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led examination of the complex old concepts are out of date. good philosophy. The second



class

to the middle income brackets. It is, in fact, together with the generation in national wealth, which have been making of our affluent society. And reality behind the myth of the Britain one is becoming middle class.

and this is where the complexities begin undoubtedly equalizing trend has con- inequalities have remained, seemingly the last decade, between those at the top of the class structure. They are most ed in terms of income. At the one e 5 per cent of the population who own 75 per cent of all personal wealth; at the 4 million or so individuals whose ing is such that, in the context of an y, they must be regarded as impover- nomic forces which have produced the as and the new prosperity in the middle class structure have not eliminated between the wealthiest groups in our e "underclass" of the aged, the handi- employed and the underpaid. For this the idea of "One Nation" lacks empiri- n economic terms anyway, whatever ce as a political slogan.

ly in which the class structure is chang- he location of class frontiers—that is ain lines of division that can be seen rarchy of social strata. In this respect, re rapidly coming to need new defini- criptions. For example, members of ly referred to as the "new" working tum of high income manual workers loser today, in economic terms at least, er middle" class groups than they are y deprived section of population at the ss structure. And similarly, it appears e-economic situation of many white a closer to the "new" workers than l managers and professionals (see the 9). This is especially true of the grow- leral and technical staff who have or limited career chances and who a kind of white collar labour force. In the distinction between manual and mployment, as indicating a major line t once was; and other significant divi- ng *within* the working and middle e have been traditionally conceived. moreover, is confirmed by what we vial mobility in modern Britain. It has

become evident that the manual—non-manual line is no longer, if it ever was, a major barrier to either occupational advancement or decline. Intergenera- tionally, if not in the work histories of individuals, it is frequently crossed. For example, as many as a third of the sons of manual workers are likely to enter non-manual jobs and, perhaps more surpris- ingly, nearly as high a proportion of boys from non- manual families will move down to manual employ- ment.

At the same time, though, it must also be said that this mobility is very largely of a short range kind. The children of skilled workers may quite frequently become clerks, draughtsmen, commercial travellers, even schoolteachers; but far more rarely do the children of labourers find their way into higher pro- fessional or executive roles. In fact, this pattern of a relatively high rate of limited mobility persists right the way through to the top of class hierarchy. Even at the elite level, there appears to be a fair amount of circulation—as indicated by studies of the recruit- ment of higher civil servants, business leaders etc. But this goes on for the most part within a restricted range. There is room at the top—but chiefly for those whose parents' position puts them half way there to begin with. In spite of the educational reforms of the last 20 years, the degree of "bottom to top" mobility in our society remains remarkably low. There is still truth in the adage that it takes three generations to make a gentleman.

Again, then, we have a complicated and para- doxical situation. In one way, British society seems open enough; most children have some reasonable opportunity of improving on the position of their parents. Yet at the same time, the extent of mobility that may reasonably be expected is itself very much a matter of class.

Furthermore, there is another way in which mobil- ity is seriously—and increasingly—restricted. Al- though the working of the educational system is as yet still more influenced by the class structure than *vice versa*, education is, nonetheless, becoming of crucial importance in determining the level of occu- pational achievement. The occasional entrepreneur, show business performer or sportsman may shoot up without benefit of A levels, but for the vast majority who fail to make good educationally the main chance of upward mobility has already gone, and they are likely to be trapped at the bottom of the pile. The possibilities of "working one's way up" from the kinds of job allocated to secondary modern school leavers are few and diminishing. Of all the hypo- theses about why juvenile delinquency is increasing the view that it is partly a result of the great divide at 15 seems as plausible as any.

Finally, it must be remembered that occupational mobility is not necessarily the same thing as status or cultural mobility. Nor are Top People necessarily the richest. Status and cultural barriers may stand when occupational barriers have been surmounted—a recurrent theme, after all, in the modern English novel. Getting to the top does not always mean being accepted by top people. Status exclusiveness, and the use or existence of cultural differences as an expres- sion of this, are in fact those features of the stratifi- cation of British society which are most impervious to the equalizing effects of an expanding economy.

However, only a minority of manual workers now see society as being divided into the two warring camps of bosses and labour, and allow this concep- tion to shape their entire social outlook and existence. Even the milder philosophy of *us* and *them*—imply- ing resignation as much as hostility—appears to be in decline. In part, this results from the decay of the tightly knit, homogeneous communities in which such images and philosophies were readily formed. But the broader trends of economic and social change have also been important. Who exactly is *us* for the factory worker earning £18 a week, whose daughter is a typist engaged to a salesman and whose son is hoping to get a job as a laboratory technician? The growing differentiation of the working class creates more differentiated conceptions among its members

Election year Britain

of the social order as a whole, and in this way a sense of class solidarity and class particularism is inevitably diminished. Studies of the new working class have emphasized home and family centredness as salient features of its way of life in place of the communal sociability of the traditional working class district. And in interviews in the factory the telling phrase has recurred: "Mates are not friends".

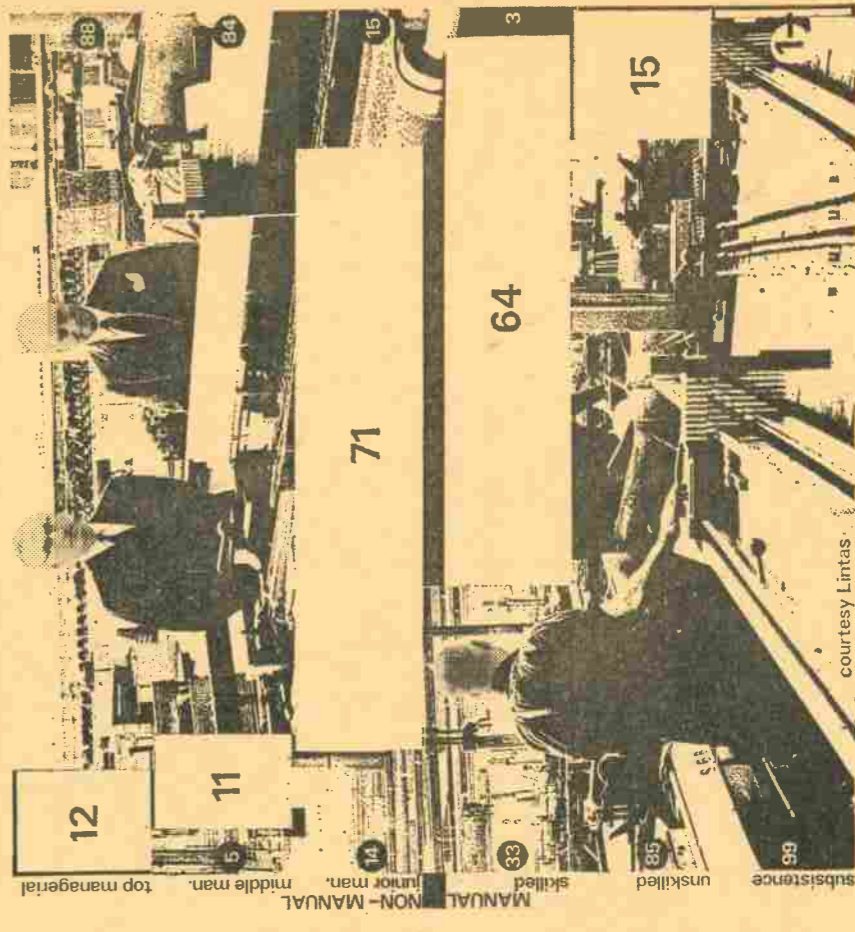
It would, of course, be wrong to conclude that even among these more affluent workers all vestiges of class antagonism have disappeared and that instead there is now a pervasive concern with status gradations. For one thing, there is still awareness of conflict in the industrial field. The new worker, no less than the old, retains a firm grasp on the principle that what is profit for his employer could be income for him, and he is still a firm supporter of his union, at least in its bargaining functions. Collective strength and collective action remain his essential means of ensuring his continued economic success.

Furthermore, the evidence suggests a quite wide- spread and critical rejection of what is seen as characteristically middle class status striving and snobbiism. In part, this stems from a contempt for placing appearances above realities: "It's just a case of frilly curtains at the window and nothing on the table." But also, there clearly is resentment at the status superiority which, it is felt, middle class people still seek to preserve, even when their economic superiority has vanished. Many members of the new working class seem undecided whether to cling to their proletarian pride or to join in the status game. In all probability their decision may affect the de- gree to which they are committed to the Labour Party, come what may.

On the middle class side, the most important changes seem to be occurring, as was implied earlier, among the lower white collar groups. In status terms, members of this stratum may feel themselves threat- ened by the affluent manual workers and for this reason the antagonism of the latter may often be reciprocated. They also feel that the middle class values which seem snobbish to the worker (and occa- sionally to the intellectual) do go with high stan- dards in behaviour, education and so on. But leaving status issues aside, there is evidence that in certain respects the social perspectives of the two strata are in fact converging. At the same time as many manual workers are casting off the old forms of working

INCOMES OF SIX OCCUPATION GROUPS 1961. Net incomes of married men only

The white areas represent the "middle market" percentage of men with annual net income between £600 and £950 (e.g. 71 per cent of junior managers and 64 per cent of skilled manual workers share this range). Area covered by top photograph represents the percentage of men in each occupation who earn more than £950, the bottom picture shows those whose net is less than £600.



courtesy Lintas.

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class consciousness, many white collar employees appear to be abandoning the traditional individualism of the middle class. For those whose careers will never extend beyond the lower levels of our vast industrial, commercial and governmental bureaucracies, a Smilesian doctrine of self help now has few appeals. For these groups—who often feel themselves to have gone down in the world *vis-à-vis* other classes—collective action is beginning to make economic sense.

This trend is most clearly indicated in the growth of white collar unions. But it is also notable that surveys show some division of opinion between the lower and upper middle classes on issues affecting the future of the social services. For the former, these services are now an essential part of their well-being and security, and they are unlikely to be a party to attempts to modify them in ways which might prove attractive to those in the supertax bracket. Further-

more, state education is the great hope of white collar man for the realization by his children of the aspirations and ambitions which in his own life were frustrated—though it may well be selective rather than comprehensive education that he favours.

At the extremes of the British class structure, class attitudes and ways of life may remain relatively fixed, reflecting the rigidity here in the structure itself. In the more fluid middle ranges this is not so. Economic and social changes which are an integral part of the development of an advanced industrial society are forcing individuals into new conceptions of their social worlds and new appraisals of their values and interests. It is, moreover, only misleading to oversimplify this process, by speaking, for example, of the blue collar bourgeoisie or of the white collar proletariat. For one thing, at least, is clear: the trends in question are outmoding our familiar concepts—however much we may reshuffle them.

Who has it how good?

% OF REGIONAL POPULATION BUYING DOMESTIC APPLIANCES FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1958, EXPRESSED AS A FRACTION OF THE POPULATION OWNING THEM IN 1963



Courtesy Reader's Digest: taken from their *European Survey 1963*

National Opinion Polls, working for Aims of Industry, recently published a survey showing that the "cost of living" was over three times as important to the electorate as any other election issue. Indeed 40 per cent of voters regard it without qualification as the one most important to them "personally"; "pensions", the next most vital question, lagged far behind. Gallup confirms that economic affairs regularly rate as the most important problem.

In an economy supposedly committed to growth it should always be true that the voter has never had it so good; the question is one of how fast—and how fairly—good is getting better. There have been years during the present administration when people have become marginally poorer as prices have pushed ahead faster than wages, but these are exceptions. The general picture is that, taking fat years with lean, about two thirds of the extra income coming to the average household is being absorbed by higher prices. Between October 1959 and April of last year average industrial earnings (which often advance faster than formal wage rates) had gone up 18 per cent while the cost of living had risen by 12 per cent. In those three years the standard of living went ahead by 6 per cent and it has probably been doing rather better since then. It is fair to say that since the last election people have been getting better off at a rate around 2 per cent a year. People in all regions of the country agree that this is so (see right-hand map above).

It is price increases for the basic necessities of life that provoke some of the sharpest attacks on any administration. When the costs of bed, board and clothing begin to climb the cry to protect "the old, the pensioners, and those on small fixed incomes" arises.

The Government, however, is not especially vulnerable to attacks like this on its record of food prices. The components of the cost of living have

gone up very unevenly and food has kept well behind. World "surpluses" of farm products, high agricultural subsidies, and (perhaps) the abolition of resale price maintenance in most of the food trade, have helped to keep the rise in food prices down to just over 15 per cent between the beginning of 1956 (the base year for the price index) and the end of 1963, while the cost of living as a whole had risen by 22 per cent. With clothing too, cheapening man-made fibres and the price leadership of Marks and Spencer have allowed prices to go up only 10 per cent in eight years.

On the other hand the cost of the third basic necessity—a roof over one's head—is the cause of simmering discontent (which will be examined more closely next week). The cost of housing since 1956 has gone up by comfortably more than a half. The recent rise in rates—which meant also a doubling of payments for some unfortunate London flat-dwellers—will not help to mollify the discontented. The immediate effect of the 1957 Rent Act was to double many rents; since then the gradual progress of "creeping decontrol" has steadily reduced the supply of reasonably cheap rented housing.

But it is the soaring price of houses for sale—whether new or secondhand—that has made the biggest impact. Statistics from the Co-operative Permanent Building Society, often quoted in the House, show that prices of houses worth more than £3,000 have doubled since the mid-50s. Yet the shortage of houses is not evenly spread. High prices have hit hardest at one definable group of voters: the young married white collar families looking for a job in London and a house some way outside it.

Consider the bright young executive who has already found (as the new Southeast Study asserts) that there is no more room to live in London, and begins to look for a home in the commuter belt. In the

London area house prices have risen four years with the better houses faster. To find what he can afford he to settle for a longer daily journey to had originally intended. This in turn mortgage) commits him to a steadily ticket payment. Yet this commuter who is sacrificing more than he can afford, and the compromise over price review and the compromise over price they are enough to offset a deep, ineflabile sense of insecurity, is another d

But outside the minorities what standard of living meant? Once what given moment to be the basic necessities extra money overflows in tw and luxuries. The purchase of a consumer durables (refrigerators, warty) has in the last five years outpac necessities (irons and vacuum cleaners the country (see the maps opposite), perity has provided both the incentive of saving against the lean days of expansion of the newspapers. "City paise of the small investor, and the ex trusts the growth of his savings. (U have risen from roughly 250,000 in million today.) This may still affect savings certificates; life insurance, banks have all expanded at a record hard to claim that an affluent soci one, but annual savings have increase since the last election. The average 1959 was putting about 5 per cent o come aside against a rainy day has that proportion to around 7 per cent.

Beyond savings, however, greater v all been used to buy freedom of mov away from home are one of the 1 which people aspire. From 1950 to 1 of British people taking holidays show—about 25 million went away each.

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NEW SOCIETY 16 APRIL 1964

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had originally intended. This in turn (besides his
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who is sacrificing more than he can afford in insur-
ance premiums which will eventually educate his
children at independent schools. He may also be
electing to pay twice for his health by joining some
private patients plan. (The number of those covered
by health insurance has soared from 700,000 in 1958
to 1,500,000 this year.) These large standing charges,
even though of a family's own choice, produce a
special brand of frustration and dissatisfaction.

This is a minority group, but it is significant be-
cause the huge majority of it would (if not discon-
tented) be certain Tory voters. There are other simi-
lar groups. The small farmers, traditionally Tories,
are made to feel insecure by the knowledge that any
"modernizing" Government with a responsible atti-
tude to the subsidy bill may eventually drive many
of them out of business. (There are 71,000 with a hold-
ing of five acres or less.) The small shopkeeper feels
the same about resale price maintenance. (Some quar-
ter of a million shops occupy only one or two people.)
It is clear that the very generous 1964 farm price
review and the compromise over price maintenance
have been aimed to reassure these people. Whether
they are enough to offset a deep, inevitable but just-
ifiable sense of insecurity, is another question.

But outside the minorities what has the higher
standard of living meant? Once what are seen at any
given moment to be the basic necessities of life are
satisfied extra money overflows in two ways: saving
and luxuries. The purchase of relatively luxurious
consumer durables (refrigerators, washing machines,
ty) has in the last five years outpaced spending on
necessities (irons and vacuum cleaners) throughout
the country (see the maps opposite). Growing pros-
perity has provided both the incentive and the means
of saving against the lean days of retirement. The ex-
pansion of the newspapers' "City pages" reflects the
rise of the small investor, and the expansion of unit
trusts the growth of his savings. (Unit trust holders
have risen from roughly 250,000 in 1959 to half a
million today.) This may still affect only National
savings certificates; life insurance, and the savings
banks have all expanded at a record rate. It may be
hard to claim that an affluent society is a thrifty
one, but annual savings have increased by 70 per cent
since the last election. The average family which in
1959 was putting about 5 per cent of its pre-tax in-
come aside against a rainy day has now increased
that proportion to around 7 per cent.

Beyond savings, however, greater wealth has above
all been used to buy freedom of movement. Holidays
away from home are one of the first luxuries to
which people aspire. From 1950 to 1955 the number
of British people taking holidays showed little change
—about 25 million went away each year. Since then
the holiday habit has spread rapidly through the
social scale until last year some 36 million holiday
trips were taken. Spending on holidays rose from
£550 million in 1960 to £650 million in 1962. The
number of people looking abroad for their leisure
went up from 3½ million to 4½ million a year.

But in fact holidays are more, not less, individual-
istic than they used to be. The heyday of the chara-
banc is passing and the growth of holidaymaking is
linked above all with the growth in the ownership of
cars. Last year only a quarter of holidaymakers left
home by coach whereas a third of them did so in
1955. But 54 per cent depended on their cars, the
most obvious reflection of the expansion of the
national fleet of cars from 5 million in 1959 to over
7 million today. Just under a third of families own
a car.

A more mobile electorate has become more de-
manding and sophisticated in its tastes. It has brought
back from abroad the habit of wine drinking, and
looked for delicatessen from the supermarkets. Tea

has gone into a decline, while coffee is gaining
ground. Imagination is making quite serious inroads
in British hotel catering though there are plenty that
still resist change. At the "cultural" level, Penguin
books, the serious weeklies and "quality" Sunday
newspapers have all been doing well.

The marketing world now talks of a single "middle
market", made up, according to a 1961 Lintas survey,
of 25 to 30 million people, and providing, as Mark
Abrams puts it (*20th Century*, Autumn 1963), both
the advantages of economies of scale in such things
as mass-produced television sets and also the chance
to exercise some power of discrimination in the
selection of the sets' cabinets. As this market expands,
so class differences in consumption disappear: age
differences and the position of children as depen-
dants or as earners, in fact seem in some ways more
significant.

Dr. Abrams goes on to say "consumption is of
considerable and growing importance as an area
in which to have opinions, and as a body of raw
material on which to build conversation and social
relationships". We not only have cars, hi-fi, washing
machines and so on, but we spend more and more
time talking, reading and thinking about them.
According to this view, consumption displaces birth,
education and occupation as the basis of class differ-
entiation.

Neither party is prepared to deny the virtues of
material progress. Yet one of the most striking fea-
tures of the last five years is the fact that the public
itself has a split mind towards prosperity. The British
have not learned to accept and live with affluence in
the way that Americans at least believe they have. A
revolution of rising expectations has left many people
with lurking feelings of both guilt and insecurity.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the public's ambi-
valent attitude to credit. It is a commonplace that
domestic prosperity now rests largely on hire pur-
chase—there is a HP debt between £17 and £18 out-
standing for every man, woman and child in the UK.
Yet the finance houses which provide the money are
regarded with widespread dislike. As in the past those
who feel guilty about their own debts project their
guilt on to those from whom they borrow. Even
those who do enjoy what they can buy on credit still
feel threatened by falling into their creditors' power
—even more perhaps than by the high rate of inter-
est charged on most hire purchase.

Credit, of course, is not merely hire purchase. The
national bank overdraft has risen by almost 40 per
cent since 1959 to over £4,500 million, and more and
more people have started accounts and are paid by
cheque.

Prosperity has brought many people into touch
with "business" for the first time, and individuals
feel insecure. The bank manager is still often seen as
enemy rather than ally. The boom in house purchase
led to a bill to control estate agents; the helpless
feeling of the new holidaymakers is expressed in
demands that travel agents too should be subject to
some sort of control. Supermarkets have been more
successful in attracting customers in a short time
than any previous sort of shop, yet motivational re-
search has revealed in shoppers a deep distrust of
the "tycoons" who are imagined to run them. Pur-
veyors of the new affluence, lenders, agents, shop-
keepers are all welcomed and all feared.

This feeling has been partially crystallized, among
the middle classes at least, by the banding together of
"consumers" as a new socio-economic group. The
Consumers' Association, the Consumer Council, the
Molony Report on Consumer Protection, the Weights
and Measures Bill all reflect the public's search for
reassurance when faced with the unfamiliar world
of hard dealing. The shopper in the supermarket likes
both to be tempted to buy and at the same time to be
protected from temptation. The characteristic good
things of affluence come largely on hire purchase,
yet to refer to ours as a "hire purchase society" is to
condemn it. Sometimes it seems that we are proud of
what we have bought, but ashamed that it should
have been sold to us.



Courtesy Mark Abrams