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RLST 6020 Mid Term Exam
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Essay Choice 1B

What if the ideas and ideals of G.B. Cutten had taken hold in America? Would there be a state sanctioned leisure police force? Leisure via gunpoint does not sound like an appealing idea. Cutten did not believe that man was evolved enough to handle the responsibilities of leisure choice. In addition to his views on leisure, Cutten was a Eugenicist. He believed in the study of hereditary improvement of the human race by controlled selective breeding. Cutten believed that during their leisure time people could not control themselves, by themselves, and that there was a link between too much leisure and too little morality. Cutten felt that evil and debauchery were human instincts and that hard labor was the necessity required to keep those evils safely locked away inside an individual. Cutten's view of leisure time is that it is an open door to crime and vice.

Cutten believed in the importance of leisure. He felt that the "...proper use of leisure has created every civilization which has ever existed...improper use of leisure has killed each one in turn." (Cutten, 1926). If Cutten is right about the cause for the decline of civilizations, and is right that man is not able to control his lusts in his search for leisure opportunities, then mankind is surely doomed.

I do not believe that an increase in free time is the necessitating factor for an increase in criminal or amoral activities. It is my opinion that criminal

activity is a result of either perceived necessity or greed. People commit crimes in order to achieve a goal that they have set for themselves. Cutten would have us believe that crime is a function of boredom. Or that since people have eight hours of work, eight hours of sleep, and eight hours of “leisure” that if people are not forced to do something “productive” (such as digging holes, moving rocks, or praying to God for moral guidance) during that leisure time, the ugly face of evil will emerge into life, unannounced, and force people to do unscrupulous things.

Our crime rates indicate that people make poor choices in their free time. This should not include professionals whose work is “criminal” or “amoral” in nature. These types of people have un-obligated time after “work” like the rest of us. We are speaking of the man who works his eight-hour day, sleeps his eight-hour night, and in the remaining eight hours breaks into someone’s house, rapes his wife and murders his children; the man who, in his eight hours of un-obligated time, steals a car and robs a bank; the man who drinks away his eight hours while watching “*Wheel of Fortune*”, beating his wife when she guesses the puzzle before he can.

Is it the job of the leisure professional to combat these activities by offering other types of activities? Would the everyman in Cutten’s beliefs even accept these other leisure alternatives if given a choice?

If we assume that crime is a function of boredom, shouldn’t we as leisure professionals do everything in our power to stop boredom, thereby stopping crime? Cutten makes no case for the causes of crime, only that it is a result of not being able to control oneself. So is it more important to teach self-control or is it more important to provide leisure pastimes that help man to get through the day

without committing a crime? Can self-control be taught through leisure at all or does Cutten feel that “proper” leisure activities serve only to keep man from thinking about all of the crime he could be doing?

Certainly leisure services offer many benefits to the participant. While Cutten believes that man has little power to resist the temptation of vice, most modern practitioners believe that becoming self-determined is one of the major benefits of leisure education. “Self-determination is theorized to be an essential ingredient of intrinsic motivation” (Mannell and Kleiber, 1997). If increasing intrinsic motivations by becoming self-determined in leisure is one of the benefits of leisure education, then through the use of leisure programs, leisure professionals will teach participants to choose activities that provide alternatives to the crime, vice and debauchery which Cutten believes lie at the heart of every man.

Cutten, G.B. (1926). *The Threat of Leisure*

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

Mannell, R.C. and Kleiber, D.A. (1997). *A Social Psychology of Leisure*

State College, PA: Venture Publishing, Inc.