**The Tumultuous Tale of Daylight Savings Time**

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Daylight Saving(s) Time (DST) is the system of adjusting the official local time forward by one hour for the duration of the spring and summer months. This was intended to provide a better match between the hours of daylight and the active hours of work and school.

The ‘saved’ daylight is then spent on evening activities which get more daylight, rather than being wasted while people sleep past dawn. There has been much confusion and controversy surrounding the practice over the years. So why do we do it?

Daylight Saving(s) Time was believed to have been first proposed by Benjamin Franklin in a letter to the editors of the Journal of Paris. This letter, however, was written with a humorous tone and was meant to imply that people should get up and go to bed earlier. It was not meant to suggest a nationwide changing of time. The debate continues on this topic among historians.

The idea was first seriously suggested by William Willet in *Waste of Daylight* published in 1907. He lobbied for a change in time but was unable to garner support. The Germans, however, saw the value of this during wartime and instituted DST after the onset of World War I. The British and the Americans followed suit towards the end of World War I. Daylight Saving(s) Time lasted in the United States until 1919, after which the law created for it was repealed due to its unpopularity. It was not reinstated until February 9, 1942 at the onset of World War II. The government saw this as a means to conserve resources during the wartime buildup that was taking place. This would remain in effect until the war effort began winding down. On September 30, 1945 the requirement was removed.

From 1945 to 1966, there were no U.S. laws addressing Daylight Saving(s) Time and states and localities were free to observe it or not. This created a patchwork of different times across the country as different states and local municipalities had different times depending on whether or not they were observing DST. Traveling in the U.S., even short distances, could get very confusing.

In 1966, The U.S. Federal Uniform Time Act was passed and mandated that Daylight Saving(s) Time begin nationwide on the last Sunday of April and end on the last Sunday of October. (This was later repealed by President Reagan in 1986, in which the start time was changed to the first Sunday of April). Each state was free to be exempt from the act, but they were required to pass a law exempting the entire state to avoid total confusion.

Arizona chose to be exempt from DST. The entire state does not observe DST with the exception of the large Navajo Indian Reservation. This was done as a way to conserve energy and save money for the state, as the state’s climate is warm year round. Indiana also had some exemptions, but this turned out to be a messy situation as Indiana straddled two time zones and some areas were observing and others weren’t. The state of Indiana has been working on some legislation that hopes to put an end to this disorganization in the state.

Beginning March 11, 2007, Daylight Saving(s) Time will be extended another four or five weeks. It will now begin on the second Sunday of March and will last until the first Sunday of November. This change was introduced as part of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Proponents claim that the extension will save ‘the equivalent of’ 10,000 barrels of oil per day. But this figure was based on statistics from the Department of Energy Conservation (DoE) during the 1970s. The DoE no longer stands by the accuracy and relevance of these figures as they do not apply to the energy consumption habits of the nation today. There has been very little research on what the actual positive effects of this extension, if any, there may be.

This extension has stirred up all sorts of controversy and questions. Many are concerned with what effect a change like this will have on our daily lives. Parents and schools are worried about the safety of children who will now be traveling to school in the dark before the late sunrise at the end of their school year. The airline industry is worried about the effect on Thanksgiving travel.

The Sunday after Thanksgiving is one of the biggest travel days of the year and forgetting to change a clock in a hotel or wherever could result in a missed plane. Even software designers are worried about the problems that will arise with software that has been designed to auto calculate Daylight Saving(s) Time based on the old tables. This software is in use all over the country and will require labor and manual updates too many systems to get them on the correct time.

Opponents of Daylight Saving(s) Time claim there is little benefit to this extension, or Daylight Saving(s) Time in general. They believe that constant disruption to people’s sleep habits, confusion while traveling, and lost productivity from sleep deprived workers are just a few of the ill effects of a system that gains us nothing.

Many believe that the measure actually wastes more energy, as people coming home from work are more apt to get in their cars and drive to the lake, or go shopping, etc., while it is still daylight. They believe that DST is, and always was, a measure to get more money from consumers and increase sales for businesses. People are more apt to go shopping and spend money after work while it is still daylight during the summer. Businesses can reap the benefits of these ‘extra’ shopping hours. They believe the ‘energy savings’ was never a real concern for the government and was just a way to sell it.

Whatever the case may be, it appears that Daylight Saving(s) Time is here to stay, forever altering our sleep habits and ensuring that the entire world remains confused as to what time it really is.