

Free Time: The Forgotten American Dream. By Benjamin Kline Hunnicutt. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2013. Pp. vii, 237. \$34.95, paper; also available as an eBook.

doi: 10.1017/S0022050713001058

In this book, Benjamin Kline Hunnicutt seeks to shed light on what he considers to be one of the great mysteries of our time: why did the long downward trend in work hours stall after the Great Depression? In seeking to unravel this mystery, Hunnicutt offers a panoramic view of both philosophical writings on the intrinsic merit of leisure time and the efforts of labor activists who sought to regulate work hours in the hopes of securing Walt Whitman's "Higher Progress" for the working man and woman. It is the weaving of these two important currents that is the key contribution of this book.

The introduction and chapter 1 review the writings of the nation's founders and early thinkers who linked the advance of democratic freedom to the freedom to spend leisure time in higher order pursuits. Hunnicutt's discussion and excerpts illuminate the progression from the early writings based on theological principles, with the freedom from excessive work being part of the release from Adam's curse, to the Declaration of Independence's secular "pursuit of happiness," achieved in part by the gift of leisure hours that could be used to pursue "man's higher destiny." As Hunnicutt points out, however, the early writers were clear that this leisure could only lead to this higher progress if it were used well; idleness was viewed as no better than excessive work. The goal was abundant leisure dedicated to intellectual enrichment, community volunteerism, and similar pursuits that improved the mind and community.

Chapter 2 begins the discussion of the various movements that sought to reduce work hours before the Civil War. Hunnicutt explores the ideas and actions of the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, and in particular the dreams of a reduction in hours to the "ten-hour day." According to the careful data analysis of Atack and Bateman (Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, "How Long was the Workday in 1880?" *The Journal of Economic History* 52, no. 1 [March 1992]: 129–60), the "ten-hour day" was achieved in manufacturing by 1880.

The remaining chapters continue the weaving of ideas, activists' efforts to implement them, and politicians' responses over the decades. Hunnicutt argues that while the late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw significant declines in hours per worker in manufacturing, these declines stalled during the Great Depression. The book's review of the various arguments of politicians makes it clear that starting in the 1930s, worries about whether high unemployment was a necessary companion of the new technology pushed the movement for lower work hours and more leisure to the background. As the book documents, starting with FDR, "Full-Time, Full Employment" became the mantra of American politicians, even until the present time (p. 119).

Hunnicutt's proposed solution to the mystery is simply that society forgot the grand goal of increasing leisure so that average individuals could lead more fulfilling lives. He argues that there are no political or economic roadblocks to more leisure, but simply a lack of belief and commitment.

Reading this book significantly raised my awareness of the long-run trends in thought and activism on work hours and leisure. As an economist, however, I felt that the story was missing some key theoretical and empirical insights from modern economics. In particular, modern economists understand that John Maynard Keynes' prediction that increases in labor productivity would create abundant leisure relied on the implicit assumption that income effects were greater than substitution effects. When labor productivity increases, the *income effect* leads workers to want to work

less and enjoy more leisure. However, the *substitution effect* makes leisure more expensive relative to goods (since each hour of work can now produce so many more goods), and hence makes individuals want to work more. Since the predictions of standard economic theory of the effect of increases in productivity are ambiguous, there is no mystery from the economics point of view.

Recent empirical work, however, suggests that the long-run trends in leisure haven't necessarily stalled. In order to accurately assess the trends in work and leisure, several years ago I created new estimates of time use based on numerous data sources ("Time Spent in Home Production in the Twentieth-Century United States." *The Journal of Economic History* 69, no. 1 [March 2009]: 1–47 and "A Century of Work and Leisure," with Neville Francis, *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics* 1, no. 2 [July 2009]: 189–224.). This work takes a more expansive view of leisure as the time left over after market work, home production, formal schooling, and commuting. The estimates from this research (in both the published papers and available at my website at econ.ucsd.edu/~vramey) show a more nuanced picture of long-run trends in work and leisure than painted by Hunnicutt. For example, the estimates show that previous conclusions about typical hours of work were biased because they drew heavily from manufacturing, which represented only 20 percent of all employment in 1900 and did not reflect the experiences of a majority of workers. In our *Century* paper, Francis and I showed that hours per worker continued to fall until 1980. We further discovered that because increases in life expectancy were not accompanied by increases in years spent working, cumulative lifetime leisure increased fairly steadily over the twentieth century. Thus, our estimates suggest that gradually increasing free time is not necessarily "a forgotten dream," but rather a dream deferred until later in life.

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Political Arithmetic: Simon Kuznets and the Empirical Tradition in Economics.

By Robert William Fogel, Enid M. Fogel, Mark Guglielmo, and Nathaniel Grotte.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. Pp. xiii, 168. \$32.00, hardcover.
doi: 10.1017/S002205071300106X

On the same day that the *New York Times* published Bob Fogel's obituary, this book came in my mail. It is fitting that Bob's last published work is a short biography of his mentor, Simon Kuznets. *Political Arithmetic* is informed by a series of interviews with prominent economists conducted by Bob and Enid Fogel who had planned to publish a number of books based on them.

The book is about the life and times of Simon Kuznets, with the emphasis on "times." A short Introduction, "The Amazing Twentieth Century," presents as background Bob's concept of "technophysio evolution" in that period. Chapter 1 traces the rise of academic economics before World War I, and the growing involvement of academic economists in public policymaking during that war. The World War I experience made clear the need for systematic quantitative information on the economy. This demonstrated need was a key factor in the subsequent establishment of the privately funded National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), whose founding is the subject of chapter 2. The NBER's initial research thrust was two pronged—business cycles and national income. There is mention in this chapter of the early work on national income measurement of Willford King and Oswald Knauth, but this reader wanted more on Kuznets' recruitment to this endeavor and his pioneering NBER work on national product and income in the 1920s.