

Clarke, John and Critcher, Charles. *The Devil Makes Work: Leisure in Capitalist Britain*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 1985. pp. 245. Further Readings, Index, \$29.95

The publishers of *The Devil Makes Work* claim it to be “the first attempt to formulate a coherent radical alternative to the liberal consensus that has dominated thinking about leisure in contemporary Britain” (cover). For once the claim is justified—Clarke and Critcher do indeed provide an alternative not only for Britain, but even more so for North America. Their alternative will not be well received by leisure and sport researchers in North America because it attacks the fundamental assumptions of a majority of North American leisure researchers. At the same time the questions raised demand answers. These questions emerge out of the basic objectives of the authors and the particular ways in which they constructed their answers.

The book can be divided into three separate yet interrelated parts. Part I, Chapters 1-3, reviews the salient literature on the sociology of leisure and provides an historical overview of the development of leisure. Part II, Chapters 4-6, examines leisure in Britain today and explores the potential future of leisure in post-industrial society. In the Conclusion and Epilogue, Clarke and Critcher delve into the theoretical and practical implications of their alternative approach to leisure.

In their review of four sociology of leisure texts the authors pinpoint the underlying weaknesses of various approaches to leisure. They argue that leisure has been examined in isolation from its antecedents and from the society of which it is inexorably linked. Their arguments are persuasive; leisure cannot be *Understood* without situating it historically in the “structural and cultural processes which constitute society” (p. 48). It is this emphasis upon history and society that has important implications for sport historians. It provides a focus to the nature of the questions they should be asking—ones that help us

understand the form and function of leisure in society. At the same time, it is in Chapter 3 on the history of leisure that a basic problem emerges.

The historical analysis pinpoints the problems facing non-historians who make extensive use of historical data; the dependence upon works written by historians and the selective manner in which this information is used. To be fair, the authors recognize this limitation in the introduction to Chapter 3. However, they then construct a history of working class leisure based on a corpus of literature written, for the most part, by middle class radicals. The conclusions drawn from this historical analysis are fundamental to the central argument of the book. Let me give examples from their examination of the 1880s (pp. 60-71). In discussing police interference in leisure, they refer to the “children’s game of pitch and toss” (p. 66). This was patently not true in the mining vilages of East Northumberland where pitch and toss was a sport of the miners, not children. Later, in discussing the expansion of activities during the 1880s, they state “what is shocking about this whole period is how little of the expanded leisure activity was indigenous to the working class” (p. 69). Again, the history of sport in the mining communities was the exact reverse of this; it was the indigenous sports of bowling, quoits, and fives that witnessed the greatest growth. While each of these may be unimportant in themselves, they are used to support a basic thesis about the nature of leisure and the social and cultural constraints under which it exists. This historical analysis leads, nearly inevitably, to the conclusion that leisure has become, at heart, a consumer product. It is this conclusion that is fundamental to the examination of leisure in contemporary Britain, thus the validity of the historical analysis is vital to the enterprise.

The heart of the book focuses on leisure in contemporary society (Chapters 4-6), particularly on the way “the market and the state play an active role in constructing leisure” (p. 100). Leisure, according to Clarke and Critcher, has become a consumer product that is used by the State and Capital to achieve their own ends; a particular view of society and profit. This ideology influences all aspects of society-family, education, culture and sport. They provide substantial evidence to back up their argument. In Chapters 5 and 6 they examine the consequences of the “consumerization” of leisure for individual and group opportunities for leisure now and in the future. To anyone concerned with racial, class, age and gender inequality they raise questions that demand an answer.

From an intellectual viewpoint the Conclusion and Epilogue provide the most challenging reading. In thirteen pages (212-225) the authors trace the academic roots of their own perspective. Through an analysis of C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, and Michelle Barratt’s *Women’s Oppression Today*, they trace the development of their own intellectual perspective. This section alone is worth the price of the book. Unlike so many books, the authors lay out clearly the rationale for the positions they take. These origins are expanded in the Further Readings that follow each chapter. These readings provide a clear guide to the academic

origins of the book and provide a comprehensive reading list for anyone interested in a "radical alternative" to the prevailing view of leisure.

Although many North American leisure researchers will have difficulty with the fundamental assumptions underlying *The Devil Makes Work*, the book raises issues that must be addressed if words such as "equality," "fairness," and "democracy" are to have any real meaning. The basic premise that in order to *understand* leisure in contemporary society one must also understand its historical development and its relationship to society as a whole, is one that must be addressed if leisure is to fulfill the role that many researchers have suggested it can. In particular, Clarke and Critcher place at centre stage the problems of racial, age, and gender inequalities in access to and provision of leisure. Their analysis and answers provide an excellent starting point for anyone interested in the development of leisure for everyone, not just a particularly socially advantaged group.

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