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(Signed) Noel Burrell.

Fencourt, Cambridge,
3rd Dec., 1947

Alfred Jenkins,
22 Manners St., Wellington.
Dear Sir,—I must say that I wished I had done this course long before now, as it makes one feel as though life is really worth living. I can say that I have never felt fitter before and consider that every young chap should take this course, as it most certainly builds one up.—Yours faithfully (Signed) John Hogan

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The "Average" Use of Leisure

A SURVEY made recently in the United States revealed that in one week the average man works about 40 hours and has about 30 hours of leisure. The remaining time is given to sleeping, eating, dressing, bathing, shaving and going to and from work. His leisure is spent roughly as follows: 15 hours of sport ("spectator and participant"), games and hobbies, seven to eight hours listening to the radio, three to six hours in his motor car, and about four hours reading newspapers, magazines and books. There may not be much scientific value in this sort of research. The "average" man in any country becomes a symbol placed somewhere near the centre of a mass of different personal habits. Some people do not spend any time in motor cars; they read books for 15 hours a week, and stay cheerfully away from the races. Even if they are few in number, and so different from most of their fellows that they are thought to be eccentric, it may still be true that leisure among the majority cannot be separated arbitrarily from the rest of experience. Why, for instance, should no place be found in it for eating? Admittedly, an inhabitant of Wellington who snatches a pie and a cup of tea in a milk bar may not believe that he is enjoying himself: he is simply meeting a physical necessity, and meeting it so rapidly that the effect on his digestion may eventually be painful. But the citizen of Paris who spends two hours in a restaurant, loitering through the courses and talking to friends, is undoubtedly drawing upon his leisure. Similarly, a bath taken at the beginning or the end of the day, with due formality, should be classed among the pleasures of living. Even shaving, a habit which by some men is endured patiently or with dark thoughts, can be for others a chance to commune with a loved image in a mirror. Indeed, in some cases it can be included in

the time given to work. Many a problem has been solved while a razor went rasping about a chin. Was it not A. E. Housman who found that lines for a new poem came sometimes to him while he shaved, and came so imperiously that his beard stiffened under the impact? There are some people—especially women, perhaps—for whom dressing is no task to be done hurriedly and grudgingly, but a pleasant and dreaming interlude in which the personality prepares itself for action and conquest in the jungle outside. Finally, the research worker who looks at leisure seems never to realise that it can be spent profitably in idleness. To have nothing to do for several hours, or for an entire day, is for wise or fortunate people an opportunity not to be missed. There are few better ways of passing the time than to sit idly in the sun when the mind, eased from tensions of work and play, is receptive to its own springing thoughts, or is merely quiescent and lulled about by animal warmth. But such pleasures are out of tune with the rushing life around us. They are not amenable to classification or inquiry, and therefore they seem to be perverse intrusions of self into the busy social scene. We are expected, in the interests of science, to order our lives neatly and consistently. All is well if we read more or less than our neighbours, if we listen regularly or casually to the radio; but work and leisure must be sharply divided, and we are not playing the game according to the rules if we allow the two parts of life to become entangled. Yet life has its own way with us. If we learn to think, we shall find ourselves thinking in the bath as well as at the desk; and there can be smooth working hours which are curiously like leisure in their quality of enjoyment. What a pale and useless abstraction is the "average man" if compared with a single individual, alive and breathing steadily, whose habits are entirely his own!

N.Z. LISTENER, DECEMBER 2, 1949.