



1926

The 40-Hour Workweek

Ford believed that a worker should be allowed leisure time just like the salaried employee above him. He argued time off was not time wasted because it encouraged the workers to do a better job when on the clock. It also helped stimulate the economy by allowing workers, with Saturdays off, to use their free time spending money.

A worker could spend their paycheck on clothes, leisure activities, and restaurants. The promise for these hours encouraged more workers to seek employment at Henry Ford.

¹ African American Foundry Workers

Courtesy of the National Automotive History Collection, Detroit Public Library

² Movie Theater

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, [LC-USF34-038814-D]

³ Fine Dining

From the Collections of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Sam Vinegar Collection

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Lacey, Robert. *Ford: The Men and the Machine*. Boston: Little Brown & Co, 1986. Print.

Keywords/Topics:

Work/Jobs

Entertainment and Recreation

Questions:

1. Why did Henry Ford create the 40-hour workweek?
2. How did other business owners feel about Ford's decision?
3. Why would an autoworker like the new workweek?

Links to Internet Websites:

<http://www.worklessparty.org/timework/ford.htm>

http://www.americanheritage.com/blog/20069_25_469.shtml

<http://www.thehenryford.org/exhibits/fmc/chrono.asp>

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Courtesy of the National Automotive History Collection, Detroit Public Library

Working six days a week in the auto plants was very strenuous. The environment was dirty and dangerous. Many workers used their days off to rest and recuperate from a long workweek.

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Henry Ford was correct in his assumption that workers would use their days off to spend money. A popular activity at that time was the theater. Pictured above are black and white children lined up outside a movie theater in Chicago, Illinois.

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In the years before the Great Depression, restaurant dining was a popular form of recreation. Couples got dressed in their best attire to go out to dinner. People would also eat dinner at a restaurant before going to a play or picture show.