



## Basic Black by Arthur Black

### Seven days makes one week

*This is the greatest week in the history of the world since Creation!*

U.S. President  
Richard Nixon,  
(after Apollo moon landing)

*A week is a long time in politics.*

British Prime Minister  
Harold Wilson

So how's your week been so far? I've spent a good chunk of mine musing over some of the many things we take for granted in this life. Things like, well, the fact that we divide our time into salami-like slices called 'weeks'.

Funny word, 'week'. Comes from an Old English word meaning 'change' or 'turn'. That's what happens, alright. We march like foot soldiers through the days of the week from Sunday to Saturday, and then like a well-drilled platoon we 'turn' and start all over again at Sunday.

But why do we make it a seven-day sortie? Other units of time - days, months and years -- make solid sense. The length of a day is dictated by the rising and the setting of the sun. The waxing and waning of the moon tells us how long any given month will be. A year is determined by the rotation of the earth. But a week? That's a man-made convention.

And evidently a popular one. We've been using the seven-day week unit faithfully for the past 1700 years. Before that, there were other attempts

to subdivide that undifferentiated stretch of time between a day and a month, but none of them lasted.

Historians say that some early West African tribes observed four-day weeks.

The Type A Egyptians opted for a ten-day marathon. The ever-practical Romans split the difference and came up with the 'nundinae' - a nine-day week that conveniently ran from one market day to the next.

Then along came those meddlesome Christians with a whole new set of rules and regs beginning with The Ten Commandments. The fourth commandment decreed that once every seven days all folks hoping to earn a pair of angel wings should lay down their tools, quit drinking and dancing and 'observe the Sabbath'. King Constantine made it the law of the land around 300 A.D. and most of the Western world has been observing it ever since. More or less.

There have been one or two attempts to re-jig the week.

Back in the late 18th century, just after they'd stormed the Bastille and separated Marie Antoinette's head from the rest of her, rebels in Paris issued the first French Revolutionary Calendar. It included among other innovations, a ten-day work week. But that was too radical even for the radicals. It disappeared faster than a dab of Brie on a baguette.

In 1929 the Russians took a

shot at streamlining the week. The Kremlin declared that all comrades would observe a five-day week, in which each fifth of the work force had its own day off, with no common day of rest shared by all. This screwed up Russian family and civic life even more than Stalin and his henchthugs had already managed to.

Russians drifted back to the seven-day week; the Kremlin pretended not to notice.

The ill-fated Communist offensive was the last official assault on the seven-day week, but that hasn't preserved it from further tampering. Even in my lifetime, the concept of Sunday as a day of rest has changed beyond all recognition.

When I was a kid, there was no doubt when Sunday rolled around. The stores were closed. There were no baseball or hockey or football games. Movie theatres were dark. The only sounds were church bells tolling, kids whining about having to dress up for Sunday school and backsliding fathers snoring on the chesterfield.

Today, aside from the lack of traffic jams, it's pretty hard to tell Sunday from any other day of the week. It's certainly no longer a day of rest. It's now a day of lawn mowing, mall shopping and catching up on work that didn't get done during the previous five days.

Napoleon would have loved it. He was a workaholic. Even while France's Reign of Terrorists were frantically trying to introduce the Revolutionary calendar, Napoleon was putting in 16-hour days as a Consul. "Do let's keep awake, citizens" he exhorted his colleagues as one meeting ground past the 2 AM mark. "We must earn our salaries."

"God made Bonaparte and then rested" purred one sycophant. Another, less enamoured councilor grumbled "God should have rested a little earlier."



*You've got  
the last word*

### Why I always vote

by Thelma Davidson, Newcastle

Dogs and kids know when they are going to be left behind. There are clues. When I was a kid in the 1940's I always got to tag along except when:

1. Mom had rollers in her hair when I came home for lunch and she was ironing daddy's "good" white shirt.
2. I was told there would be hot Campbell's Tomato Soup and cold bologna sandwiches for dinner (my favourites!)
3. The household mail and daily newspaper lay unopened on the little arborite hall table.
4. Daddy came home from the factory and shaved AGAIN!
5. Mom's hat with the short "just over the nose" veil and her black gloves lay waiting on their bed.

Then I knew, without a doubt, that I would be left alone with my comic books and the radio, after the upstairs tenants had been instructed to "listen for Thelma."

My parents were 1930's immigrants from Poland. New Canadian citizens. They would no more have missed the privilege and honour of voting than they would have missed the wedding of a close relative. On the eve of "voting day," they dressed up "special" and arm-in-arm walked to their polling station. They did not own a car. The weather was not an issue. Umbrellas, boots... whatever it took... off they went, proud as peacocks, to "do their duty."

That is why I always vote.



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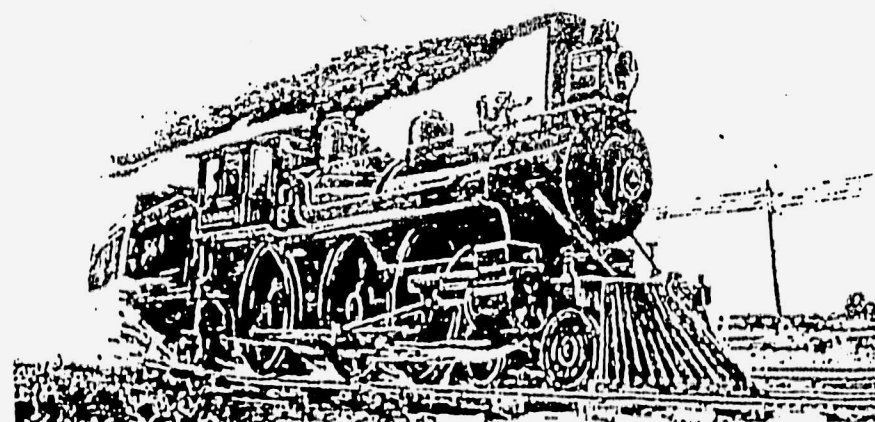
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