READ & DISCUSS

Weekend Invention

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Our two-day long weekends which we are familiar with were initially more of a one-day-off-a-week deal due to various religions only requiring one day of rest a week. Fridays were rest days for Muslims; Saturdays for Jews, and Sundays for Christians. This started changing during the Industrial Revolution however when the move from farming to factories occurred.

As farmers took on jobs in the factories, they demanded longer rest periods to spend more time at home as they were used to less packed schedules. Of course, factory owners were reluctant initially, but laborers' complaints soon turned into large-scale strikes and owners were forced to give in.

Since Christianity was widespread and well-known, getting Sundays off was quite easy. Saturdays were adopted as a second rest day when factories gained an influx of Jewish workers in the late 1800s who required Saturdays off for worshipping.

Apart from religious workers pushing for off days, the famous factory owner, Henry Ford also advocated for longer rest periods after realizing that a rested workforce was more likely to buy and sell his cars if they had free time to drive the cars around. Slowly, two-day 'weekends' became standardized, and shorter work hours -such as 40-hour work weeks- were implemented.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you sometimes just hang out/have a picnic with friends in a park?
2. How much time do you spend doing chores on the weekend?
3. Do you often go out for drinks on a weekend?
4. Some countries have a Friday/Saturday weekend and other countries have a Saturday/Sunday weekend. Which one do you prefer?
5. What do you think about working for 24 days and then having a six-day break?