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A LION'S SHARE OF TOURISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

BY

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ABSTRACT

Leisure-time activities and tourism are placing overwhelming demands on society and the environment. In order to meet these demands--or prevent the danger they will bring--we might think of three possible solutions: 1) representative tourism; 2) development of local, ethnic sites; 3) use of educational programs, video and movie presentations given to tourists before they enter a country; and formal courses in Popular Culture Studies as Humanities, which will develop thematically the similarities and differences of and between all people, respect for those differences, and a greater respect for humankind and nature.

INTRODUCTION

The driving demographics which will guide up to 10 billion people on earth by the beginning of the 21st century in what Isaac Asimov foresaw as a "leisure world" compel us to reexamine our position on the use of non-work, tourism time and to suggest that we become what John Hultsman and William Harper, two authorities on the subject, call "leisure literate" (1).

Though now eagerly sought for, leisure time has not always been considered desirable. According to a Protestant truism, moral idleness was looked upon as the devil's workshop, as in the caution, "Idleness is the school of vice, and the way to ruin" (Schneider, p. 163), and, according to playwright Sherwood Anderson, might become God's curse: "For ages now men have cried out for leisure. One of these days, the impatient gods will punish men by giving it to them" (Vanity Fair, 26 (1), p. 47).

Yet idleness, freedom from enslavement to routine and work, has universally and timelessly been the Paradise and Eden of nearly everybody's dreams, the ultimate goal in life as the way to happiness, perhaps most poignantly voiced in William Butler Yeats' poem "Land of Heart's Desire":

Land of Heart's Desire,
Where beauty has no ebb, decay no
flood,
But joy is wisdom, Time an endless song
(1894)

Now as we see all around us idleness solidified into hopes and dues and driven by

human desire and the violence of frustrated expectations, we must recognize an entirely new imperative. With our increasingly effective ways of technologically finishing jobs faster, idleness is becoming increasingly a factor in society. Historian John Lukacs (2) correctly says, "Leisure (including some of its superficial forms) is the basis of culture." He might have added that proper leisure time activities are the healthful diet that keeps the body-culture growing and might, in fact, like leisure time in other growing animals, be necessary for humankind's full development.

Despite Emerson's feeling that "Traveling is a fool's paradise" and Thoreau's assurance that one can travel sufficiently in one's own neighborhood ("I have traveled widely in Concord"), tourism is the driving force of developing leisure-time. So we are compelled to look upon properly handled tourism, in its broadest sense, as a categorical imperative of a healthy culture. The wisdom of that proper handling is the understanding that tourism must be treated as one of the Humanities, one of the most important constituents of our culture and our lives.

As we move into the next century, the areas of tourists and tourist workers are already crowded. We cannot possibly expect to put three times as many airplanes, cars and buses in the air and on the roads to accommodate all the new people who will want to go on vacation. We cannot expect to enlarge airports to three times their present capacity. Yet as everybody demands and gets more time off from work, society must prepare for a useful, enjoyable and non-destructive employment of that time, else we might have a societal devil's workshop much worse than the one we are suffering from today in crime and anti-

social activities and the punishment Anderson foresaw. The public will have greater expectations from the tourist business; cheaper rates, greater accessibility more comfortable facilities and withal greater preservation of the environment and nature. The demands are incompatible. Too many participants want the lion's share.

We cannot expect nature to accommodate 40 billion hands and feet using the natural resources, which haven't expanded, and preserve pristine nature and wildlife. We're beginning the process of loving our recreational facilities to death. Yet everybody believes that he/she has the constitutional right to enjoy personally the natural elements of tourism. For example, when it is suggested that the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River cannot accommodate everybody who wants to shoot the rapids and see the walls from the river up, the people who oppose over-exploitation are called elitists who are denying the enjoyment of the Canyon to the public. When it is suggested that the ecology of certain parks is too fragile to support unregulated tourism, many people feel that it is unfair to restrict unfettered enjoyment. People are pouring into Yosemite until they are stacked higher than El Capitan and have to be controlled. There are definitely more whale watchers than watched whales. Off the Grand Banks the ratio is at least 1000 watchers for every whale. In our famous caves, human breath and body heat are so corroding the natural wonders that the only safe way the people can be accommodated will soon be with them dressed in space suits.*

The Serengeti of eastern Tanzania has far more safari tourists than wild animals being safaried. Wildlife specials are afraid that the presence of so many tourists is changing the

animals' feeling of what "wildness" is. We all know the often-shown picture on television of the beautiful leopard alone in a tree, and the panning of the camera to the ground, where ten safari buses with at least a hundred tourists are sprawled all over the ground taking pictures. One wonders if the leopard is not thinking it is time for a feast on human flesh. Much more likely, he'd just like the people to leave him alone.

Yet most tourists believe, to one degree or another, that wildlife has a natural constitutional, God-given right to life, liberty and the pursuit of natural goals, just as human beings do, and that natural environments must be preserved. Just as humankind like to think about the sanctity and safety of our own homes, we believe in the sanctity of animal homes. We even call them--when we have created them--sanctuaries. So people in the tourist business must somehow work with the people and wildlife and with the mixed emotions about the issues of animal and environmental rights. The issues are not always open and shut. In northern South Africa now, for example, a hot debate is raging over whether old, dying black rhinos, an endangered species, should be sold to hunters at \$100,000 each for the hunter's pleasure of shooting them instead of allowing them to die and become expensive hyena food. The danger comes in the misunderstood example it might provide about the value of black rhino's preservation.

There are several ways to mitigate the impact of the tourist on the natural world.

One way is through representative tourism, with small numbers of people acting as surrogates for the rest of us. This is, of course, a suggestion which though it is not

new brings out many strong negative responses. Many people think it is discriminatory and just another perk for the rich and powerful. But the sheer weight of the problem demands some regulation. If we believe that our political life must be served by our electing a few among us to represent, to voice, to exercise our political rights, then we quite properly might ask why not send a small percentage of us out to enjoy those aspects of nature that are too fragile to accommodate us all. If facilities will collapse under the sheer weight of us all, why not keep them viable through representative groups?

There are of course strong objections. Unlike political life, vacation enjoyment is not something one likes to do by proxy; everybody wants to do for himself/herself. Yet at least from the time of Marco Polo's adventures in Cathay, travel literature has been one of people's most popular ways of getting to other places; it was inexpensive traveling, and apparently quite satisfying. In 19th century America travel literature, of which Mark Twain's Innocents Abroad is an outstanding example, was one of the most important forms of literature. It was inexpensive and clearly quite satisfying. We know from TV, movies, all forms of entertainment, even pornography, that the next best thing to doing something oneself is seeing someone else do it. If we cannot do all the traveling we want, we can enjoy it through someone else's activities.

Further, many of us apparently want only an opportunity for an on-site photograph--a kind of travel couch-potatoism--to show others in order to validate attendance. When we visit a site all we are interested in is seeing the sights through the hotel window or from the seat of a local taxi. We want a kind of on-site picture. Years ago

photographers provided this service in their studios, using all kinds of backgrounds as desired. Now we could provide very sophisticated opportunities for inclusion in videos and very realistic settings. With the ever-growing number of documentaries, such as are on Cable TV and PBS, a reasonable substitute could be provided for actual presence on a tourist site. Contrary to the initial objects of many, such reasonable substitutes--with artifacts and toys and relics--need not further isolate us from participation in life's activities. They could in fact become agents for more knowledgeable and greater participation.

Objections will be raised, of course. Reduced numbers of tourists, some people will say, will cause the tourist industry to collapse, airlines to be grounded, the total economy, which in many places is closely tied in with tourism, will break down. But regardless of the tourist business, which might suffer some initial set-backs in readjustment, the whole of society will not fall with a reduced rate of total tourism. Tourism business, though it may constitute from one-third to one-half of a particular community's business, may be the wrong kind of income. Tourism does not create wealth. It merely shuffles it around. With people released from the tourist business, society could devote itself to creating something valuable, something tangible. The adjustment, though seemingly somewhat traumatic, could be effected for the benefit of all. If that suggestion is too draconian, I have another.

In addition to the exponential growth of total populations, society is changing in another way, this time with a positive possibility for the tourist trade. The current drives toward ethnicity and nationalism have unleashed forces which seem at least to

threaten conventional society itself. Regardless of the ultimate result on society at large, this ethnicity and nationalism presents an opportunity to enlarge and enhance local tourism. Many Americans are now rediscovering their roots and finding enrichment in this discovery. They may want to visit the "old country" but may not be financially able to return and tour the countries from which their ancestors came, no matter how strong the nostalgic tug at the heart.

Yet these latter-day would-be pilgrims may fulfill their fondest desires. Throughout the United States and other countries, there are ethnic and nationalistic enclaves which are tightening their cultural ties and development through museums, festivals, dances, foods and other manifestations of the "old life" which recreates rather effectively the life the tourists want to experience. So these local representations present a gold opportunity to provide a return to "roots" without the expense of going overseas for it.

If these aspects of ethnic life, and other marketable ways to enjoy leisure time, seem too thin to satisfy the desires of many tourists to spend a week or two away from home, then the various local sites can be marketed collectively. In northwest Ohio, for example, the 3 million people who visit Cedar Point Amusement Park yearly could be coaxed into spending the rest of their vacation period visiting other sites in northern Ohio: Seaworld, Edison's birthplace, President Hayes' home, Sauter Museum, Ft. Meigs, the Ford Museum and Greektown in Detroit. If these are not sufficient inducement to lure the tourist, then this area, at the crossroads of two of the most heavily travelled arterials in the country, might wisely think of developing

new ones. Most areas throughout the country have clusters of tourist attractions which could occupy the visitor for at least a week.

My third suggestion is somewhat more broadly based and longer-range, with infinitely more ramifications for the trade and society at large.

With tourism there is an inevitable abuse, use and destruction of resources. It is estimated that tourists reduce the height of the Alps 4 inches every year, and many of the Swiss want only for the northern tourists to drive through their country and not to stop. Some British believe that the price of tourism, which alters and destroys traditional British culture, is too high. The French both love and hate the tourists, who dilute the French culture; they still by and large want nothing to do with Eurodisney, the Disneyland around Paris which attracts millions of all other Europeans. Hawaii is now wondering if tourism does not promote as much harm as good in the islands.

As the number of people on earth increases, the growing number of fingers and toes that touch and break things will be hard to tolerate. We put up signs that people are not supposed to lean on glass, touch the flowers, rub the medallion, chip the monument. But it is hard to keep people from tensile participation. There is an almost imbred feeling among tourists that they pay out their good money and therefore have a right to handle and destroy, oblivious to the rights of their successors.

We fight this urge in many ways but with mixed success. We are also not entirely successful in creating the proper respect for the need to conserve the environment and the culture in which things exist. We could

be far more successful if we worked in greater detail and depth in preparing the tourists for the environment of the destination. Some simple and obvious ways could be very beneficial. An excellent way would be for the airliners going to foreign countries to present videos of the cultures of destination-countries, telling the customs, ways of life, the flora and fauna. These videos would of course be free; people not interested could turn their attention elsewhere, but it would be my guess that only the most callow would not be at least partially interested. We now pass out printed brochures, sometimes, which at best are superficial and somehow insufficient. There might also be preparation at the point of entry of the tourists. Again, videos could be shown, printed brochures could be designed to be more effective, and tourist guides could very profitably preface their tours, where tourists go on such trips, with more background material. Some tour guides do relatively fine jobs, but most of us know that the majority of them merely repeat by rote.

But perhaps the most effective and most badly needed change in the tourist business in the future will be an extension of education, and will begin in the classroom. It may be too much to ask the incoming tourist to spend a day or two in a classroom before being released into a country's society. But it clearly would be a worthwhile idea if the embassy or In-tourist office had a one-day, or even a one-hour, seminar for those people coming into a country. It might have been done in the home country before the tourists left. But wherever, it would be helpful. The instructors could be paid by a small surcharge of the tourist facilities, or indirectly. The results would be happier and less destructive tourists, with less negatively

impacted destinations and consequently increased tourism overall.

But in many ways the success of the tourist business of the future can be greatly assisted by those professionals who come into daily contact with the tourists, the guides, cultural attaches, In-tourist officials. It is they who will direct, explain, mollify and modify the tourists' behavior. For those professionals somewhat more particular education would be helpful--education in the Humanities, that is.

The Humanities are those elements in our culture which characterize us as homo sapiens, which provide the society in which we live, our way of life, what makes our lives and society what they are, the culture around us which makes us cohere as groups and nations. In our present-day life the Humanities are the Popular Culture, the everyday culture in which we live and by which we are shaped and driven. The Humanities are also the everyday cultures around us throughout the world. There are American Popular Cultures and there are even more complex overriding world Popular Cultures. If one understands his/her own popular cultures it will be easier to understand those of other peoples and countries, and to explain them to tourists so that they can appreciate the similarities and differences.

Some years ago I was lecturing for the USIA in Moscow. One of the people at the American Embassy was a Bowling Green University Ph.D. in American Culture whom I had had as a student in Popular Culture courses. She told me that she had served for several years in the office of the Cultural Attache in several Near Eastern countries and was now in Moscow. She insisted that the training she had received in Popular Culture Studies had served her best

in her duties. These studies had trained her to relate best to the people among whom she lived and worked, and allowed her to explain the United States most effectively to the non-Americans among whom she worked, who were eager to learn what "America is really like."

Her observation has been borne out dozens of times by the students who come to American universities from other countries, from such places as Japan, China, Australia, Germany, the Near East and elsewhere. Generally these foreign students come to get training in American Studies so that they can teach U.S. culture back home. They soon discover however, where given the exposure, that what they really want and need for back home is training in Popular Culture Studies. Their students do not really want American Studies in the conventional sense but Popular Culture Studies, the real, everyday culture of the United States. At the moment I have a student from China who got an advanced degree from Michigan State University in American Studies, took a course or two in Popular Culture Studies and discovered when he got back to China that he really needed more of the latter field so that he could satisfy the needs of his students and school. He is now back at Bowling Green State University for a year to develop his skills in Popular Culture Studies. From both directions, then, the best preparation for people working with foreign cultures and those tourists who are going to meet these cultures is Popular Culture Studies. These studies are particularly useful to those people who will touch the travels of any and all--travel agents, those working in hotels, embassies as translators, in all forms of business.

It would be unrealistic to ask that all people who are in or going into the tourist trade, especially that associated with overseas travel, become Ph.D.'s in Popular Culture Studies, even if such a degree were currently available. But it would be useful for such people to take courses in Popular Culture Studies, no matter what they were called, and the more taken the better the tour person would be prepared to be most effective.

What would such courses consist of? Essentially they would consist of the theory and rationale for people's behavior, the differences and similarities in the activities of people of different countries and cultures, what makes them different and what similar. Such explanations could be especially effective in our present-day and future society when the Global Village that media specialist Marshall McLuhan predicted turns out to consist not of small groups of friendly natives but ethnic enclaves armed to the teeth and shooting to kill.

The Popular Culture courses point out that all peoples like and need essentially the same kinds of activities and that those of one people are not superior to or inferior to those of another, but merely seem different when they are actually similar. The courses point out anthropologically and culturally how dressing habits, eating habits, entertainments worldwide spring from the

same needs. And the courses mitigate the differences between the strong and weak nations and peoples. They will point out how the "cultural imperialism" of the U.S. and the Western nations can be explained, if not immediately "justified" to non-Americans as well as to Americans and citizens of developed countries. Proper backgrounds in Popular Culture Studies oil the ways of life for all the citizens of the world to a degree nothing else can.

Of the three possible new directions in tourism in the future, undoubtedly the last mentioned is the most important, for it actually encompasses the other two. Through the travel agents it explains the greatest possible gratification to be found in travel and touring--and the most effective way for tourism to remain in business without ultimately destroying the world in which it operates. It keeps alive and healthy the goose that continues to lay the golden eggs. With such an arrangement all creatures both great and small can have their day in the sun and moon. The lion can have its share of the world and we people, the most voracious consumers of all times, can have ours. Such accommodation will be all around beneficial.

*My thanks to Marty Knepper for reminding me of this phenomenon.

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