tune to which the feet of his betters are more daintily tripping."[6]

II

But as middle-class critics uneasily observed, a tendency towards conspicuous consumption and an emphasis upon immediate gratification was not confined to the very rich. Portions of the middle classes too had clearly altered their way of life and were becoming much less circumspect in their pleasures. They freely attended theatres and restaurants, and even the music hall and public house were frequented by members of the most respectable classes. Most remarked upon was the changing behaviour of women; Sylvanus Urban of the Gentleman's Magazine described their new attitude towards what was acceptable in amusements as a "practical sub-versal of domesticity", and Blackwood's drew attention to "the woman who will have a good time as a special feature of our day".[7] Middle-class

Edwardians of both sexes were consciously accepting enjoyment as an important determinant in deciding how time should be spent, and allowing leisure to play a more significant and visible role in their daily lives.

What is of special interest is the part leisure played in drawing loyalties and energies away from ideas and institutions which had been the defining features of Victorian middle-class life. We have seen how the desire for more free time and money to spend on consumer goods and amusements was a factor in the reduction of family size in this period, and how much concern the diminishing birth rate aroused. Critics of the "new materialism" were also distressed by a marked decline in religious observance in the middle classes.[8] Sunday church-going had been the paramount social obligation in mid-Victorian England, but it had been gradually losing allegiance in the 1870s and 1880s, and by the turn of the century those who found church attendance burdensome no longer felt compelled to keep up appearances. Hugh McLeod has described this change in attitude in Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City, and he quotes a minister in Hampstead who remarked upon the way Sunday had become a "day of convenience" even for professing Christians:

> It has become a common thing for Christian people - even
> members of churches - to make their presence at public worship
> entirely a matter of inclination. If they think well to be
> there they will; if from any cause whatever they choose to be
> absent, they will be absent. A fine morning will decide them
> to take a walk, a wet morning to stay at home. The visit of
> a friend for tea will fix them for the evening. The playing of
> a band on Parliament Hill will draw them there.[9]

What the clergy were reluctantly discovering was that for many people church attendance itself had become a leisure activity, once the element of compulsion was removed and now that the Victorian concept of "duty"

was losing its function as the primary motivating factor in middle-class life.

The same influences were acting upon attitudes towards work. A broadening choice in legitimate recreations allowed leisure to play a much more important role in the development of individual identity, which to some degree had the effect of eroding the importance of work as a basis of self-definition, and hence the work ethic as the dominant frame-work for middle-class thought and behaviour.[10] A highly significant feature in this development was that while the Edwardian middle class were less preoccupied with work than the previous generation, and were indeed "cultivating play instead of merely permitting it", there remained a tendency to judge leisure activities in terms of "output". One of the ideological legacies of the Industrial Revolution was the concept of "spending time"; now that enjoyment had been widely accepted as a legitimate goal of recreation, time "spent" on leisure must yield a return in pleasurable experience. The work ethic was more easily discarded than the middle class fear of not "succeeding", and as leisure took its place as an autonomous and central part of life, enjoyment became associated with personal success.

The transformation in middle-class attitudes towards holidays illustrates the rise of what might be termed "the leisure ethic".[11] The mid-Victorian holiday was regarded primarily as a process of renewing oneself for work. It acquired further justification if it was an "improving" holiday, such as touring art galleries on the Continent, or studying natural history by the sea. Towards the end of the century these notions were losing importance; as the Gentleman's Magazine remarked in 1890,

the idea should be "of a holiday, not a penance".[12] Many articles in the

Edwardian press echoed this suggestion. The Cornhill Magazine in 1904

exorted readers to go wherever they could enjoy themselves: the aim

should be to "clear our minds of cant" - the test of a successful holiday

"is whether it has increased the human stock of cheerfulness". In 1910

the Spectator, considering the problem of "The Search for Happiness",

estimated that "among those who spend, say, a month of the year in travel

or sport or with their families at the seaside, there must be ninety-nine

who confess that their only object is happiness as against one who thinks

first of adding to his knowledge or capabilities or reducing his weight."[13]

But as was frequently noted, when pleasure became the main goal

of a holiday, it could also be more difficult to secure. The problem of

achieving happiness became the subject of a number of serious essays and

humorous short articles during the Edwardian years. Typical of the lat-

ter category was a piece in the Saturday Review in August, 1912 by Filson

Young. Recognizing that "the only true spirit in which to start on a

holiday is the spirit of release from bondage", he recounted his own in-

ternal struggle to follow such advice:

> I can, and sometimes do, work very hard . . . and I resent very
> much that my conscience gives me no credit for this, but occu-
> pies the time after the work is done, when I should be relaxing
> and enjoying myself, in nagging at me with the question: "Well,
> what are you going to do next, and when are you going to begin?"
> And sometimes when all other forms of torment have failed, my
> conscience (which does not like holidays, but refuses to remain
> behind when I try to take them) will suddenly say, "Well, why
> aren't you enjoying yourself? This is a holiday, you know, you
> can't always have holidays; why aren't you making the most of
> it and being merry and bright?"[14]

Another article suggested that a successful holiday served as an import-

ant indicator of both social status and personal worth, for the quality

of one's holidays mattered so much more now that "everyone" took them. It
was a common claim that the lower orders made poor use of their leisure;
it followed that the middle classes must exhibit a superior talent at
holiday-making: "To make the most or best of holidays as of everything
else they must be devised with intelligence; and the kind of holiday a man
takes is an indication of his general ability."[15]

A much freer acceptance of the value of recreation was thus combin-
ed with a variety of ambivalent feelings towards its proper use. There was
no middle-class consensus of opinion about leisure in these years; even
more than in mid-Victorian times it was up to the individual to decide how
much and what kind of recreation was right for him. The decision was com-
plicated on the one hand by the admonitions of those who equated the new
emphasis upon pleasure with a deterioration in the national life, and on
the other by the way enjoyment was increasingly associated with achievement
or success, and was becoming a social obligation. To this dilemma was add-
ed the necessity of distinguishing one's own leisure needs from what seem-
ed to be an ever-expanding appetite for amusement in the classes below.

III

For the working classes too, leisure was growing in importance as
a means of self-expression and as a way of defining one's status and
identity in the anonymity of early twentieth century city life. Jobs
were becoming less and less satisfying through the introduction of mass
production methods, and as Peter Stearns has written: "Workers were in-
creasingly learning new forms of play. Some were coming to judge life in
terms largely apart from work."[16] Working-class leisure revolved around

the traditional pub-based culture, and newer commercial offerings such as professional sporting events, music halls and cinema, and newspapers and novels aimed at the newly literate. For men there was often a world of "semi-leisure" which might include the club, friendly society and trade union. There was a growing tendency in many industries to allow employees a week or more off each year, which gave better-paid workers the opportunity of a summer holiday. Bank holidays permitted many more people to take shorter and cheaper excursions, as did the Saturday half-holiday, "already a permanent institution", remarked the Times in 1904, "the practice of 'week-ends' has rapidly spread from the most affluent to the humblest in the community."[17]

Despite new opportunities, for a majority in the working classes recreation was still severely restricted. The main problem for most workers was not, as it was for the classes above, how to make a wise choice from a range of available pleasures, but how to find the means to enjoy any kind of leisure activity. This was particularly true for those with families, and the new commercial entertainments were aimed primarily at young unmarried workers who could regularly afford to spend a portion of their incomes on such amusements. As for the average working-class man and woman, once married their recreational opportunities diminished rather abruptly. Leisure expectations which had been met in the years between school-leaving and marriage were now left unsatisfied; according to Stearns the artisan family in London could only manage to attend the music hall, for example, about twice a year.[18] In The Classic Slum Robert Roberts recalls the monotony of time off work for men without even "the few coppers" to go to the pub: "How familiar one grew in child-

hood with those silent figures leaning against door joints, staring into
vacancy waiting for bedtime."[19] In his research on poverty B. S.
Rowntree found that life on the common wage for unskilled workers of a
pound a week barely allowed for physical necessities, and when the poor
indulged in any pleasures they deprived themselves of the food or cloth-
ing necessary to health. He wrote:

> It must be remembered that this sum allows nothing for sick
> clubs or trade unions, or beer or tobacco, or trams or trav-
> elling, or amusements or newspapers, or writing materials
> and stamps; and if an evening paper is bought, or the chil-
> dren have coppers given to them to go and see the "moving
> pictures", physical efficiency suffers . . . Of course we
> know that even they do not limit themselves to the quest of
> physical health; they smoke and drink, and go in thousands
> to witness football matches; they _do_ read the evening papers,
> and _do_ ride in trams: and the casual observer imagines that
> all _is_ right - that, indeed, "a chap can do jolly well on a
> guinea a week". He does not realise that every penny devoted
> to luxury or amusements by poor families is a tax on health.[20]

This kind of deprivation in a society increasingly aware of its "right to
leisure" was an important factor in rising class consciousness; both
sympathetic and unsympathetic observers admitted that considerable work-
ing-class resentment arose directly from their financial inability to
join in "the new spirit of enjoyment". H. G. Wells declared that social
unrest in the Edwardian years was aroused in good part by the visibility
of amusements which the workers could not hope to afford. "The obvious
devotion of a large and growing proportion of the time and energy of the
owning and ruling classes to pleasure and excitement and adventure is now
being brought before the eyes and into the imagination of the working
men," wrote Wells. "The Spectacle of Pleasure . . . is the culminating
irritant of labour."[21]

Even in those families in which the head of the household enjoyed

some recreation, the leisure outlook for women tended to remain bleak.

Unmarried working girls - more and more of whom chose to go into factories

rather than into service - enjoyed freedom and friends, and could afford

amusements like the music hall and weekend outings. Marriage suddenly

reduced their leisure opportunities, curtailed their spending money and

in many cases virtually eliminated social contacts made at the workplace.

Women were also limited by their husbands' view of their role; in these

years it was generally considered a disgrace for a man's wife to work,

and other activities outside the home were few.[22] Many reformers remark-

ed upon the apparent lack of companionship in working class marriages;

with so little diversion the women soon became "hopeless drudges" and

their husbands found their chief interests among their "mates": "They

find so little pleasure in one another's company," wrote Barnett. "They

walk behind the other in the country, they are rarely found together at

places of entertainment, and they are soldom seen talking with any viva-

city." Lady Bell blamed the general lack of leisure provisions in

England, a deficiency felt especially by women:

> As far as women are concerned, there is still less provision
> made for their diversion and recreation than for that of the
> men, except for private undertakings of one kind or another;
> as to public places, there are not many in this country where
> it is the custom for ordinary domestic respectable working
> women to go, and it is much less common, then, to see a work-
> man taking his wife and family out pleasuring with him than
> it is in most countries on the Continent.[23]

Roberts recollected that in his mother's shop "the confinement of daily

life was often a subject for bitter complaint. . . One, I recall, spoke

wearily of never having been more than five minutes walk from her home

in eighteen years of married life." Rowntree concluded that "No one can

fail to be struck by the monotony which characterises the life of most

married women of the working class", and a vast and unrelieved boredom

was often held responsible for the vices to which these women were most

prone: "Their interests, not unnaturally turn towards the stimulus of

drinking, and of betting and gambling - two elements which at least give

colour in a life set in grey."[24]

Lack of sufficient recreation available for married workers of

both sexes, in fact, accounted in part for the continued importance of

drink in working-class life. Another factor was that the pub still ful-

filled many of its traditional functions, offering bright and pleasant

surroundings, companionship and entertainment, and while more working-

class families were now following the middle-class example of drinking at

home, the social side of the consumption of alcohol was still of greatest

importance. According to Charles Booth's investigation, public houses

were much less disorderly than in Victorian times, and notions of res-

pectability seemed to have had an effect on drinking habits. Consumption

was still very high, but drunkenness was increasingly felt to be anti-

social. As Booth was advised: "'nowadays you drink, and the more you

drink the better man you are, but you must not be visibly drunk. Outward

drunkenness is an offence against the manners of all classes.' The idea

is to 'carry your drink like a gentleman'." It was often commented,

however, that women now drank to excess far more than men, and were not

necessarily bound by the same code of behaviour: "They let the whole

world know if they have had too much." Many of Booth's respondents

attributed women's drinking to boredom and overwork: "The women are

worse than the men, but their drinking is largely due to their slavery
at the washtub." A clergyman said "Worry is what they suffer from, rest
and hope what they want. Drunkenness dulls the sense of present evil
and gives a rosiness to what is to come. That is why they drink."[25]

Some of the same circumstances which encouraged drinking help to
explain the dramatic increase in betting and gambling in the Edwardian
period. The advent of "starting price" transactions in horse-racing and
the new football coupon-betting provided ample opportunity, and the pre-
valence of this habit in the lower classes in general was a source of
alarm to a great many contemporaries. Numerous articles appeared in the
press describing the evils resulting from gambling and encouraging res-
trictive legislation, while the appointment of the Select Committee on
Betting and Gambling and the number of private members bills brought
before the Commons testify to the amount of official interest in the
problem.[26]

Booth found that betting amongst the working classes was said to
be "increasing beyond what you can imagine." "Increasing out of all pro-
portion to other forms of vice," reported a police inspector, and the
clergy affirmed that gambling "presses drink hard as the greatest evil
of the day".[27] Men were constantly exposed to betting at the pub and
workplace, and for most working-class women, it was the only new diversion
presented to them in these years. For them betting was a continuous tem-
ptation, because bookmakers in Edwardian England went from door to door
seeking to reach housewives while their husbands were at work - the ad-
vantage being that women often had the entire household fund at their
disposal while men had only their "pocket money". These rounds were

often done by agents, who "while collecting the weekly payments on some
article purchased, also collect for the master who makes a book, and so
induce the women to place money on any race taking place in any part of
the kingdom".[28]   Part of the motivation to bet sprang from poverty –
"the possibility of spending a shilling and winning £5" was irresis-
tible – but social investigators recognized the even stronger and more
immediate desire for a break in the tedium of daily living.   Lady Bell
described one woman who began to bet when she needed money but who had
"gone on with it for the sake of the excitement and interest it brought
into her life:

> It was undesirable, no doubt, that this woman should bet –
> horribly undesirable, as the look of the house and surround-
> ings showed. But what an illumination, albeit lurid, of
> outlook it must have brought to one, who before had had no
> personal interest in anything outside her sordid life, when
> she began to import into it these constant moments of alter-
> nating hope, fear and wonder, when day by day, as she took
> up the half-penny evening paper to see the result of the
> race, she felt it might contain something governing her own
> destiny.[29]

Sympathetic observers also understood that an amusement which
flourished in a leisure vacuum could not be legislated away; as Ramsay
MacDonald pointed out, "prohibitive Acts will not carry us very far. . .
the gambling instinct must be elbowed out, not stamped out." In his own
contribution to Betting and Gambling: A National Evil, Rowntree explain-
ed that while the worker could not afford the recreations of the weal-
thier classes "he has the same desire for life. He thinks to get it by
betting". People would bet, through some means, until an alternative
source of excitement presented itself: "Men will not tolerate a uniform
drudgery," he wrote. "They will not live in a world which is a feature-

less expanse."[30]

The working-class leisure situation seems somewhat contradictory: opportunities were broadening, yet vast numbers of workers still enjoyed very little in the way of amusement. Commercial leisure offerings such as the music hall, cinema, spectator sport and the excursion trade were aimed at young unmarried workers and those in skilled trades who formed the must lucrative market. Apart from the continuing but necessarily small-scale efforts of the churches to provide alternatives, the problem of how to meet working-class leisure needs received almost no attention from other sources. Large numbers of people were therefore confined to the seductively cheap but habit-forming pleasures of drink and betting, made even more appealing by the sense of "escape" offered by both. As we have seen, workers in this period were victimized in more ways than one by rising expectations. Real wages and hence the standard of living stopped rising shortly after the turn of the century, which not only curtailed leisure opportunities but any sense of personal advancement as well. The economic "life-cycle" of individual men and women had a similar effect, for the relative prosperity of the early wage-earning years, when pleasures could be afforded, was usually followed by the financial pressures of raising a family, and a drastic reduction in expenditure beyond the "necessities" of life.

IV

As in the nineteenth century, the "view from below" was strikingly different from middle-class ideas about working-class leisure, which

were generally based upon the conviction that the lower orders enjoyed a

surfeit of amusements.   Edwardian leisure critics displayed a preoccupa-

tion with the working man's insatiable desire for more and more recreation.

"The maw of pleasure is not easy to fill," wrote Booth.   "The appetite

grows."[31]   As time available for leisure expanded, the problem of its

misuse became even more urgent.   Walter Besant, for example, in his study

of the people of East London, stressed the significance of placing more

time at the workers' disposal:

> I have already called attention to the very remarkable change
> that has gradually transformed the life of the modern crafts-
> man. We have given him his evenings – all his evenings: and
> we have postponed his going to work by an hour at least. . .
> This point is of vital importance;   it is affecting the
> national character for good or evil;   it is full of possibi-
> lities and it is full of dangers.

In an article in the Cornhill Magazine in 1907 entitled "The Recreations

of the People", liberal clergyman Canon Barnett expressed the same

anxiety: "Their use of leisure is a signpost showing whether the course

of the nation is towards extinction in ignorance and self-indulgence,"

he wrote.   "The country is being lost or saved in its play, and the use

of holidays needs as much consideration as the use of workdays."[32]

But while the misuse of leisure was as great a source of concern

as it had been in Victorian times, there were fewer middle-class Edward-

ians who felt it was their responsibility to "set an example" or otherwise

try to have a reforming influence upon working-class recreation.   The

decline in the kind of idealism which had inspired the movement for

rational recreation was related to a number of trends – the rise of the

"new materialism" and a diminishing sense of a religious, "civilizing"

mission, a loss of faith in the middle classes' ability to impose its

values on the rest of society which accompanied the growth of democracy,

and the well-publicized failure of innumerable schemes aimed at elevat-

ing the masses. Campaigns like the free libraries movement, for example,

which had anticipated a revolution in working-class habits and morals

to follow from literacy and the availability of good literature, had had

disappointing results and seemed to prove that the lower classes did in

fact lack the capacity for cultural advancement.

The working man's holiday was one aspect of Edwardian popular

recreation which seemed to justify the worst fears of the middle-class

critic. Bank holidays, in particular, drew attention to the gulf between

the classes in terms of leisure habits and attitudes. A thirty year old

institution by the turn of the century, the Bank holiday was still ob-

served only grudgingly by the middle classes, whose objections revealed

their sensitivity towards any apparent loss of social control. Charles

Booth encountered strong resentment in the employing classes towards

these occasions because of their tendency to turn into celebrations last-

ing well beyond the appointed day, which seemed to indicate a serious

lapse in industrial discipline. The Times published articles throughout

the period on the implications and dangers of the "holiday-hunger".

"Where is it all to end?" asked one such piece in 1901, "and to what

thin and attenuated proportions will the working day, or week, or year

ultimately shrink?"[33] A manager of a large factory told Booth that "it

is useless to open the works on the day after Bank holiday, or even for

two days."[34] Part of the problem stemmed from the fact that these events

were characterized by "a general abandon of restraint" - a phrase which

referred not just to a temporary reversal in the moderation of drinking

habits, but to a greater abandon in sexual behaviour as well, reminis-

cent of the traditional popular recreations under attack a century before.

Much was made in the Edwardian press of the "vulgarity" of these

occasions - the over-crowded third-class carriages heading for the sea-

shore, and the boisterous crowds which remained in the city and swarmed

through the streets. A resident of North Kensington who signed himself

"Grumbler" addressed the Saturday Review with a common complaint:

> During every Bank holiday my house becomes a sort of front
> seat to view a spectacle which I can only liken to Pandem-
> onium. . . Bank holidays they seem to regard as an excuse
> for drink, for mad frolic and for annoyance to folk who may
> live on what I can only call their lines of march or in the
> neighbourhood of their playgrounds.[35]

Masterman echoed middle-class sentiments towards the holidays of the

people when he spoke of them as "outburst of brutalising and unlovely

pleasure".[36] It was observed that these occasions contributed to class

segregation in leisure, for vulgarity and riot were evidently carried to

such extremes that the genteel population felt compelled to remain in-

doors, "lest a bibulous chorus come betwixt the wind and their nobility",

wrote the Saturday Review, only partly in jest. The Times observed that

for the middle classes "Bank holidays are a disagreeable necessity, and

their instinct is, when they occur, to sit at home with the blinds

drawn."[37] Clearly in the Edwardian years, leisure was more a divisive

than a unifying force in class relations. As the Times declared after

the August holiday in 1909, nothing estranges people so much "as a con-

tempt for each others' pleasures".[38]

Despite the gulf between the classes, some critics, when chastis-

ing their middle-class readers about their own preoccupation with amusement, were aware of some disconcerting comparisons which could be drawn. It is easy to suspect that to some extent, middle-class unease about the "appetites" of the working population was a projection of the uncertainty they felt about their own leisure habits. Factory employees, for example, were often accused of neglecting their work in favour of attending football and cricket matches, yet at the same time the idea was circulating that the English gentleman's passion for games was not unrelated to the nation's military and industrial inefficiency. The reading habits of the working classes were linked with their alleged moral degeneracy, but the ensuing controversy over the need for censorship reflected the anxiety felt by portions of the middle classes towards their own exposure to "immoral" literature. Much criticism was directed at the increase in betting amongst the workers, but not without an awareness of the revived interest in gambling in fashionable circles. Some critics observed that at all levels of society work had become to be regarded as "an irksome interruption to play", and a degree of self-blame for having rejected the role of "example-setter" seems likely to have been a significant factor in middle-class attitudes towards the leisure habits of the people.

NOTES

1. Harold Nicolson, <u>Small Talk</u> (London, 1937) p. 73, reprinted in Asa Briggs, <u>They Saw It Happen</u> (Oxford, 1960), p. 34. See also M. E. Edes and D. Frazer (eds.) <u>The Age of Extravagance</u> (New York, 1954); J. B. Priestley, <u>The Edwardians</u>, (London, 1970); V. Sackville-West, <u>The Edwardians</u> (London, 1930).

2. "English Society as it is", <u>Saturday Review</u> (6 June 1896): 571.

3. <u>Blackwood's Magazine</u> (January, 1902): 54.

4. "The Drift Towards Plutocracy", <u>Spectator</u> (15 October 1904): 547. See also Jamie Camplin, <u>The Rise of the Plutocrats</u> (London, 1978).

5. C. F. G. Masterman, <u>The Condition of England</u> (London, 1909), p. 41.

6. Ramsay MacDonald, "Gambling and Citizenship" in B. S. Rowntree, <u>Betting Gambling: A National Evil</u> (London, 1905), p. 122.

7. <u>Gentleman's Magazine</u> 206 (1903): 295; <u>Blackwood's Magazine</u> (January, 1903): 55.

8. See for example <u>Contemporary Review</u> 85 (1904): 847; <u>Gentleman's Magazine</u> 302 (1907): 91.

9. R. F. Horton, <u>Hampstead and Highgate Express</u> (10 December 1904), quoted in Hugh Mcleod, <u>Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City</u> (London, 1974), p. 233.

10. See Kenneth Roberts, "A Society of Leisure", in J. F. Murphy (ed.) <u>Concepts of Leisure: Philosophical Implications</u> (Englewood Cliffs, N.Y., 1974).

11. "In a society increasingly devoted to the values of leisure and consumption rather than to those of production, leisure presents itself as an alternative sources of ethical values to those founded in production and work, and which are identified with the middle class." Tom Burns, "Leisure in Industrial Society", in M. Smith, S. Parker and C. Smith (eds.), <u>Leisure and Society in Britain</u> (London, 1973), p. 47.

12. <u>Gentleman's Magazine</u> 268 (1890): 409.

13. <u>Cornhill Magazine</u> (1904): 832-3; <u>Spectator</u> (17 September 1910): 416.

14. "Holidays and Conscience", <u>Saturday Review</u> (10 August 1912): 167-8.

15. "The Holiday Horizon", <u>Saturday Review</u> (29 July 1905): 144.

16. Peter Stearns, Lives of Labour: Work in a Maturing Industrial Society (London, 1975), p. 293.

17. Times (21 May 1904): 11.

18. Stearns, op. cit., p. 293.

19. Robert Roberts, The Classic Slum (Manchester, 1971), p. 32.

20. B. S. Rowntree, "The Industrial Unrest", Contemporary Review 100 (1911): 455. In Things That Matter (London, 1912), p. 215, Chiozza Money detailed the need to adjust the poverty line to recognise not only "necessities" but some pleasures as well.

21. H. G. Wells, "The Spectacle of Pleasure" in What the Worker Wants. The Daily Mail Enquiry, pp. 16, 18. A great number of workers would have been familiar with Robert Blatchford's Merrie England, in which he argues that "the luxury of the rich is a direct cause of the misery of the poor." (London, 1893). Journeyman Press ed. (1977), p. 80.

22. Peter Stearns, "Working-class Women in Britain, 1890-1914", in Martha Vicinus (ed.) Suffer and Be Still (1972).

23. Canon Barnett, "The Recreations of the People", Cornhill Magazine (1907), p. 60; Lady Bell, At the Works (London, 1907), p. 131.

24. Roberts, op. cit. p. 32; B. S. Rowntree, Poverty: A Study of Town Life (London, 1910) p. 77; Masterman, The Condition of England, p. 11.

25. Charles Booth, Life and Labour of the People of London, Final Volume. Notes on Social Influences and Conclusion (London, 1902), p. 60; p. 62; pp. 74-5.

26. For examples see "The Art of Gambling", Quarterly Review 204 (1906); "The Gambling Mania", Contemporary Review 104 (1913); "Coupon-Betting: the Football Fungus", Spectator (22 March 1913): 482-3.

27. Booth, op. cit. p. 58.

28. J. M. Hogge, "Gambling among Women" in Rowntree, Betting and Gambling, p. 81.

29. Bell, op. cit., p. 256; p. 258.

30. Ramsay MacDonald, op. cit., pp. 129-31; Rowntree, "The Repression of Gambling" in Betting and Gambling, p. 172.

31. Charles Booth, Life and Labour, 3rd Series, Religious Influences, Vol. 7 Summary, p. 426.

32. Walter Besant, East London (London, 1901), p. 289; Canon Barnett, "The Recreations of the People". Cornhill Magazine (1907): 58-9.

33. Times (16 September 1901): 7. See also "The Holiday Hunger", Times (24 August 1898); "The Art of Holiday-making", Times (3 August 1909); "Holidays New and Old", Times (7 August 1911).

34. Booth, Notes on Social Influences, pp. 50-1.

35. Saturday Review (6 January 1900): 15.

36. Masterman, "Realities at Home", in The Heart of the Empire (London, 1901), p. 28.

37. "The People at Play", Saturday Review (29 May 1909): 647.

38. Times (3 August 1909): 9.

Chapter 4

SPORT IN NATIONAL LIFE: THE DECLINE OF THE
GAMES ETHOS AND THE RISE OF PROFESSIONALISM

A good deal of criticism was voiced in the late Victorian and
Edwardian years of the way in which the lower orders seemed to be taking
over and "vulgarizing" former middle-class leisure preserves. This was
especially the case in various sporting activities. By the turn of the
century, a major change had taken place in middle-class attitudes towards
sport since the time when the "cult of athleticism" had rendered interest
and participation in games a highly respectable and universally approved
form of recreation. In the Edwardian period not only was the contribu-
tion of the games ethos to the national life being seriously questioned,
but working-class encroachment on sport and the resulting rise of pro-
fessionalism was increasingly a focus of class resentment. To some ex-
tent as well, the debate over sport provided a convenient arena for the
expression of other class feelings, and a variety of typically Edwardian
anxieties.

I

A brief overview of the nineteenth century sports revival will
help to place the Edwardian controversy in context. The origins of organ-
ized sport may be traced to the public schools of mid-Victorian England.[1]
These institutions were undergoing a process of reform at this time, aim-
ed at establishing a more effective system of discipline and control.

The system of prefects was introduced as a policy of "divide and rule", and a reformed canon of sport replaced the rough and unsupervised games pupils had traditionally played in their free time. The new emphasis on sport in the curriculum was carefully calculated to absorb youthful energies which might find less desirable outlets - of either a violent or sexual nature - and a theory concerning the beneficial influences of sport upon character and morals was developed and refined into the games ethos, which became the dominant educational doctrine of the second half of the nineteenth century. It was maintained that the teaching of games would foster habits of co-operation, courage, loyalty, self-control, and the ability to command and obey - all qualities appropriate to the country's future leaders.[2]

A fundamental element in establishing the games ethos as a total ideology in the late Victorian public school was the idea that the secret of national greatness lay in the cultivation of games. As imperialist fervour intensified in the last quarter of the century, the link between games and patriotism grew stronger, and the rigours of sport were pronounced to be the ideal training for both administrative and military duties abroad. As J. A. Morgan writes, "Imperialism, militarism and athleticism . . . became a revered secular trinity of the upper middle-class school . . . By the end of the century it was not the public school system in general but the playing fields that were associated with the imperial battlefields."[3]

The revival of games which began in the public schools played a significant role, from the 1860s onwards, in the expansion of leisure opportunities. It was natural for public school men to carry their

enthusiasm for games into adult life and the result was the growth of
a middle-class "sports cult", revolving mainly around cricket, track and
field, and a reformed version of football. These amusements were re-
commended as legitimate in the mid-Victorian terms because they encour-
aged self-discipline - that vital ingredient of rational recreation - as
well as contributing to the physical strength of a primarily urban and
sedentary middle-class population. The attention directed toward
England's military preparedness after the Crimean War served to emphasize
the value of a physically healthy nation, hence the formation of the
Volunteers who "played their games in the service of England's security."[4]
Darwinists suggested that a concern for fitness would help to preserve
and strengthen the race, and the middle classes turned confidently to
sport as a means of promoting both personal and national well-being.

Sport played a central role in the campaign to promote rational
recreation among the working classes, but in doing so it shared the con-
tradictions inherent in the movement itself. The games cult looked for
some of its justification to the "sentimental associations of social
harmony and the fraternity of all classes in sport", and reformers were
hopeful that if a mutual interest in sport were fostered it would create
a common ground between the middle and working classes, and help to
achieve a degree of social integration. But cultural unity did not
materialize in sport any more than in other forms of recreation, despite
the efforts of various philanthropic organizations in the 1870s and
1880s. For the middle classes, participation in sport could be a valu-
able means of enhancing social status, and the athletic associations
which were formed in these years tended to stress, rather than overlook,

class distinctions; thus exacerbating class antagonisms. The idea of
competing with working men was unappealing on class grounds; it was
also felt that those employed in physical labour might present unfair
competition to "gentlemen amateurs", and even more serious was the danger
that working-class participation would permit professionalism to creep
into respectable sport and destroy the morally vital contrast between
work and play. Encouragement from the wealthier classes thus tended to
be the exception, not the rule, and as Bailey writes, "the popular ex-
pansion of the new sports in the 1870s and 1880s derived a good deal of
impetus from below". The role of the middle classes in the development
of working-class sport was important, however, for "the simple fact that
athleticism was practised by the respectables made it legitimate prac-
tice for the lower orders".[5] The middle-class pioneers of organized
sport also originated the new codes of play which were to become univer-
sal, and as P. C. McIntosh has written: "By the 1890s the Philistines'
revolution of sport had determined the pattern of organisation, the laws
and the techniques both for themselves and for the Populace."[6]

Football was the game which most attracted, and would be most in-
fluenced by, worker participation and interest. In its traditional form
it had been a highly undisciplined and frequently violent popular past-
time and had been suppressed by the employing classes in the early
stages of industrialization. The popular enthusiasm for the sport, how-
ever, had not been extinguished and when the opportunity to join in its
revival was presented in the late nineteenth century the working classes
were quick to respond. Football clubs originated in a variety of ways.
There was a movement in the church which saw sport as a possible means

of making contact with the people, and although "sporting churchmen"
were a minority in their profession, a number of prominent clubs had
their origins in the church or chapel. Frequently, however, the initia-
tive to form a team came from within the working-class membership, and
the institutional base merely provided a convenient starting point for
clubs which dissassociated from the church a few years later.[7] There
was also an increasing trend in the last quarter of the century toward
organizing teams at the workplace; the men employed at the Singer cycle
factory, for example, founded a club in 1883 which was to become Coventry
City in 1898. Such teams were often started by management as part of a
scheme to improve industrial relations, as was the case with the Thames
Ironworks Football Club, forerunner of West Ham United.[8]

Working-class teams did not come into real prominence until the
mid-1880s, and it was public school men who wrote the rules, determined
how clubs should be operated, and founded and ran the governing body, the
Football Association. Uniformity in football was speeded by the intro-
duction of the F. A. Cup in 1871, which also stimulated the competitive-
ness that spurred the formation of more and more clubs, especially in
the North. Working-class teams entered the annual Cup competition, and
although these were dominated in the early years by the gentlemen
amateurs of the south, the growth of working-class clubs soon brought
the question of professionalism to the fore. Initially the F. A. had
been preoccupied with establishing rules and solving problems of organi-
zation, but by the early 1880s attention was concentrated on the contro-
versy raging between the F. A. and other defenders of the amateur status

of the game, and supporters of professionalism - especially the northern

teams which had to find some means of paying players expenses and whose

members and followers recognized the class nature of the conflict. The

climax was reached in 1884 when the F. A. effectively barred profession-

als from playing in the Cup competition, but the threat of northern

secession from the Association led to an abrupt official sanction of pro-

fessionalism in the summer of 1885. The mid-80s also saw domination of

the F. A. Cup shift to the north with the victory of the Blackburn

Olympic over the Old Etonians, and the retreat of public school teams

from competition with working-class clubs. The administration of the

F. A. would continue in middle-class hands, but in the face of rampant

professionalism the middle classes in general "withdrew from the game

which they had once proclaimed as an instrument of moral salvation and

social order". Professionalism did not mean the end of patronage, but

the men who helped to bring new working-class teams into prominence were

less of the established elite than the "self-made" businessmen, whose

motivation was primarily financial rather than a manifestation of some

larger social purpose.[9]

II

Despite the overwhelming acceptance of sport in late Victorian

England, a faint but growing voice of dissent could be heard as the

century progressed. In the public schools there were some headmasters

who recognized that, to a degree, the games ethos had evolved "as a form

of pseudo-reasoning which permitted the obscuring and rationalising of

the real motives for games", and that in satisfying the need for control

other key aims, such as intellectual achievement, had been undermined.
Matthew Arnold was among those who had some fairly early misgivings
about the preoccupation with sport exhibited by the middle classes. In
Culture and Anarchy he observed:

> Population and bodily health and vigour are things which
> are nowhere treated in such an unintelligent, misleading,
> exaggerated way as in England. Both are really machinery;
> yet how many people all around us do we see rest in them
> and fail to look beyond them.[10]

A sense of unease about the role of games in the national life found
expression in the periodical press as organized sport expanded. A turn-
ing point was reached at the beginning of the new century when the re-
lationship between games and patriotism was discredited by the Boer War
fiasco, and the idea gained currency that sport, rather than providing
young men with the perfect training for imperial defense, was more often
an irrelevant source of distraction from the serious business of life.
While criticism, especially of the growth of professionalism, had become
fairly explicit by the 1890s, it was greatly amplified in the Edwardian
years as the condition of English sport became part of the general at-
mosphere of uncertainty in the post-Boer War period.

The prestige of the games ethos suffered partly through associa-
tion: athleticism and imperial greatness had been linked, so now were
sport and the alleged symptoms of decadence. Kipling's poem "The
Islanders", published in the Times towards the end of 1901, possibly
began the vogue of relating England's military inadequacies to an over-
indulgence in trivial amusements. As the Saturday Review remarked a few
years later, "'flanneled fools at the wicket or muddied oafs at the
goals' was not a phrase which enhanced the popularity of its author",

but England's mishandling of the recent conflict had left Kipling willing to imperil his reputation in order to take a stand against athleticism and for "efficiency". The Times excused Kipling's "rhetorical exaggeration" because it felt the poem reflected a growing feeling of unease amongst the British people during the previous two years and that it held "a kernel of grave reproof which none of us can afford to disregard".[11] Letters to the Editor appeared in the Times from indignant athletes and headmasters, but as Samuel Hynes has observed:

> The striking thing about the "Islanders" controversy is that more than two thirds of the letters printed in The Times supported Kipling. In the last months of the South African War the British people were demoralised and looking for explanations of the military inadequacies, and though cricket and football could not be seriously blamed for failures on the veldt, they seemed to symbolize a civilian softness and idleness that was a more palatable explanation of British failures than some alternatives.[12]

The analogy of Rome supplied many a rhetorical flourish to analyses of the effects of sport on military efficiency and the national life. Football games were regularly referred to as "gladitorial displays" and players as "hirelings in the arena", but apart from making use of a convenient journalistic device, some critics of sport evidently thought the British public should be alerted to the similarities between the two empires. Such an article in Blackwood's Magazine entitled "A Nation at Play: The Peril of Games" reminded readers that "Nero fiddled while the imperial city was in flames", and queried:

> May it not happen one of these days that we shall be found going forth to our play rather than to our work and labour while the fate of the Empire is hovering in the balance? Has it not been so with us since the birth of this twentieth century? . . . Let us remember while there is still time that an Empire almost as great tottered to its fall when the citizens of the mother-country grew too serious over

their amusements. Never was England more formidable in the eyes of Europe than when she was Puritan; and it was an ascetic Rome whose legions bore down all opposition.[13]

Growing anxiety about England's military capability was paralleled by mounting concern over her industrial position amongst nations, particularly in relation to Germany and the United States. A piece in the Fortnightly Review in 1901 called "Will England Last the Century?" discussed the contenders for industrial supremacy, compared their leisure habits to those of the English, and was typical in the sensitivity it displayed towards foreign opinion. Denying rumours of England's degeneracy, the writer held that the country was in danger not because of a lack of vitality but due to "an excess of misdirected energy": "Running to sport bids fair to become our British form of running to seed," was his observation. Surveying the "unmistakable signs of a more significant levity in English life", he singled out the preoccupation with sport as the most telling symptom, and included both the employing and the labouring classes in his analysis:

> The wild exultation of a huge crowd round a great football match is the really significant suggestion of the fund of animal force in the nation and of its perverted employment. When the German Emperor casually mentioned upon one of his recent public progresses that English merchants were universally reported to be too fond of sport, he laid his finger upon the very symptom of our complaint. Our weakness as compared with our two greatest competitors is our different views of work . . . The average Briton thinks far more of sport than of his job, and thinks far too much of sport while at his job. The absence of a sufficient mental interest in the things that matter – there indeed we reach to root of the national evil, and the exact definition of England's danger.[14]

Anxiety over the relationship between productivity and sport was often expressed more directly in class terms. As was the case with holidays, sport was an area of leisure which was construed as posing a threat

to industrial discipline, and workmen were repeatedly criticized in the press for letting an interest in football and cricket take precedence over their work. This problem was no doubt highly exaggerated; the Quarterly Review, for example, made much of the fact that a number of the unemployed, having been given relief work, seriously offended the Bristol Corporation Distress Committee by requesting to cease work on Saturdays in time to attend football matches. The author in Blackwood's Magazine drew attention to an incident in Staffordshire where "seventy-eight employees left work in a body to watch the play (football), to the complete dislocation of the colliery", and another periodical, likely referring to the same occasion, claimed that in the North Staffordshire factories "the most drastic measures are necessary to keep the men at their work during the mid-week matches".[15]

Some of these writers were quick to point out, however, that working men themselves were not solely to blame for their disproportionate interest in sport. While "it is the working man who is king of the situation", continued Blackwood's, "one day clamouring for relief on the ground that no work is available, on another, content to leave work and wages to their own devices if only he can look on at a football match," he is only following the example of his social superiors in regarding "play and recreation as the primary objects of existence".

> We notice, perhaps, the shortcomings of the mechanic more clearly, because his increasing wants bear hard upon the pockets of the ratepayer; but we prefer to ignore the fact that men of higher sorts and higher conditions have set him the example of regarding work as a grievance and the excitement of playing or even watching games as a necessity of life.[16]

The question of social leadership played a more prominent role
in the controversy over sport than it did in other aspects of the lei-
sure problem. Some critics viewed class imitation as a major factor in
the current "monomania for games", and believed that the situation
should be dealt with at its source, in the public schools and universi-
ties. An article which appeared in The Times before the Boer War charged
school masters with "hiding behind" the moral aspect of games, using the
games ethos "to deaden the stings of conscience" when they are accused
of trying "to exalt a recreation into the business of life".[17] In the
midst of "The Islanders" controversy The Times remarked that Kipling's
attack on sport had brought publicity to the question of athleticism at
the public schools and expressed the hope that his "pithy taunts . . .
may do more than pages of reasoning to call attention to a great and
growing evil". Although The Times was fully alive to the value of games
in developing character and as a check to "loafing" it found that athlet-
icism had been carried far beyond the healthy use of sport, and was now
out of control:

> Our headmasters and others who direct our educational system
> find themselves face to face with a powerful genie whom with
> the best intentions they have evoked and encouraged, but who
> has grown out of all due proportion, until at many centres
> of so-called higher education our "young barbarians" are "all
> at play".

The products of the public schools were imbued with the notion that "to
go on playing games is the summum bonum of existence. It is these young
men who hereafter . . . will help to fix the standards of national life."[18]

Some writers placed a good portion of the blame with status-
conscious parents, who down-graded intellectual distinction and encouraged

the more visible achievements of athletic and social success, and who

exerted pressure on the schools to hire staff according to their athletic

abilities: "the modern parent is not over-concerned to inquire whether

the teacher's syntax is above suspicion," noted Blackwood's, "but he is

very much interested in the fact that his boy's tutor made a century at

Lord's or stroked the winning University Eight."[19]   Prominence in sport

also brought prestige to the schools, and the expansion of inter-school

competition, combined with the growth of professionalism in the larger

context of organized sport in England, had led to the use of professionals

as coaches for school teams. Some writers felt that this practice was

having a "vulgarizing" effect upon the pupils, who tended to model their

own behaviour and attitudes after those of the revered but socially in-

ferior professional sportsmen.[20]

The idea that sport had been rendered less respectable through

working-class infiltration was the second major element in the decline

of the games ethos. Professionalism was, in fact, at the centre of the

Edwardian critique of sport. The cry so often heard that "pastimes have

become a profession" reflected the anxiety felt by many contemporaries

at the apparent erosion of the proper spheres of work and play which had

been so well established in Victorian middle-class ideology. The bene-

fits of the revived interest in physical recreation were fully acknow-

ledged, but as the critics of the public schools pointed out, when carried

too far it resulted in the perversion of a spirit which was intrinsically

sound - "all vice is exaggerated virtue," ventured the Quarterly Review.

Like compulsory games at school, professional sport was seen by many

middle-class Edwardians as a contradiction in terms. Playing for the

rewards of winning rather than the enjoyment of playing was what distin-
guished the professional sportsman, and too keen a desire to win at
games, at the expense of "good form", was clearly vulgar, and could only
result in the degradation of sport. As the Saturday Review put it in
one of several articles concerning the professional menace to rowing:

> A gentleman will not make of his sport the serious business
> of life; and he invariably cares more for the game itself
> than to win the game . . . There is a wholesome difference,
> for decent men, between work and play. Making a business
> of sport is a confusion of the provinces. Like so many
> forms of vulgarity, it has for its root a lack of the true
> sense of proportion.

Professionals had their function, it was recognized, in most classes of
sport: "All that is necessary to remember is that the professional is
made for the game and not the game for the professional, that he is
ancillary and not principal."[21]

The modern emphasis upon winning at the expense of both pleasure
and gentlemanly conduct so often observed in English athletes was widely
believed to have reached its most extreme development in the United
States. MacMillan's Magazine in 1901 compared American and English atti-
tudes in a piece entitled "National Games and the National Character"
and observed that while the European marvelled at "our absorbing inter-
est in games," American keenness seemed extravagant even to the English-
man.[22] The expansion of organized sport led to the rapid growth of
international contests at the beginning of the twentieth century, and
competition from America in other areas of national life accounted for
some of England's sensitivity towards her sporting rivals. American
successes were generally explained away by pointing to their unabashed
professionalism and their willingness to "do anything to win", which

reflected another aspect of the English critic's unease – namely that

the overly egalitarian United States was having a vulgarizing effect

upon sport which was even more debasing than what was taking place in

England.

The paying spectator was the necessary accompaniment to the

growth of professionalism, and he received a good deal of attention in

the Edwardian press. Blackwood's Magazine noted in 1908 that "the

fashion of watching others play games has taken a great hold upon the

people of this country, and . . . it is a factor to be reckoned with in

our national life", and the Saturday Review saw "the prospect of the

growth of large crowds of partial idlers" as "an evil fraught with ser--

ious national consequences".[23] Gathering in large numbers to watch

games encouraged betting and exposed individuals to the debasing influ-

ence of the crowd, and it eliminated all of the physical and moral bene-

fits attached to games. Looking on at sports had no value in terms of

arresting physical deterioration, and to prefer to watch than to do

seemed a sure symptom of decadence:

> Vicarious patriotism, vicarious exercise, vicarious provi-
> dence – these are our present ideals; and the mad craze
> for "athletics by other people", whether it be regarded
> as cause or effect, is amongst the most ominous and the
> most disheartening symptoms of the hour.[24]

The popular daily and sporting newspapers catered to the mil-

lions of would-be spectators who could not attend the games, and the

exaggerated treatment of sport in the press was another irritant to the

critics of professionalism. Sportswriters were accused of influencing

the quality of play by sitting in judgement upon the players and tempt-

ing them to "play to the gallery like members of modern parliaments",

not to the actual spectators but to "that larger and still less discrim-
inating crowd which follows sport indolently and vicariously in the columns
of the daily press."[25] Particularly offensive, and a relatively new
phenomenon for contemporary observers, was the way "crack sportsmen"
were turned into national heroes or minor gods; in 1908 Blackwood's was
still able to marvel at how "their performances are recorded and exulted
over as the sayings and doings of trusted statesmen or profound thinkers
or eminent divines seldom are."[26] It was also felt that the press erect-
ed false ideals and standards in sport, and that young men with an apt-
itude for games were discouraged from playing by "the grotesque criterion
of excellence set up for them by the descriptive reporter". Their
greatest ambition then became, as the Quarterly Review summed it up:

> to pay others to play for them and make a match an excuse
> for loafing up to the ground, sitting or dawdling away an
> afternoon, and "backing their fancy" - most appropriate of
> phrases - with no regard for the merits of the game and
> with no real advantages moral or physical to themselves.[27]

Professionalism was thus condemned for a variety of reasons,
amongst them that it discouraged participation and encouraged idleness
and betting, that it debased sport through its emphasis upon winning in-
stead of the quality of play, and that it generally left sport bereft of
the qualities which had once made it an ideal expression of the ideology
of rational recreation. The respectability of the reformed games had
been seriously eroded by working-class participation, and in the Edwardian
period the middle classes were attempting to protect what remained of the
amateur tradition, and to erect new lines of demarcation between popular
and gentlemanly sport. The amateur status of rugby football, for example,

was carefully guarded, while in Association football the fight against professionalism had been abandoned and by this time soccer was fully recognized as "the game of the people". In other areas of sport such as cricket, the campaign to protect the game from excessive popular influence continued into the twentieth century.

III

A brief look at the commentary in the periodical press concerning football and cricket will help to illustrate several contemporary middle-class attitudes and concerns. That the evils of professionalism were represented in football at their worst was a unanimous verdict. The prevailing view was that the game had been deprived of any qualities of sportsmanship by an all-exclusive concentration upon winning. Team members exhibited in play a primitive survival instinct which appalled unsympathetic observers, though such behaviour was to be expected, perhaps, from men who were bought and sold like "human chattels" - a feature of professional sport new enough to Edwardians to arouse frequent comment. That players were seldom employed in their own locality was seen as increasing the artificiality of modern sport, rendering team allegiances meaningless, and eradicating the sense of obligation men might feel to represent their own community in an honourable fashion. The author in MacMillan's Magazine who compared American athletes unfavourably with the English, exempted Association football players from his general observations, for he felt that they freely resorted to "devices of such perverse ingenuity" as would shame American players:

> The professional football player, when he can avoid the
> argus-eyes referee, will use every trick he knows to damage
> any prominent opponent he can. If he thinks it worth while
> to face the penalty he will openly commit his "intentional
> fouls" to use the ugly phrasing of the football rules.[28]

There was repeated mention in such articles, in tones of dismay and revulsion, of the recently invented "intentional foul" as the epitome of professional football's perversion of the spirit of true sport.

But as football had already been excluded by the turn of the century from the canon of rational recreation, the greatest source of concern in the Edwardian years was not the fate of the game itself but what the game was doing to the national life: in 1902 Herbert Spencer pointed to football as a prime example of what he termed the "rebarbarisation" of English society.[29] For the vast majority it was a game to be watched rather than played, but the emotional involvement of both players and spectators made the modern game reminiscent in some ways of the unreformed version of the sport. Now, however, the unruly behaviour which accompanied it took place on a mass scale,[30] and football served as the main focus for the Edwardian critique of the crowd.

Commentary on the volatile nature of the football crowd was well underway in the 1890s. An article in The Nineteenth Century in 1892 entitled "The New Football Mania" observed that "the new football is a far more effectual arouser of the unregenerate passions of mankind than either a political gathering or a race meeting . . . There is no mistake about it: the exercise is a passion nowadays and not merely a recreation". The writer conveys some of the colour of these games by describing the multitudes in attendance primarily in terms of their strong smell and language; they flock to the fields "in their workaday dirt, and with

their workaday adjectives very loose on their tongues", and are given to
forgetting themselves in ferocious cries of " 'Down him'! 'Sit on his
chest!' 'Knock their ribs in!'" - addressed to the players "in no play-
ful mode be it understood". He quotes a "typical" observer who regarded
football as a very bad "symptom":

> "It's ruining the country. The young men talk of nothing
> else. Their intellect all goes into football. They can't
> do their work properly for thinking of it. Never saw such
> a state of affairs in my life. The lower middle and the
> working classes may be divided into sets: Fabians and foot-
> ballers, and, 'pon my word, it's difficult to say which is
> the greatest nuisance to the other members of society."[31]

Ten years later the criticism had become more specific. In all
the areas of Edwardian national life where the over-emphasis of sport was
seen as a menace to efficiency or morality, football was the prime tar-
get of disapprobation. The game of the people was deemed a hindrance in
terms of physical efficiency; as the Quarterly Review noted in 1904:
"unless the spectators get their exercise in breaking down the turn-
stiles or battering obnoxious referees, we are driven to wonder how our
national physique is to be improved by the national game".[32] Industrial
efficiency allegedly suffered whenever employees decided to "strike work"
and go off to the playing field, not to mention their constant preoccupa-
tion with discussing the last game and betting on the next while on the
job. As for the question of national defense, the middle classes did
not relish having to rely upon the weak and volatile, football-besotted
masses to defend England when the need might arise. Masterman observed
the crowd at the Crystal Palace for the Cup Final and doubted that "that
congestion of grey, small people with their facile excitements and their

little white faces inflamed by an artificial interest" could be relied
upon in a time of trial.[33] The author of a piece called "Football
Fever" in MacMillan's Magazine pointed out that the "disease" was even
worse in the industrial North and Midlands than in the south of England.
He recounted the reaction of the crowd at a game he attended almost as
if he were describing the behaviour of an alien race:

> When the game is quiet the vulpine and sodden faces are
> eager, but not happy; when an exciting phase occurs the
> general expression is one of malignant anxiety, here broken
> by an outburst of frantic disappointment, there by one of
> savage joy . . . Once at a famous North Country ground I
> saw and heard half a crowd of 20,000 people turn upon a
> poor referee who had done something distasteful, while the
> other half applauded his action. The spiteful yells which
> arose, the torrents of foul abuse which were poured forth,
> the fierce brandishings of sticks and fists, the almost car-
> nivorous expression on the passion-deformed faces, made up
> a terrible picture of an English crowd taking its pleasure
> on a Saturday afternoon which I shall never forget.[34]

The vulgarization of football, however, was by this time an accepted
fact; its main value now was to serve as a highly visible reminder of
the threat to other areas of sport.

Unlike football, cricket maintained its respectable image through-
out the rise of organized sport. Professionals had long been an accepted
part of the game, and in the nineteenth century, "the distinction between
amateur and professional . . . sat so easily on the game that it impres-
sed itself upon the national vocabulary as a synonym for mutual and ami-
able discrimination".[35] The gentlemen amateurs were in firm control and
could protect the game from corrupting influences. In the early years of
the twentieth century, however, the problems afflicting other branches
of sport began to play havoc with cricket - the takeover by professionals,
the vulgarizing effect of appealing to a large spectatorate, the debasing

influence of the press: "The outlook for cricket is dark," mourned the

Saturday Review in 1909. "Every lamentation is justified." The game

had long served as "a metaphor for the ideal society": Ford Madox Ford,

predicting its ruin through over-specialization, professed cricket to

have "a national value of the very highest kind, and a mystical value

too . . . playing cricket is synonymous with pursuing honourable cour-

ses."[36] Each inroad made by professionism signified not only the end

of middle-class hegemony in the game they regarded as their own, but

symbolized the passing of cherished ideals and distinctions.

As in football, the growth of professionalism in cricket reflected

broader trends in social and economic life in Edwardian England. It was

widely observed that cricket, like so many activities, was becoming a

business, requiring a high degree of specialization to achieve success,

and that middle-class players now had difficulty meeting its demands.

The Fortnightly Review took a keen interest in the fate of cricket, and

in 1910 it declared the "antagonism between first-class cricket and earn-

ing one's living" to be "the real contemporary crux": "The danger that

has overwhelmed football is menacing cricket, namely, that the first-class

game should fall into the hands of professionals."[37] Many amateurs

could no longer afford to be involved in county cricket without some

monetary compensation, and when this was provided it upset the equilibrium

between amateur and professional and caused some resentment. Philip

Trevor, speculating on "The Future of Cricket" in the Fortnightly Review,

remarked on the professionals' dissatisfaction and their failure "to

appreciate some of the finer distinctions that are drawn; they are unable

in many cases to recognise the justice of some of the social barriers

that are artificially preserved; and the result is some loss of res-

pect."[38] Professionals were tempted to claim for themselves the same

treatment and advantages as the amateurs, challenging, for instance, the

ruling that they must enter the playing field through a separate gate.

The Fortnightly Review's reaction to such an incident at the Essex

County Cricket Club revealed considerable class sensitivity:

> As well might the workmen at a printing establishment
> insist upon passing through their employer's private
> office, when going to or from their work, instead of
> using the door provided for them. All thoughtful sports-
> men were grieved at the rebellious spirit shown by the
> professionals who refused to obey orders . . . The level-
> ling up (and down) process has not yet removed all social
> distinctions in this country, and until these disappear
> the ordinary usages and observance should guide the con-
> duct of professional cricketers as it does that of their
> peers in other walks of life.[39]

Little could be more provoking to middle-class cricket enthusiasts than

to have their game continuously judged and analyzed by newspapers aimed

at an undiscriminating, mass audience. It was the "gutter press" which

the author accused of upsetting the happy relations between amateurs and

professionals (based on the latter knowing and keeping their place) by

encouraging disobedience in the matter of entrance gates.

In no area of sport, in fact, was the vulgarizing effect of the

working-class spectatorate more deeply resented or more clearly expressed

in class terms. As usual, Blackwood's Magazine was especially eloquent

in this regard. In an article which appeared in 1912, the author dismis-

sed the spectators' views of the game as irrelevant and out of place:

"Cricket was not made for the spectators, and if they do not like it they

may stay at home." He then revealed how he perceived the relationship

between the "corruption" of modern cricket and mob rule:

> It is easy for them to understand the rough-and-tumble of
> a football match, and with luck they may see a man break
> his leg, when one member of the league opposes another.
> But cricket demands for its appreciation a subtle know-
> ledge, which large crowds do not possess . . . The truth is,
> the one and only curse of cricket is the "spectator". He
> was invented with gate-money, test matches, international
> sport, and the other enemies of leisure and good-fellowship.
> When cricket is played for profit, and profit alone it
> ceases to be a game, and becomes the foolish plaything of
> the majority. And if a swift return be not made to the
> ancient habit, then mob will dictate to the players how
> they shall play, as the mob dictates to the demagogues how
> they shall speak.[40]

Apart from the erosion of class barriers in cricket, the growth

of professionalism was held to have a damaging effect on the quality of

the sport. Unlike in football, the professional cricketer's consuming

desire to win was manifested in excessive caution; they played well but

"the very necessity of earning their living at it prevents them from tak-

ing those sporting risks which are the very salt of the game".[41] This

was a common complaint. The fear of "getting out" was symptomatic of

the general lack of boldness in modern cricket, and was suggested by

the Saturday Review, with characteristic over-statement, as the source of

much distress:

> What is the matter with cricket, and why are counties on
> the verge of bankruptcy? The matter with cricket is that
> batsmen do not hit the ball . . . The batsmen might get
> out if he hit it; he might fail to reach the coveted
> hundred! Anything more depressing than these displays of
> inactivity it would be difficult to conceive . . . "The
> play's the thing"; let us have it.[42]

"Risk, dash, personal sacrifice and a slight element of personal danger"

- these were the qualities worthy of the national game, and which were

now fast disappearing as the professional's preoccupation with merely

avoiding defeat replaced gentlemanly daring and sportsmanship on the playing-field.

The modern organization of cricket was also viewed as fatal to the sport. One writer commented that there are "too many matches and far too little real cricket", and another blamed the County Championship which "extends over and monopolises the whole season" for a great deal of the "insufferable dullness of modern cricket".[43] With the need to pay professionals and the "expenses" of amateurs, first class cricket had become dependent upon gate-money, and the development of the game as a spectator sport led to a number of technical changes - widening the wicket, levelling the playing surface to permit higher scores - each in its turn the source of a minor controversy. The Spectator was not exceptional in viewing rule changes aimed at increasing gate-money as inviting certain decay, and the Quarterly Review summed up the conservative position when it warned that "there are few more fatal symptoms than an unnecessary demand for tampering with a code".[44]

The crowd had monopolized football, and critics feared that if cricket were subjected to the same influences it would meet a similar fate. Public school men nurtured on games retained a particularly fond attachment to cricket which they were unwilling to relinquish, but the exaggerated and emotional tone of many articles concerning the sport in these years suggests that for middle class Edwardians there was a symbolic connection between the "decay of cricket" and their own insecurity in the face of rapid social change.

The dominant theme of working-class takeover in sport is highly

suggestive of the wider apprehensions of the middle classes in these
years. In one sense, the problem of sport was "real" in that cherished
values and modes of play were being overwhelmed by a new set of prac-
tices and standards which they quite legitimately resented. But as was
true of leisure attitudes generally, the critique of sport contained
elements of both projection and displacement. The middle classes were
aware of the fact that they had originated the cult of athleticism, and
now that the games ethos had been discredited they were more self-
conscious about their own enthusiasm for sport. Another form of middle-
class involvement, which was seldom alluded to in the periodical press,
was the role of the businessman engaged in organizing and promoting
professional sport, who was responsible to a considerable degree for the
direction and form of its growth, as Stephen Yeo has shown. What is
important in understanding the kind of commentary which did appear is
that it was motivated only partially by a concern for sport itself, and
for the most part was not aimed at investigating the underlying circum-
stances of the growth of organized sport. Most significant is that each
of the characteristics described - the mass spectatorate, the "crack
sportsman" as national hero, the catering of the press to working-class
interests, and each instance of unnecessary "tampering with a code"
had its parallel in the broader mood of critical uncertainty as the
middle classes faced the dawn of twentieth century democracy.

NOTES

1. There are several essays on sport in B. Simon and J. Bradley (eds.) The Victorian Public School (Dublin, 1975).

2. J. A. Morgan, "Athleticism: A Case Study of the Evolution of an Educational Ideology" in Simon and Bradley, pp. 156-7.

3. Ibid. p. 167. Also see Norman Vance, "The Ideal of Manliness", in Simon and Bradley.

4. Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England, p. 126 and see Chapter 6.

5. Ibid. p. 129; p. 140; p. 138.

6. McIntosh, p. 74.

7. Bailey, p. 138-9.

8. See Charles Korr, "West Ham United Football Club and the Beginnings of Professional Football in East London, 1895-1914". Journal of Contemporary History 13 (April, 1978).

9. For the development of individual amateur clubs into business enterprises see Korr, op. cit., and also Stephen Yeo, Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis, pp. 188-96 for details on the Reading Football Club.

10. Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy (L &don, 1869) quoted in P. C. McIntosh, Sport in Society (London, 1963), p. 74.

11. Saturday Review (17 July 1909): 78; Times (4 January 1902): 9. "The Islanders" was a denunciation of England's complacency. This frequently quoted stanza attacked the pastimes which distracted young men of all classes from their imperial obligations:

    And ye vaunted your fathomless power and ye flaunted your
        iron pride
    Ere-- ye fawned on the Younger Nations for the men who could
        shoot and ride!
    Then ye returned to your trinkets; then ye contented with your
        souls
    With the flanneled fools at the wicket or the muddied oafs
        at the goals.

    Nor was the reproof quickly forgotten: "That phrase", wrote Orwell in the early 1940s, "sticks like an arrow to this day." Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters II, p. 218.

12. Samuel Hynes, The Edwardian Turn of Mind, pp. 21-2.

13. "A Nation at Play: The Peril of Games", Blackwood's Magazine (Jan. 1904): 21, 31.

14. "Will England Last the Century?" Fortnightly Review 69 (1901): 24-5.

15. "Sport and Decadence", Quarterly Review (1909): 495; Blackwood's Magazine op. cit., p. 24; "Some Tendencies of Modern Sport," Quarterly Review (1904): 495.

16. Blackwood's, op. cit. p. 24.

17. Times (2 September 1897): 7.

18. Times (15 January 1902): 9.

19. Blackwood's Magazine, op. cit., p. 25. Also see the Times (20 September 1900): 9.

20. Times (15 January 1902): 7. Also see Quarterly Review, op. cit., p. 501; Saturday Review (30 July 1904): 130-1.

21. "Work and Play", Saturday Review (27 July 1912): 104; "Some Tendencies of Modern Sport", Quarterly Review, op. cit. p. 498.

22. "National Games and the National Character", MacMillan's Magazine 85 (1901-2): 296.

23. "Sport and the Territorials", Blackwood's Magazine (September 1908): 303; Saturday Review (30 July 1904): 131.

24. Quarterly Review, op. cit., p. 502.

25. Ibid., p. 501.

26. Blackwood's Magazine, op. cit. p. 303; also see H. W. Massingham, "The Modern Press and Its Public", Contemporary Review 98 (1910); "Sport, the Press and Henley", Saturday Review (17 July 1909); 78.

27. Quarterly Review (1909), op. cit., p. 501.

28. MacMillan's Magazine, op. cit., p. 298.

29. Herbert Spencer, Facts and Comments (1902) pp. 128-9, quoted in Bailey, op. cit., p. 144.

30. Attendance figures for Cup Finals give an indication of the growth of the spectator crowd:

1871-2 at Kennington Oval	2,000	
1880-1 at Kennington Oval	4,000	
1890-1 at Kennington Oval	23,000	
1900-1 at Crystal Palace	110,802	Source: P. C. MacIntosh

31. The Nineteenth Century 132 (1892): 622; 627-8; 630.

32. Quarterly Review (1904), op. cit., p. 139.

33. C. F. G. Masterman, The Condition of England, p. 132-3.

34. "Football Fever", MacMillan's Magazine 89 (1903-4): 278.

35. Bailey, pp. 144-5.

36. Saturday Review (10 June 1909); Bailey, p. 128; Ford Madox Ford,
     The Spirit of the People (London, 1907), p. 164.

37. "Youth in Cricket", Fortnightly Review 93 (1910): 980.

38. Fortnightly Review 86 (1906): 528.

39. "Professionalism in Sport", Fortnightly Review (1900): 156.

40. Blackwood's Magazine (August, 1912): 255-6.

41. Fortnightly Review 93 (1910): 980.

42. "Cricket and Its Critics", Saturday Review (14 June 1913): 737.

43. "What is Wrong with Cricket?", Fortnightly Review 93 (1910):
     1184; "Cricket as a Game", Fortnightly Review 84 (1905): 717.

44. "The Decay of English Games", Spectator (16 May 1903): 774-5;
     Quarterly Review, op. cit. (1904): 135.

Chapter 5

LEISURE AND THE NATION'S MORALS

In the Edwardian years the question of the moral influence of popular amusements remained, as it had been in the previous century, a central issue in the leisure controversy. The Victorian recreation reformers had waged the Battle of the Music Halls because they viewed this leisure form as a menace to working-class morality, as well as an agent of cultural debasement. When its rationalization was achieved through a combination of reform pressure and entrepreneurial acumen, the focus of attack shifted to the problem of literacy and the vast moral and cultural implications of a newly-created mass reading public.

I

The music hall was a prominent institution in the Edwardian entertainment industry, a business enterprise which had absorbed millions in capital, and now possessed the broadest public appeal of its entire history. It was not by any means, however, a focal point of the Edwardian leisure problem, a circumstance in sharp contrast to its role in the Victorian controversy and the attention it received from the recreation reformers of the 1870s and 1880s. It is worth speculating upon the reasons for the comparative lack of concern shown by the social critics of the early twentieth century towards the music hall, not only in terms of understanding its subsequent decline, but for the insight which may

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be gained into the underlying assumptions which influenced Edwardian
leisure attitudes.

The mid-Victorian origins of the music hall as an outgrowth of the
public house are well-known. A great many halls, accommodating an aver-
age of fifteen hundred patrons, were built during the boom of the late
1850s and early 60s, and ths music hall of this period has been described
as a "prototype modern entertainment industry". Many of the halls were
thoroughly commercialized, large-scale operations, meeting a need for a
new working-class leisure outlet and attracting a mass paying audience.
The new industry absorbed considerable capital investment, and exhibited
a steadily growing tendency towards monopoly in the hands of a few big
proprietors as the century wore on. The artists were fully professional,
increasingly distanced from the audience (unlike the earlier informality
of the free-and-easy) and marketed as "stars" by a management exercising
a growing control over their performances. With consolidated ownership
and the greater mobility of the stars through improvements in transpor-
tation, the style and content of music hall fare became more and more
standardized throughout the country. Many of the characteristic features
of professional sport, when it became a full-fledged entertainment indus-
try at the end of the century, were first witnessed at least a generation
earlier in the Victorian music hall. Among these were its commercial
organization on a national basis, the large audience or spectatorate,
the subordination of the performers' or players' freedom to the success
of the enterprise, and the development of the "celebrity" and the "fan".

The bulk of the nineteenth century music hall attendance was made

up of the better-paid artisans and clerks. The big city halls attracted certain "fringe elements" from the middle classes and the aristocracy, but the working classes predominated and determined the tone and content of the entertainment. The larger proprietors attempted to attract a higher class clientele, but generally failed to do so before the 1890s, because the vulgarity of the music halls placed them off-limits to the vast majority in the middle classes. As Bailey has noted, the Times in 1883 detected "a kind of class discrimination in reverse" when it charged that the halls "intensify the tendency of the nation to become two".[2] Middle-class observers were not wholly critical, however; some saw the halls, which families could attend together, as a valuable socializing agent in urban life, which also served to lure the people away from the pub.

The religious and temperance groups which comprised the recreation reform lobby were much less tolerant. Their hostility arose in part because of the sale of strong drink on the premises, and also in reaction to the sexual suggestiveness of the music hall songs and singers. Their campaign against the halls was part of what they viewed as a civilizing mission to the working classes. Counter-attractions like the Coffee Music Hall were not a success, and the reformers' main strategy was to contest the annual renewal of licenses "on the grounds of the moral dereliction of the proprietors".[3] Demonstrations were also staged outside the halls in the 1880s, and Christian Socialist leader Stewart Headlam, with some backing from the Working Men's Clubs, led a counterattack in what became known as the Battle of the Music Halls. The halls

underwent a number of changes in these years; many proprietors, wishing
to safeguard their licenses, took on the role of "moral vigilantes" and
attempted to purge the performances of vulgarity as well as critical
allusions to members of government and the London County Council, royal-
ty, religion and the law. The alterations were not undertaken entirely
or even primarily in response to reform pressure, however, for some of
the changes were recognized as good business practice, making more effi-
cient and profitable management possible. The censored artist and sub-
dued audience reduced opportunities for vulgarity but also facilitated
control over the programme and "a maximum exploitation of time and re-
sources": "Applying the disciplines of respectability to audience and
performer was part of a general rationalization of music hall opera-
tions."[4] A change in the kinds of entertainment offered was part of this
process; such features as short dramatic sketches - much easier to con-
trol than the ad lib, comic singers - became more common, and by the
1890s music no longer predominated in the halls. The variety theatres,
as they were increasingly called, had aimed at respectability and had
succeeded in breaking down, to some extent at least, the class barriers
in music hall attendance.

By the turn of the century, the music hall had been universally
recognized as an established institution in English life. The Contempor-
ary Review in 1900 admitted that through its appeal to the public and its
importance in the economy the music hall had become "a power in our
midst", and the Saturday Review declared it to be "one of the accepted
facts of the day . . . the music hall is as certain, as serious a fact as

democracy".[5] The variety theatres in central London now attracted a

cross-section of all social classes, and the major syndicates were

building halls in the suburbs catering for the more refined tastes of

that rising portion of the middle classes who no longer viewed such

entertainment as a challenge to their respectability. Comment on the

halls was almost non-existent in the Edwardian press, and if acceptance

can be measured by lack of criticism, it may be concluded that the music

hall played little part in the contemporary leisure controversy. The

social investigators took some interest in the predominantly working-

class, local halls, but for the most part they appreciated the fact that

for those who could afford to attend, the music hall offered not only

amusement and relaxation, but helped to provide a sense of community and

mutual appreciation of both the pleasures and hardships of working-class

life. Lady Bell and Charles Booth would have agreed with Walter Besant,

who declared the halls were places "frankly of amusement, and for the

most part, I believe, vulgar enough, but not otherwise mischievious".[6]

The music hall received some minor criticism from the National Crusade

for Public Morals in 1910 with regard to its effect upon working-class

sexual morality,[7] but by this time such voices of protest emanated almost

exclusively from the conservative clergy. The periodical press paid

some passing attention to the halls towards the end of the pre-war period.

One writer in the Saturday Review in 1911 claimed that he detected a

degree of "re-vulgarization" in the entertainment, but he reversed his

theme in the following week in a piece entitled "The Devulgarising of

the Music Hall", in which he complained that the halls were losing their

distinctive character through trying to copy the theatres and opera houses.[8] A letter to the Editor in the same issue expressed what seems to have been, from limited evidence, a typical point of view when he proclaimed that "in no single department of our vast body politic has such an upward advance been made as has characterised the music halls during the last fifteen years".[9]

It was in 1912 that the music hall reached its height of respectability and fatal apotheosis in the Royal Command Performance. The artists and acts were carefully screened, to the exclusion of the most vital - if vulgar - of music hall stars, Marie Lloyd, and what remained was a "rather dull performance which could not by the wildest stretch of imagination be called typical of the English music hall".[10] However atypical, the Command Performance is often regarded by historians as having administered the "final kiss of death" to the music hall, as D. F. Cheshire writes: "After the Royal Show music hall's fortunes declined sharply. The respectful reception accorded the performers at the Palace by a predominantly establishment audience did not please those who admired music hall for its vulgarity and brash common touch."[11]

The loss of vulgarity was the theme of one of the last articles to appear on the music hall before the war. John Palmer wrote in the Saturday Review in April, 1914:

> People who think that our London entertainment should reflect all aspects of London life have long regretted the increasing respectability and pretentiousness of the London music hall. I understand that the London music hall once stood for a definite and a useful ideal. It was a place where people could be vulgar . . . Vulgarity today has no where to lay his head.[12]

The ultimate purge occurred with the gradual displacement from the

audience of the people for whom the music hall had been created. Charles

E. Hands presented the working-class point of view in "A Common Person's

Complaint" in the Daily Mail in 1913.   The music hall as a place of

popular entertainment, he maintained, had almost ceased to exist in

London or anywhere else in the kingdom. In a delightful reversal of the

rhetoric of the middle-class press, he charged that "the conquering

hordes of the upper and middle classes . . . have taken music halls from

us". The much-praised "improvements" in the halls "amount to no more

than the exclusion from the auditorium of the vulgar working-class popu-

lation", through the replacement of the pit seats in the London theatres

by stalls "at the popular price of seven and sixpence or half a guinea

a-piece", and "the re-building of the little local halls as palaces and

empires and hippodromes . . . with such expanse of marble and gilding

and emergency exits that we could not get past the box office". Hands

concluded:

> Out of the population of London there are five million of us
> who habitually stop away from the music halls. Believe me,
> it is not because we do not want to enjoy ourselves or have
> lost the capacity for enjoyment. We have not left the music
> halls. The music halls have left us.[13]

Middle-class acceptance of this kind of recreation for themselves

was far from unanimous, and of course workers still attended the halls in

large numbers. The "takeover" which Hands described, though partial, had

a neutralizing effect upon music hall entertainment, which resulted in

the loss of many of its characteristic qualities, and helps to explain

its inability to survive growing competition from other leisure forms,

especially the burgeoning cinema. The direction of the takeover, with

the middle classes adopting and altering a working-class institution, as
opposed to the opposite situation in sport, is significant in understand-
ing the lack of attention it received from the Edwardian leisure critics.
Also important in this respect is the fact that the music hall had come
into prominence as a leisure industry decades before the uncertain years
of the post-Boer War period. It could not, therefore, by any feat of
imagination, be associated with military inefficiency or physical deter-
ioration, and a connection between this amusement and "the condition of
England" was seldom drawn. The scale of the entertainment had been dwarf-
ed by the rise of spectator sport, and the music hall audience was no
longer impressive, or menacing, in terms of its size; nor was it, in
the large London halls at any rate, dominated by members of the working
classes. Clerical critics were still concerned with its effect upon
morality, but devoted much more of their energy towards the problem of
"noxious literature", which now reached a far greater proportion of the
population. Unlike literature and the legitimate theatre, the music hall
was not subjected to any organized, official form of censorship in the
Edwardian period, probably because, devoted as it was to "light" enter-
tainment, it did not present a serious threat to established standards
of morality from "new ideas". While to some degree the music hall assis-
ted "in the removal of the gulf between the classes" by becoming a multi-
class institution, one might also conclude that class sensitivities for
the most part merely shifted in the Edwardian years to other areas of
the leisure debate.

II

"Reading," observed the Times in 1908, "is the commonest form of amusement after talking."[14] A number of factors came together in the late 19th century to bring reading into prominence as a leisure activity. In the middle classes, the utilitarian and evangelical notion that literature must confer a higher benefit upon the reader than mere diversion was gradually discarded, and reading for pleasure became a recognized form of rational recreation. Educational reform was a major element in the Victorian "civilizing mission to the poor", and the Education Acts of the 1870s, which made elementary education compulsory and free for all, resulted in a sudden and widespread rise in working-class literacy. The creation of a vast new reading public, combined with technological advances such as the manufacture of cheaper paper and the use of highspeed presses which permitted the large-scale production of inexpensive books, resulted in a revolution in the English publishing industry. Improved communications made organized distribution possible, and this period witnessed the beginnings of the mass dissemination of books and newspapers which would be characteristic of the 20th century.

Universal literacy had a particularly dramatic effect upon newspaper publishing. From the year 1880 onwards, a variety of entertaining, illustrated periodicals were introduced, which were priced to attract a wide market and consisted mainly of light fiction and brief "pre-digested" news items with eye-catching headlines. The birth of the popular daily press took place in 1896 when Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe) created the Daily Mail, through which, as Holbrook Jackson wrote, "the

political prejudices of the average man and his need for romance by proxy were exploited with phenomenal success".[15] It was aimed at a lower middle and working-class readership, and in three years achieved an average daily sale of over one half million. In 1903 Harmsworth began publishing the Daily Mirror, which was destined to become the daily paper with the largest circulation in the world. The Mail and the Mirror met with some disparagement in their early years, as Asa Briggs has remarked, "the first as the paper for people who could not think, the second (the pioneer of the tabloids) as the paper for people who could not read".[16]

By the turn of the century reading had become an important part of working-class leisure culture. Some workers, albeit a small minority, were attracted to the classics which were being re-issued at popular prices by publishers like Dent and Cassell, or became acquainted with such works as Robert Blatchford's Merrie England and Henry George's Progress and Poverty through the newly formed Workers' Education Association. Relaxing in the evening or on the weekend with a newspaper or some light fiction was the preference of a majority of workers, however. Lady Bell studied reading habits in Middlesborough in some depth and found that books as well as newspapers were read by just over a quarter of the population, nearly half read only newspapers, while a quarter did not read at all. Men, she discovered, adopted reading as a pastime more readily than women did, for their interest was stimulated by fellow workmen, and the breadwinner also had "more definite times of leisure in which he feels he is amply justified in sitting down with a

book". When women read, their tastes ran to romance "with a dash of religion", something to relieve "the greyness of their lives, some suggestion of other possibilities", but "they nearly all seem to have a feeling it is wrong to sit down with a book".[17] As Bell's findings disclosed, newspapers played a more important role in working-class life than did books. By presenting the news of the day in an easy to read format and language, the popular press brought working-class Edwardians more closely in touch with events outside their immediate environment than any previous generation had been, while the sporting news and gambling tips kept workers informed about their other leisure interests. Also important, as one historian has suggested, the popular newspapers provided their readers with "a common universe of discourse".[18]

For the multitude of workers who could afford little else in the way of amusement, reading offered a welcome escape from the monotony of daily life. Late Victorian and Edwardian leisure critics, however, expressed mounting concern over the content of popular newspapers, magazines, and books, and frequently questioned the efficacy of partial and unguided literacy. The debasing influence of mass education upon standards of newspaper publishing was vividly described by Masterman in The Heart of the Empire:

> Each individual has been endowed with the power of reading, and a certain dim and cloudy capacity for comprehending what he reads. Hence the vogue of the new sensational press, with its enormous circulation and baneful influence; the perpetual demand of the reader for fiercer excitement ("more chops, bloody ones, with gristle!") from his papers; and the strenuous competition of the papers, in their fight for his patronage, each to become the most clamorous, lurid, and dreadful.[19]

W. E. Adams, whose widely read volume of memoirs was published in 1903,

blamed inadequate but universal education for creating a market which made it necessary for the press "to play to the groundlings and the gallery" until they became "mere ministers to the passions of the people".[20]   The "giving-the-people-what-they-want formula, as H. W. Massingham called it, was held responsible for the over-emphasis on sport and pleasure and a disregard for matters of real importance to the well-being of the country. "Scores of English journals," he complained, "subsist entirely on the business of chronicling amusements and 'puffing' the trades which live on their patrons."[21] The effect of the press upon morality was viewed by many leisure critics as wholly negative; the detailed reporting of criminal cases and divorce proceedings was believed to encourage delinquency and promiscuity, and many commentators attacked the emphasis upon gambling which degraded the newspaper "to being the organ of the bookmaker".

Criticism of the Edwardian press tended to take the form of a combined attack on the publishers and their readership, but as in other areas of the leisure problem, the forces of demand were generally perceived to exert the greater influence. Masterman and others alluded in passing to the responsibility of the publishers to resist rather than exploit the clamour for vulgarity, and to improve the quality of reading material aimed at the masses, but offered no suggestions as to how they might be persuaded to do so. The very success of the popular dailies and Sunday papers was perhaps enough to discourage any serious analysis of their influence, but there was also a vague assumption operating to the effect that the debasement of the press was part of the price English society had paid for becoming a democracy. More specifically, the

responsibility was frequently laid at the feet of the nineteenth century
education reformers who, in their campaign to make the people fit for
democracy, had placed their faith in the elevating effects of mass
education, and in the working man's capacity for self-improvement
through literacy.

<div align="center">III</div>

The failure of that ideal was a favourite theme in middle-class
periodicals in the early years of the new century. The late Victorian
education reformers and the free libraries movement had associated vice
and brutality with ignorance, and had believed that literacy was eesen-
tial for the moral regeneration of the lower orders. After the initial
goals of universal education and the proliferation of free libraries had
been achieved, however, reformers realized that their expectations were
far from being met and that they were now faced with a new problem of
far-reaching implications. It was discovered that good taste and judge-
ment in reading did not follow automatically from literacy, and that the
commercial suppliers of cheap literature, in which criminal and sexual
adventures were favourite themes, were reaping the benefits of working-
class education. Reformers and social critics feared that reading, in-
stead of improving working-class life, would instead offer further
stimulus to vice and vulgarity. They were also concerned that the mass
dissemination of poor quality reading material would gradually debase
the standard of English literary culture. The free libraries encountered
the dilemma, common to would-be purveyors of rational recreation, of
trying to serve popular needs while at the same time attempting to improve

public taste. As Helen Meller writes of the late nineteenth century, "the challenge now was not ignorance, but 'barbarism'. The uses of literacy was the crucial issue which would make or break the civilisation of the future".[22]

Judging from the commentary in the periodical press, by the Edwardian period working-class literacy was widely regarded to have failed in its civilizing mission. Much of the criticism centred upon the free libraries and their role in popular recreation. "It must be confessed," wrote the Saturday Review in 1905, "that free libraries have so far, like compulsory education and other reforms, justified the prophecies of the cynic rather than those of the philanthropist."[23] Unlike reform campaigns which had languished from lack of interest and support, the free libraries movement had succeeded in creating a flourishing institution, but had failed in its primary goal of moral regeneration. Blackwood's Magazine declared, without enthusiasm, that the twentieth century was "an age of books", in which "fashion and municipal socialism have combined . . . to provide universal facilities for the munching of cheap novels".[24] Blackwood's Magazine, of course, was particularly apt to perceive the reading preferences of the people as proof that the working classes were incapable of improvement through education, and to conclude also that literary culture could not be extended to the masses without suffering debasement. "It is impossible to over-rate the crimes against taste and decency which have been encouraged by philanthropy and superficial education," wrote the author of "Musings with Method" in 1905, and he continued: "Education, indeed, has had a fair trial and been found wanting. The whole country was driven to school

by the iron hand of the law some thirty years ago, and complaints of

vulgarity have been louder and louder ever since."[25]

Vulgarity was not the only vice promoted by literacy; the free

libraries were also criticized for encouraging reading for "the mere

purpose of killing time", and once again a new leisure activity was

associated with dissipation and laziness, and viewed as a threat to in-

dustrial efficiency. The Nineteenth Century, for example, claimed in

1903 that the unemployed habitually spent their days perusing novels

and magazine instead of looking for work. The free library, it was

suggested, was little more than a substitute for the gin-palace:

> The simple truth is that our boasted progress among the
> masses . . . has resulted in little more than exchanging
> one form of dissipation for another, intellectual dram-
> drinking for physical, the sentimental novel or racy skit
> in the free library for the tankard of quartern at the public
> house bar.[26]

This writer expressed another misgiving common among middle-class critics

concerning the content of the free libraries. It was feared that working-

class morality was endangered not only by the "shilling shockers" and

"comic rags" which glorified vice, but by exposure to better quality

writings "for which they are not ripe" - classic literary works which

while not immoral inthemselves, "inflamed the passions and imaginations"

of the volatile, half-educated masses. This assumption that the poor,

due to their natural vulnerability, must be shielded from corrupting

influences by their moral superiors, was an important part of the ration-

ale which lay behind the campaign for censorship in the Edwardian years.

IV

The spread of literacy, the growth of free libraries, the wide
distribution of books whose circulation had been previously limited by
price, and the ever-increasing number of books which questioned accepted
ideas about sex, religion and politics were all factors which stimulated
a campaign for more stringent control over the reading habits of the
English people in the pre-war period. As Hynes writes, "If indecent
art is a poison, it is usually a poison with a class-consciousness,"[27]
and the advocates of censorship displayed a strong class bias in their
belief that the lower orders were especially ill-equipped to resist
contamination. Moral degeneration, caused to a great extent by the pro-
liferation of "noxious literature", was seen as the counterpart of the
physical deterioration thought to be over-taking the labouring population.

Censorship was by no means a class issue alone, however. Conser-
vative Edwardians were keenly interested in restricting the exposure of
members of their own social strata, especially women and the young, to
literary works which challenged conventional morality. As was noted in
an earlier chapter, the late 19th century witnessed the gradual disinte-
gration of the Victorian middle-class moral consensus, and literature
played a vital part in reflecting and disseminating new ideas about social
organization and personal behaviour. The intrusion of realism, feminism
and socialism into high literary culture, as well as the evident popul-
arity with middle-class readers of ephemeral works like the "New Woman"
novels of the 1890s, were developments which aroused the mounting irri-
tations and opposition of those who possessed a stake in suppressing

rival moralities and new definitions of respectability. It is important
to recognize that in the censorship campaign sexual frankness or radical
views were condemned with equal vigour and self-righteousness regardless
of whether they appeared in works of quality or in novels which were
deliberately and purely sensationalist; literary merit on its own was
not a criterion which concerned the guardians of morality and the status
quo in Edwardian England.

The sudden increase in novels dealing with sex and crime was the
principal motivation behind the movement against "indecency in litera-
ture" which was organized in the early 1880s. The National Vigilance
Association was founded in 1885; it was the early form of an organiza-
tion, in Hynes words, "of unofficial censors that was to act as England's
moral watchdog for the next several decades".[28] The mass dissemination
of cheap novels was not its only concern, however; towards the end of
the decade the influence of continental novelists such as Zola, and play-
wrights, especially Ibsen, upon English literary culture was also a
source of considerable distress. Native writers too were displaying an
insidious tendency towards "realism" in their works; when Thomas Hardy
published Jude the Obscure in 1895, for example, he came under virulent
attack from many critics and readers for resorting to "vulgar sensation-
alism".

The anxiety which followed the Boer War considerably heightened
the concern over the effects of indecent literature on the national life.
Preoccupied with their country's military security, conservative elements
in society were interested in assessing England's moral stamina, operat-
ing under the principle (which Hynes refers to as "the Galahad concept")

that "moral and martial strength" were somehow related.[29] The problem
was frequently expressed in terms of race and racial survival. Perni-
cious literature, by encouraging self-indulgent attitudes and behaviour,
was seen as contributing to the falling birth-rate, the growth of a
degenerate lower class, and national decline. The controversy surround-
ing the publication of H. G. Wells Ann Veronica is a case in point. It
seemed quite logical to J. St. Loe Strachey, editor of the Spectator, to
draw a direct connection between Wells' defense of the unconventional
sexual morality of his heroine and the nation's faltering strength.
As he wrote in his attack upon Wells' "poisonous book", "Unless the
institution of the family is firmly founded and assured, the State will
not continue."[30] For conservative middle- and upper-class Edwardians,
the new social attitudes advocated in such works seemed to endanger
national security by depreciating the very principles upon which a stable
society must be based. These standards were believed to be mutually
supporting; hence when Wells attacked conventional sexual mores, he was
accused of undermining not only the institution of family life, but
religion, national defense and racial survival. It was no coincidence
that as war anxiety mounted between 1908 and 1910, the campaign for
literary censorship gained sudden momentum.

A large number of agencies dedicated to raising the moral tone of
the nation were in existence by the Edwardian years, of which the
National Social Purity Crusade, founded in 1901, was the most widely
publicized. Voluntary and unofficial, these organizations still managed
to have a pervasive influence on English society before the Great War.

Their leadership was mainly composed of clergymen, and they enjoyed the support of the Church of England and some cooperation from the Metropolitan Police in their programme of moral vigilance. Some members of Parliament signed their manifestos, although their activities did not receive official government sanction. These organizations gained no following amongst the serious intelligentsia, and only moderate support in the press. Strachey, for example, was the only London editor who actively championed the aims of the National Crusade for Public Morals which held its famous conference in London in 1910.

This event marked the pinnacle of moral reform fervour in pre-war England, and attracted the broadest base of support the movement had ever enjoyed. A considerable amount of attention was devoted by its speakers to the moral implications of certain leisure activities. There was some mention of the theatre and music hall, but by far the greatest concern surrounded the problem of immoral literature, against which, in the earlier words of one of the delegates, "the greatest spiritual battle" in modern times must be fought. As the Rev. R. F. Horton declared:

> Immoral writing spreads farther, penetrates more subtly,
> gets a more disasterous hold on the mind, than any other
> form of immorality; it reaches people who would not be
> touched and would keep clean but for this worst and vilest
> and most insidious assault of the devil.[31]

Magazines, newspapers, advertisements, "scandalous postcards" and especially books - everything from sex novels to the works of Marx and Nietzsche - came under attack at the Conference, and English society was described as if it was being engulfed by such material. William Canon Barry, DD., in his address on "Literature and Character: The Influence on a Nation or an Age", observed that "our universe differs from all

previous ones by the deliberate arts of impression which attack us
wherever we go . . . yielding or resisting, we live in this infinite
circle of suggestion ".[32]   A common vocabulary was evident in many of
the delegates' contributions to the Conference. Words and phrases like
"poison" and "infection", "the plague-syndicates" and "moral leprosy"
were interspersed throughout their pleas for reform. The language of
disease was in keeping with the theme of racial degeneration which dom-
inated the Conference's attack on immoral literature. The manifesto
of the Crusade, published in the Times , spoke of such material as
"degrading the racial instinct", and elsewhere its effect on the charac-
ter of the reader was defined as not only an individual disaster but
"an incalculable loss to the race".[33]   The Rev. Barry stressed that no
sin had been more fatal to successive civilizations as the sensual self-
indulgence advertised in much of modern literature, and there was no
differentiation made by most of the speakers between the cheapest novels
and those works which made a serious plea for the higher morality of
the ideas which they advocated. With respect to both, the reformers'
message was the same: the racial instinct was perverted and national
survival was jeopardized when sex was related to self-gratification.
These reformers were essentially Victorian in their concept of morality,
but reflected the preoccupations of the Edwardian age in their emphasis
upon national as well as individual salvation. Their proposed solutions
to the problem, however, tended to resemble those of the previous century;
most spoke against government censorship of literature, their vaguely
defined goal being to exert moral, rather than legal, pressure upon
publishers, writers and readers.

To what extent did they succeed? Likely the greatest contribution
made to the conservative cause by the crusade for public morals was the
assistance it gave to the imposition of a voluntary pre-censorship by
publishers of English fiction. The reformers gave their full support to
the newly founded Circulating Libraries Association, whose aim was to
draw attention to the appearance of objectionable books on the market and
keep their circulation to a minimum. With public opinion running high
on the subject of indecent literature at that time, the circulating lib-
raries were in a vulnerable position, especially as much of their support
came from provincial, middle-class women - the clergymen's greatest
allies - who were alert for "indelicacies" in their fiction and exerted
pressure as consumers for the application of some sort of screening
process. The libraries were in the difficult position of deciding what
to circulate; it was expensive to have to repeatedly withdraw books,
and despite their protestations that the nation's morals were their first
concern, they had much to gain from an economic standpoint from a uniform
system of pre-censorship. The procedure which came into effect was a
very real and pervasive form of literary suppression. It was a secret
censorship, without appeal, for it had no legal existence. Good litera-
ature and bad alike were kept out of circulation; Hynes cites the
example of Balzac's _Droll Stories_ being destroyed in the same haul as
books bearing titles such as _Sexual Abuses_ and _Guilty Splendour_. A
contemporary in the periodical press testified to "the refusal to supply
a subscriber with Henry James' _Italian Hours_ on the ground that it was
not likely to promote the libraries' reputation as circulators of

wholesome literature!"[34] Not only was subscribers' reading restricted, but that of the book-buying public as well, for the circulating libraries controlled two-thirds of the shops selling new books in London. Reader resistance increased in the years up to the war, and writers mounted a campaign opposing the censorship. The conflict continued until the war began, when the imposition of a general government censorship made the issue obsolete.

The reforming zeal which had launched the nineteenth century Battle of the Music Hall thus had its counterpart in the Edwardian campaign against immoral literature. In the case of the music hall, the rational recreation movement triumphed in the sense that managers of these entertainments became convinced that reform was not only necessary in order to ensure their license renewals, but desirable because it would make the halls into more profitable business enterprises as well. The possibilities for success in reforming the reading habits of the people were much more limited. The music hall reformers had a clear focus of attack — the music hall as an institution — whereas reading material originated from a multiplicity of sources and was disseminated through a variety of means. While Edwardian critics of leisure and popular culture were aware that the vulgarity which had been purged from the music hall had, to a considerable extent, taken refuge in the new popular press, these years did not witness any concerted attempt to pressure newspaper publishers into reform. Further research would be needed before an explanation of this fact could be offered, but one can venture to suggest that such a campaign would have been certain to fail

in view of the enormous economic power and public influence of the popular press. The attention of reformers concentrated instead upon exploiting the possibilities for restricting the circulation of books. This they did with the full cooperation of Messrs. Mudie and W. H. Smith, who operated the circulating libraries and enjoyed a large portion of the book-buying market, and who - temporarily at least - found it in their financial interest to impose a system of voluntary pre-censorship. With reader opposition gaining strength towards the end of the period, however, it seems likely that this form of literary suppression would have proved unprofitable and collapsed had the war years not intervened.

There are other ways in which the two movements may be compared which are relevant in the wider context of Edwardian leisure attitudes. The twentieth century reformers were less idealistic than their forebears; they were witnesses to the failure of cultural unity and the "civilizing mission" to transform the working classes, though they were unwilling to accept the breakdown of the hegemony of high Victorian middle-class morality. Unable to place their faith in education as an elevating force, for example, they found themselves now merely fighting a rearguard action against a legacy of uninformed, misguided literacy and its vast potential for "evil". The Edwardian reformers also had a narrower base of support. The clergymen who led the Purity Crusade had the tacit approval of portions of the middle classes, but drew fewer laymen into active participation than had the movement for rational recreation in the Victorian years. In an effort to compensate for their own declining influence and prestige in English society, and to combat

what they viewed as a rising tide of materialism and sensuality, the
Edwardian reformers sometimes resorted to tactics and language more
repressive and reactionary than those of the Victorian era. As Stuart
Mews has written:

> When Puritanism ceased to set the standards for polite society;
> and over-all social agreement was lost as to how respectable
> people should behave, the moral reformers had to fight with
> all the weapons available against the rival moralities which
> made their own claim to universal validity.[35]

The reformers who attempted to protect public morals through censorship
were, in Hynes words, "at war with the twentieth century." In their
efforts to influence contemporary leisure attitudes, they found them-
selves at odds with an increasingly dominant segment of the middle classes
who welcomed the relaxation of the Victorian moral code and the expansion
of a leisure culture not circumscribed by the dictates of "rational
recreation".

NOTES

1. Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England (London, 1978), p. 147.

2. Times (15 October 1883) quoted in Bailey, p. 10.

3. Bailey, p. 161. This brief outline of the reform of the music hall is drawn from the chapter entitled "Rational recreation and the Entertainment Industry: the Case of the Victorian Music Halls."

4. Ibid., p. 167.

5. "Music Halls", Contemporary Review 78 (1900): 134; Saturday Review (17 November 1894): 534.

6. Walter Besant, East London (London, 1901), p. 313. See Booth, Labour and Life of the People of London, p. 53; Lady Bell, At the Works, pp. 128, 134-5.

7. See for example the Rev. Thomas Philips in The National Social Purity Crusade, The Nation's Morals (London, 1910).

8. Saturday Review (14 January 1911): 43.

9. Saturday Review (14 January 1911): 50.

10. H. G. Hibbert, Fifty Years of a Londoner's Life, quoted in D. F. Cheshire, Music Hall in Britain (Newton Abbot, 1974), p. 51.

11. G. Stedman Jones, "Working-class Culture and Working-class Politics in London, 1870-1900: Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class", Journal of Social History 7 (1974): 494; Cheshire, op. cit., p. 52.

12. Saturday Review (25 April 1914): 580.

13. Daily Mail (25 November 1913) quoted in Cheshire, pp. 52-3.

14. Times (9 October 1908): 9.

15. Holbrook Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties (London, 1913), p. 54.

16. Asa Briggs, Mass Entertainment: the Origins of a Modern Industry (Adelaide, 1960), p. 9.

17. Lady Bell, At the Works (London, 1907), pp. 144-6.

18. E. R. Tannenbaum, 1900: The Generation Before the Great War (New York, 1976), p. 230.

19. C. F. G. Masterman (ed.), <u>The Heart of the Empire</u> (London, 1901), p. 8.

20. W. E. Adams, <u>Memoirs of a Social Atom</u> (London, 1903), p. 584.

21. H. W. Massingham, "The Modern Press and Its Public", <u>Contemporary Review</u> 98 (1910): p. 421.

22. Helen Meller, <u>Leisure and the Changing City</u> (London, 1976), p. 103.

23. "Public Libraries and Reading", <u>Saturday Review</u> (26 August 1905): 267.

24. <u>Blackwood's Magazine</u> (October, 1902): 509.

25. <u>Blackwood's Magazine</u> (November, 1905): 711.

26. "Free Libraries", <u>Nineteenth Century</u> 53 (1903): 974.

27. Samuel Hynes, <u>The Edwardian Turn of Mind</u> (London, 1968), p. 259.

28. Ibid., p. 257.

29. Ibid., p. 282.

30. <u>Spectator</u> (20 November, 1909): 846-7.

31. The Rev. R. F. Horton, "Noxious Literature", in James Marchant (ed.), <u>Public Morals</u> (London, 1908), p. 87.

32. William Canon Barry, "Literature and Character: the Influence on a Nation or an Age", in National Social Purity Crusade, <u>The Nation's Morals</u>, op. cit., pp. 123-4.

33. <u>Times</u> (31 May 1911): 5.

34. P. E. Howe, "The Circulating Libraries: Their Complaint and Its Cure", <u>Nineteenth Century</u> 74 (1910): 479. See also Charles Tennyson, "The Libraries Censorship", <u>Contemporary Review</u> 97 (1910).

35. Stuart Mews, "Puritanism, Sport and Race: A Symbolic Crusade of 1911", in G. J. Cuming and Derek Baker (eds.), <u>Studies in Church History Vol. 8 Popular Belief and Practice</u> (Cambridge, 1972), p. 307.

CONCLUSIONS

This survey of Edwardian leisure attitudes has been a limited
one, for the kinds of social criticism which have been used as evidence
have been determined largely by the availability of primary source mat-
erials. There are, however, some observations which may be made with
respect to some of the distinguishing features of the period, and which
point to particular areas of the early twentieth century leisure question
that deserve further exploration.

Access to such sources as working-class newspapers or memoirs
would serve as a balance to the views expressed in the middle-class
press, and provide further insight into the workers' perceptions of their
own recreational opportunities and experiences. Leisure industries aimed
at a mass market expanded rapidly towards the end of the nineteenth cen-
tury, and employed new advertising techniques to attract working-class
consumers who now had more time and money to spend on amusements. A new
"leisure ethic" was promoted through advertising which played a part in
raising the workers' expectations that they, too, had a right to share
in the "new spirit of enjoyment" which was affecting all levels of English
society. Contemporary evidence, plus the research of such historians
as Peter Stearns reveals, however, that only certain segments of the
working-class population, primarily the young, unmarried workers and the
better-paid artisans could actually afford to take advantage of the
widening array of commercial leisure offerings on a regular basis. A
large proportion of the population continued to experience deprivation in
this aspect of their lives, and expectations raised but left unfulfilled

contributed to working-class resentment and unrest. In view of the industrial conflicts which distinguish the latter part of the period, it would be worthwhile attempting to achieve a greater understanding of the role played by leisure attitudes in working-class discontent.

We are not short of contemporary evidence to suggest that class antagonism was a major ingredient of the middle-class leisure outlook as well. Writers in the periodical press were highly critical of popular amusements, and constantly drew attention to class differences in leisure habits. Like their Victorian forebears who had rejected the reformers' call to cultural unity, the Edwardian middle classes sought to preserve recreation as a means of status identification. The need for such differentiation was more pressing in the early twentieth century, now that other class privileges, such as participation in political life, had been eroded. The advent of democracy meant that cultural distinctions had come to be of paramount importance in protecting social barriers.

Much of the Edwardian critique of the leisure habits of the people seems, in fact, to have served more as a means of venting class feelings than an attempt to analyse, in any serious way, the condition of popular culture at this crucial time. In the area of organized sport, for example, middle-class critics produced an endless number of variations on the theme of a working-class takeover, both with regard to the professionalization of teams and the growth of a mass spectatorate. Commentary surrounding the "decay" of modern sport was very often a thinly disguised enumeration of these writers' fears regarding the

democratization and "vulgarization" of English society. While "a con-
tempt for each others' pleasures" contributed to the gulf between the
classes in Edwardian England, it was more the symbolic content of re-
creations than the activities themselves which heightened class resent-
ment.

Another factor which seems to have influenced the middle-class
point of view was the apprehension they felt about their own leisure
habits. They had incorporated - in varying degrees - the leisure ethic
into their own way of living, but they had done so neither unanimously
nor with complete conviction. The consensus of opinion on this and other
moral issues which had been such a unifying and stabilizing force in the
mid-Victorian years was now lacking, and there was no longer any fixed
norm or standard with which to compare one's own behaviour. What seems
to have survived most tenaciously into the twentieth century were the
more negative aspects of the evangelical ethical system; Edwardians
changed their behaviour without necessarily shedding their inhibitions.
The feelings of guilt or misgiving which still accompanied the pursuit
of pleasure - even if only on an unconscious level - were no longer
rationalized by an active system of religious and ethical ideals. The
sense of dissonance which resulted, when considered in combination with
the element of class resentment, may explain the tendency of middle-class
writers to project their own anxiety into a critique of the leisure
habits of the lower orders.

The "late decline of high Victorian idealism," as Samuel Hynes
described it, also helps to account in a more general sense for the degree
of negativity in Edwardian social analysis.[1] The rhetoric of decadence

had a strong appeal to a society undergoing rapid social and intellec-
tual change, but which lacked a dominant ideology with which to inter-
pret or constructively channel these processes. Social Darwinism could
not only explain why England was falling behind as a world power, it
could account for change or deterioration in the national life in terms
of the deficiencies of the English people, instead of by focussing upon
the need for alterations in the social or economic structure. This
viewpoint served conservative interests admirably, for it fostered a
mood of nostalgia for the Victorian past, and imparted a sense of inevit-
ability which justified inactivity or purely reactionary solutions to
social problems. It was a frame of mind not confined to Tories and
churchmen, however; even radical Liberals like Masterman, while they
identified and raised important questions about the quality of English
life, were characterized by a sort of intellectual inertia and a tend-
ency to moralize rather than propose imaginative answers. Hynes writes:

> Their discussions of these problems show how much they were
> the heirs of the Victorian reformers: almost without excep-
> tion they treated social problems as moral problems, and they
> were inclined, having passed moral judgements, to stop short
> of making proposals and to rest on piety.[2]

The Edwardian predilection for lamenting change rather than try-
ing to direct it is evident throughout the leisure controversy. The only
concerted movement for leisure reform which gained coverage in the press
was the campaign for literary censorship, which was wholly repressive
and uninformed by what could in any sense be termed "genuine" cultural
standards. Edwardian critics of the development of modern sport iden-
tified a number of very real and significant problems affecting the
quality of play and opportunities for amateur participation, but by

concentrating upon the "decay" of English games, and using sport as a

forum for airing class grievances, they had a generally unconstructive

influence on this important area of the developing mass leisure culture.

For example, a dominant trend in sport in this period was for working-

class teams, originating at the workplace, church or club, to develop

into professional organizations importing players from all over the

Kingdom to replace local team members. These clubs then became limited

companies, complete with share-holders and a middle-class Board of Direc-

tors. To attribute the rise of spectatorism and the decline of partici-

pation in sport to working-class apathy, as Edwardian critics tended

to do, is to neglect the economic impetus behind the transformation of

workers' clubs into business enterprises. As Stephen Yeo puts it:

> It turns attention away from supply and onto demand. It
> displaces blame away from structures, towards the supposed
> characteristics of aggregates of human beings, often
> called masses.[3]

Yeo's work represents one of the few detailed analyses of the advancing

domination by capitalist modes in leisure at the turn of the century.

What would be of value in a further study of the Edwardian leisure ques-

tion would be an investigation of those individuals who became actively

involved in trying to influence, in a qualitative and creative way, the

development of popular culture in this period. In the research done

for this thesis, which relied heavily upon the middle-class press, only

two such writers were encountered. One of these was Charles Charrington,

a socialist actor who wrote occasionally for the Contemporary Review and

was involved in promoting municipal theatre.[4] The second was George

Macaulay Trevelyan who, interestingly enough, contributed the concluding

essay to Masterman's <u>The Heart of the Empire</u>. It is outstanding in its
clear condemnation of a policy of laissez-faire in recreation, and
caused Trevelyan to be denounced as unpatriotic by the <u>Spectator</u> and the
<u>Times</u>. With regard to the "condition of England," he dismissed theories
of racial decline out of hand: "It is not the decadence of the race but
the chance of economic law that has caused this change . . . Laissez-
faire and mere competition are fast building a hell in heaven's despite."
The problem must, he declared, be faced if it is to be arrested:

> There is no cause for despair, though there is much for
> alarm . . . The modern city man is better than his teachers
> - or rather caterers - who supply him with what they think
> he wants . . . The public house, the cheap newspaper, the
> outward aspect of city life are viler than the city-bred
> man himself. The danger is that they are making him vile.
> They are certainly making him vulgar . . . The natural
> process of modern economy is on the whole toward evil
> rather than good, but the way of salvation does not lie
> backward in vain regret, it consists in deflecting the
> Titan forces with which the modern world is armed from
> purely economic to partly ideal ends.[5]

The rise of a mass leisure culture presented an enormous challenge
to any individual or group seeking to influence its development and to
counter, in a lasting and effective way, the new industries' "natural"
appeal to the lowest common denominator in society. With the decline of
the Church's role in English life, the only national institution which
could have competed with free enterprise in the area of leisure provision
would have been the State, but given the laissez-faire attitude of the
Victorian and Edwardian middle and upper classes towards the activities
of new and profitable industries, it is not surprising that the occasion-
al pleas from men like G. M. Trevelyan and Ramsay MacDonald for govern-
ment attention to the question - for the creation of a "Ministry of

Recreation," for example - went unheeded. The possibility of an alternative or counter-balance to capitalist modes in leisure provision was further discouraged, as this thesis has attempted to show, by the way in which the majority of influential Edwardians responded to social questions in general. The social problems of the period were not really more complex or inter-related than those of the previous century, rather the responses to them had become generalized: the practice of birth control, the professionalization of sport, and the expansion of holidays did not have much in common except that they all had a bearing upon class relationships and to the conservative Edwardian mind were all signs of degeneracy. Class antagonism and national insecurity played an important part in conditioning responses to leisure and to the whole spectrum of social change in this period; they were allowed to obscure the real issues at hand and to encourage an attitude of fatalism which persisted in English national life until the outbreak of World War I.

NOTES

1. Samuel Hynes, <u>The Edwardian Turn of Mind</u>, p. 16.

2. Ibid., p. 60.

3. Stephen Yeo, <u>Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis</u>, p. 18.

4. See Chapter 1, note 14.

5. G. M. Trevelyan, "Past and Future", in C. F. G. Masterman, (ed.),
    <u>The Heart of the Empire</u>, pp. 400; 406-8.

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