



THE ROYAL BANK OF CANADA

MONTHLY LETTER

HEAD OFFICE: MONTREAL, NOVEMBER 1952

A BUSINESS MAN'S LEISURE

GOOD health is a human being's precious possession. A man may have fame, wealth, and talents — and a high executive position — but unless he also has a healthy body these are practically worthless to him.

The great majority of us can enjoy good health if we will co-operate with nature. All that is required is a reasonable degree of care and intelligence in the treatment of our bodies. Our spare time is an excellent occasion for this sort of re-creation.

Our physical and mental systems must pay some tax for the privilege of living in these exciting times. All too frequently we do the same about this tax as about taxes on our incomes; we merely grouch about it. It does not do to think lightly of the penalties attached to weakness of body.

Business people burdened with responsibilities, harassed by petty annoyances, and driven to distraction by confused politics, philosophies and ideas, are perhaps particularly vulnerable. Except for their physicians, few people who are not in business realize how great are its demands upon a man's physique. The higher his position, the more responsibility he assumes, the greater the stress and the more restricted the opportunities are to care for health.

Successful business and professional people usually hit their stride as they pass 40. They advance rapidly when they reach 45, and continue on at the same or at an accelerated pace until they knock themselves out. Rarely is a newspaper issued that does not contain the record of the unexpected death of some business man in his prime.

Too Much Effort?

Let's not waste time in repining this state of affairs or in seeking for the match that started the fire, but get busy putting the fire out.

One of the reasons behind the illness that afflicts people is their injudicious desire to get places, to do things, to be seeking success exclusively. They press

on strenuously without diversion or rest. They subscribe to the outmoded idea society had of disapproving of play for adults. It was too frivolous. It wasted time. It was all sorts of things that were not good.

People who have given thought to the matter will not hesitate to say that leisure time may be the most important factor in keeping a person mentally and physically healthy. These are the hours for refreshing your life with thoughts and actions that are foreign to those that fill your workday. A lawyer who rigged up a carpenter's shop in his basement had the right idea. "When I'm working in my shop," he said, "I lose all thought of worry and responsibility, and my mind clears up like the air after a storm. I know it sounds silly, but when I finish something particularly fine, I feel as Leonardo da Vinci must have felt when he looked at his completed Mona Lisa."

Well-rounded leisure is part of a superior pattern of living. It provides opportunity for self-expression. It gives a man space for satisfaction in what he does, whether it be the building of a Gothic cathedral or the fixing of a kitchen chair. The importance of leisure time use lies in what you put into the work yourself, and not what the world thinks of the result.

Proper use of leisure time will meet some psychic needs. Often people have feelings of inadequacy or insecurity which they can remove or reduce by the way they invest their spare time.

Warning Signs

The human body needs regular rest periods and plenty of sleep in order to throw off accumulated poisons and allow the organs to recover from fatigue. The mind needs an airing and an opportunity to harbour new thoughts and ideas. The spirit needs uplifting through contemplation. All of these are leisure time activities.

There is never a "right" time to take a rest. We make all sorts of excuses for staying on the job. When things are going badly, we say we cannot stop; when they are going well, we reason that we must take advantage

of the trend. The plain fact is, recognized since time immemorial but increasingly disregarded, that every person should play truant from work and affairs at least one day a week.

As to signs, strangely enough many of them are not physical pains, and this is a pity because we are more inclined to pay attention to a pain in some muscle than to the more subtle evidences of tiredness. One of the early signals that we need a rest is when we become irritable and bad-mannered. When little things which would in the course of our healthy life be brushed off as we would brush off a fly become magnified into irritations which condition us to snap at our family and at our business associates, that is a signal that we need a change.

Medical men of the highest grade have been insistent of late years on the need for watchfulness to catch the early signs of fatigue. If you have tired spells, they say, if you feel you cannot keep up the pace with others, if you have aches and pains, if the last hour of the day finds you sluggish, if you are fidgety and restless, if your impatience with trifling mistakes and apparent slights causes your temperature to rise — that is the time to have a medical examination.

You may never have been ill a day in your life; you may boast of your stamina and be reluctant to admit a possible decline in your exuberant vitality, but if you heed any one of these signs with the intelligent interest given your business affairs you may be heading off serious trouble and preserving the very thing that alone makes it possible to continue a satisfactory life.

The Greatest of Follies

It is the greatest of follies to sacrifice abundant health on whatever altar. A business man who thinks he can neglect his physical health and yet be as shrewd, as far-seeing and as resolute as ever, is harbouring a serious delusion. The man who neglects building himself up will be floored by difficulties with which he could cope easily if he were in top condition. He will find himself increasingly void of new ideas. He will have, in the end, neither the imagination to give birth to plans nor the grit and resolution needed to carry them out.

If you have been pronounced physically fit, if your physician can find no physical reason for your feelings of tiredness or your lack of interest, it is time to explore other avenues. No one in good health need ever be borne down by feelings of tiredness.

Perhaps the trouble lies in taking something too seriously. It can be eliminated by finding out what that something is. The factor causing physical or mental unease may be any one of many things: among others, boredom, worry, inferiority feeling, fear, oversensitivity, emotional upsets, a sense of having failed a friend or oneself, frustration, or lack of integration.

Even when one is doing purely physical work, weariness starts in the mind before it does in the body. That's worth thinking over. Evidence is found in the

fact that when a man is working at the thing he would like to play at he seldom suffers from weariness.

No fancy tricks are needed in the way of exercise, except perhaps to inveigle us into exercising. Nietzsche remarked in his introduction to his great philosophical work *Thus Spake Zarathustra*: "My most creative moments were always accompanied by unusual muscular activity." Well, an executive in his office seeking a bright idea or trying to work out a problem cannot indulge in much muscular activity. He hasn't the facilities, and anyhow he must keep up his dignity. This makes leisure time activity important, because it is in his spare time that he must build up the resources upon which to draw during working hours.

The purpose of exercise for health is to give all the muscles of the body a chance to use their strength. In no other way can the human machine be kept clean and tuned up.

Some Questions

Our feelings enter into the health picture. If we are conscious of strain we become emotionally upset and start to feel sorry for ourselves and our bodies react by giving feelings of fatigue. Some of us can get into this state just by reading about, or by listening to the tales of woe so readily tapped in conversation. Self-pity, or expression of the "blues" feeling, are unintentional but genuine efforts to gain the sympathy of ourselves and others.

When feelings of dissatisfaction come over us, and we begin to question our mental or physical health, then is a good time to take positive action to bring about a solution of our difficulties and lighten our load.

A list of questions given by David Seabury in his helpful book *How to Worry Successfully* may be effective. Here they are: "Who is using up my time? Who is confusing my mind? Who criticizes me? Who upsets my emotions? What activities are deflecting my attention? What things are bothering me? What are the things I need and can get but am neglecting? What are the things I am doing that someone else could do? What bad habits can I change that interfere with my accomplishment, such as procrastination or self-indulgence? What factors that affect my success do I neglect that I could attend to? What moods do I indulge in that waste my time, strength and attention?"

Try, urges Seabury, to correct one of these negatives per week. There can be no doubt but that getting handicapping factors out into the open in this way would give a person a good start toward healthy mental and physical living.

How to Handle Worry

We should not neglect giving attention to the human values in life. It is a sombre occasion when one admits some lack of understanding, some casualness, which made life less happy for someone else, but the realization can be made a step toward more healthy living.

The alternative to a frank and courageous facing of issues is continuing fear, and needless fear wears out our fibre. When there is no corn in the mill, the stones grind upon each other.

We cannot eliminate every one of the things that bear upon us. Every day brings a new sort of burden. But we can strengthen ourselves to bear those things which are a necessary part of our lives, and we can, after facing them, become indifferent to the things which we cannot change. It is safe to say that we shall find, in a self-examination like this, that many, if not all of our fears, worries and problems can be thrown into the wastebasket.

Here are four ways in which anxieties may be disposed of: They become extinct if they actually come to pass; they become outgrown because we have developed beyond them; they become obsolete because circumstances have changed; they become irrelevant because we have achieved a sense of security in which they are no longer factors.

The answer to our problem is to face it and do something about it. How different that is from merely worrying. We can stand almost any amount of exacting work if only we do not multiply it by worry.

Worry was defined by Dean Inge as "the interest paid on trouble before it falls due." Its burden is increased when we spend long hours computing it. A patient in an asylum told his doctor: "I'm sorry I'll have to leave you now, but I have to get back to my worrying: I'm away behind in it."

Some people say they worry because they have so many difficulties to face. But aren't many difficulties magnified because we hold them so close that they are out of focus? With imagination, resourcefulness and perseverance, a way can be found around most difficulties. Business people, of all others, should have that little extra margin of sense and effort to reduce difficulties to zero. To survey the field, to plan intelligently, to prepare completely, and to attempt with courage: these are prime requirements in business and they are the means to resolving difficulties.

Needless Hurry

There is no room for needless hurry in this campaign for better living. Whoever is in a hurry shows that the thing he is about is too big for him. He will be whirled around and made dizzy. By rushing at it he makes accomplishment of his task more difficult and he increases the chance of failure.

When are all these forward-looking steps to be taken? Most people have a set number of hours which are given over to making a livelihood, and in addition there are the hours used up in routine living. Development of mental and physical health in these hours is limited, but leisure — the minutes and hours above the time needed for the day's routine and required activity — that is the time to idealize, to create and to build.

Time, so far as the individual is concerned, consists of twenty-four hours multiplied by 365 days, multiplied by "X" years. This is our life time.

Here is an interesting little sum to show how much of the time is our own — free time to do with as we wish. Not everyone will agree with it, because men and women have many differing opinions about leisure time. Some, for example, would count travel time as leisure time, because they use it pleasantly for reading. Some would not count meals as working time, because to them eating is a pleasure. Others count their evening romp with their children as a duty, and not leisure; or assign the evening devoted to service clubs to the "work" column; and some who make out-of-town trips for their employers would count all that time (even the movie and ball-game part of it) as working time. However, the figures do give a starting point for self-appraisal, and they will likely show that we have more time than we think available for building our bodies and minds into the healthy units they could be, and for expanding our interests.

Here is the table:	hours
There are 365 days in a year	8760
Deduct 8 hours a day for sleep	2920
Deduct 5 days' work a week at 8 hours a day for 49 weeks (allowing 2 weeks' vacation and seven other holidays)	1960
Deduct 2 hours a working day for travel	490
Deduct 3 hours a day for meals	1095
Deduct 1 hour a day for dressing and undressing	365
	<hr/> 6830
Hours left to do with as we please . . .	1930

This is equal to 80 days of 24 hours each — nearly 22 per cent of the year.

Are we making the best use of this leisure time? It is a question for individuals to answer. To some people "leisure" is time when they can't think of anything to do; to others, their work is such fun that it is leisure.

One approach suggested is that we appraise these 1930 spare hours at our current rate of earnings. In cash terms, are we getting health-building value out of every hour of leisure? The answer will probably be negative, and that is what this Monthly Letter is about. There is a pattern of use for leisure time that will return value far beyond dollar computation. It will help us to become the kind of human being we want to be.

We all like to spend some time for which we don't have to account, but to get the most out of life we need to keep these unaccounted hours at a minimum. Ease

and sloth contribute little. Idleness can be more tiring than work (The Romans had a proverb: "It is difficult to rest if you are doing nothing").

What Shall We Do?

It is a blunder to suppose that we must turn to activities far removed from our job; on this error are founded most of the low-grade amusements. In contemplating use of the time we have to spare we might have in mind the motto that hung in Arthur Brisbane's office: "Five minutes is a long time." If we find it hard to find time for the things we want to do, we shall find it easier to *make* time.

Waste of time is an easy path to follow. It is, in a French saying: the "Street of Lost Time." Two hours after meandering your way through a game of cards, riffling through the pages of a magazine, idly listening to the radio, or indulging in insignificant chit-chat, you suddenly realize that you might just as well not have been alive during those idle hours. Your investment of time returned you nothing.

We need an eye for the parings of time. If we wait for long stretches of leisure in which to begin something that will build our health, we may never begin. But almost every day there are quarter hours unaccounted for, unabsorbed by other things. In these small periods we may build creative activity in which we may exercise our ingenuity and express our personality. And having decided to use them in this way, let us guard them against people who, with the best of intentions and the greatest entertaining value, would rob us of them.

About Sleep

It goes without saying that sleep is one of the most important of our non-working occupations. Some people cause themselves trouble because they believe that sleep is just a bad habit, acquired before there were bright lights to make the night interesting. Others have trouble in getting the sleep they need to cope with their responsibilities and their desires.

When a person cannot sleep it is a good bet that he has dragged his cares to bed with him. Fretting is a bad bedfellow, with his regrets about what has happened, his fears about what may happen, his solutions for unsolved problems, and his infinite store of trivialities that seem to spring from nowhere.

No fragments of the day's work should be taken to bed. There should be an impenetrable curtain drawn around sleeping hours, the hours that prepare a person to face tomorrow. It is well, even, to keep in mind Helena's meditation in *Midsummer Night's Dream*: "And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye, steal me awhile from mine own company."

Instead of thinking of disturbing things, one may conjure up pictures of the day's triumphs, and truths

learned, and laughs. These, relaxing the mind in keeping with complete relaxation of the body, will lead gently into refreshing sleep.

But sleep is not enough. Our brains cannot work unless our nerves relax. The business man who makes the opportunity to relax several times a day is doing good business for himself and for his firm. One man who went fishing frequently and took a vacation every weekend coined a significant phrase when he said: "My business requires my absence." He took time enough away from his desk so that he could think clearly when he was there, and his employees were not harried by his nerves.

If leisure time is not used to tone up a man's system he will be irritable when he should be pleasant, restless when he should be in repose, and excitable when he should be calm. It is pitiful to watch some men when they are waiting for an answer to their telephone calls. They drum their fingers, glare around their offices, fidget and fume. They could get through their business much better, live longer and work more happily if only they would seize such occasions of delay for relaxation — for dropping tension and nervous waste and making an addition of these seconds or minutes to their leisure time.

Making Things Easier

Strange as it may seem, relaxation makes things easier. It may bring solution of a problem which eludes us when we are straining for the solution.

"Recreation" is a less inclusive word than "relaxation." Leisure is free time. It can be spent in sleeping, releasing tension every once in a while, or just slumping with your feet up. That is relaxation. Or leisure may be used in a constructive way, which is recreation.

Recreation requires enthusiasm for some project, usually one out of which there may be an intellectual increment of knowledge about the ways of mice or men.

Recreation serves as an outlet for our emotional and creative desires by leading them into productive, satisfying and socially acceptable channels.

The person who is trying to make his spare time count toward his greatest happiness will ask himself sincerely how he may achieve the right sort of recreation. He will balance the kinds of his recreation, he will use recreation to increase strengths he already has and to develop thoughts which cannot be expressed through his daily work. He will choose a kind of recreation which he can expand and continue as he grows older, giving, at every stage of his life, the fullest possible expression to his inmost desires and hopes.

Recreation must be tailored to fit the individual, but in his tailoring the individual must follow certain basic principles, or else his recreation will not fit.