

id. The only vocal opposition comes from women's organisations, who fear that possibility will fall on them. They expected to give up their jobs to look after only their sick children, but also their parents and their husband's parents, they become frail and dependent.

precisely, is the WHO slogan meant? It means that people should come to realise that how they live their lives is more important for their health than any other factor in the health care system. It calls for an escape from medical dependency, and a recognition of the limit to what doctors are expected to do for patients.

requires knowledge, but how far that knowledge extend? Should there be courses aimed at the general public, not how to keep healthy or how to give first aid, but also covering the whole field of general practice? In Japan, books of this kind sell millions a year.

we want consumers to know enough to have an informed discussion with their doctor about their illness, and the precise nature of the treatment he prescribes? Every pharmaceutical contain a leaflet approved by the Medicines Commission, explaining to the consumer how the product operates, what effects it is likely to have, and what side-effects should be reported to the doctor or even direct to the Medicines Commission? Does an effective health care depend on the patient raising his knowledge base nearer to the doctor's?

power of the doctor depends not only on his superior knowledge, but also on his legal rights—particularly his monopoly of medicines which the public can legally buy without a prescription. If we are to take greater responsibility

for their health, should they also be given greater rights to decide what medicines to buy—at least from a qualified pharmacist? Has the category of medicines which only a doctor can prescribe been drawn so tightly that the time of both patient and doctor are wasted, and unnecessary costs thrown on the health care system?

But if we are serious about people taking greater responsibility for their own health, much more is needed than greater knowledge. We need to know more than we do about how people's patterns of behaviour develop, are sustained, and can be modified. There is evidence that general practitioners can help their patients give up smoking. But the most effective action to change behaviour may be that taken outside the formal health care system by groups of consumers—Alcoholics Anonymous, Weight Watchers, jogger groups, anti-smoking groups, and all the disease and disability support groups.

A job for social science

But this type of activity tends (so far) to be middle class. This could make social class differences in health wider still. It is, for example, among middle class men that the decline in cigarette smoking has been taking place. We need to find some way of stimulating parallel activity among manual workers, and particularly in socially deprived communities and among minority racial groups. But this is not enough. A major improvement is needed in services in cash and kind to benefit children.

In the longer run, the key to progress is a wider application of the social sciences. They are needed in various crucial spheres. They are needed in research—to work with

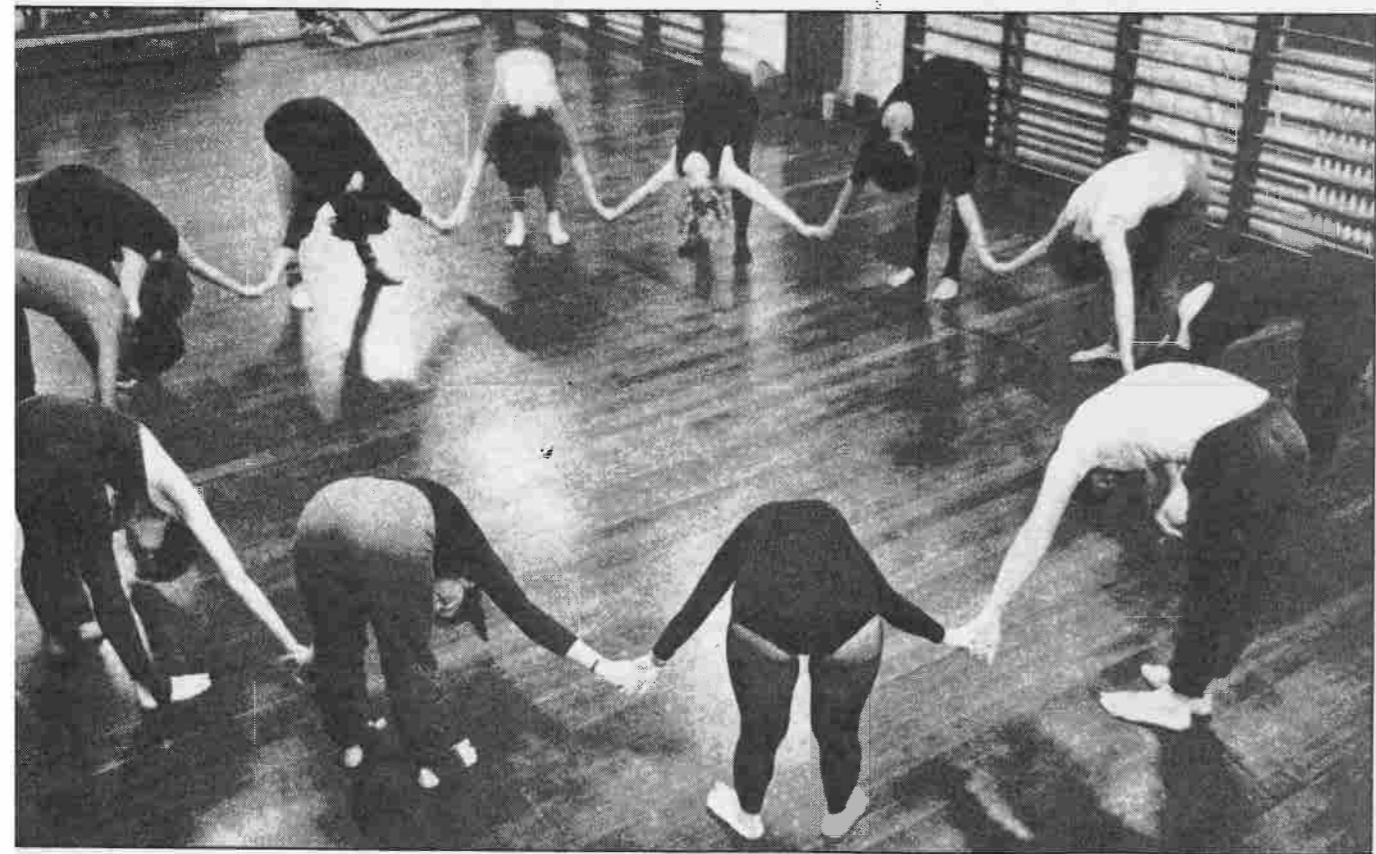
the health professions to identify more of the features of our lifestyles and of our social environment which are damaging to health. They are needed in the development of strategies for change—particularly in modifying both individual behaviour and the social pressures which sustain such behaviour. They are needed in the education of the health professions. The social sciences will only be accepted in these roles if social scientists are humble enough to admit that the contribution they can make from their existing knowledge base is modest.

But it is wrong to imagine that progress in health depends entirely on what happens outside the health care system, and to use this as an excuse for starving the NHS of funds. The most critical part of the service is the primary health care system, and it is this which varies most in quality.

We have high-quality group practices, in purpose-designed premises, with office space for attached community nurses, health visitors, surgery nurses, receptionists and secretaries, giving a 24 hour service closely linked to the personal social services. But such practices are rarely found in our inner cities, where the need is greatest.

There, instead, you find concentrations of solo practitioners, many of them elderly, who are hard to contact by telephone, work from cramped and decrepit lock-up surgeries, make much use of out-of-hours deputising services, and are isolated from the rest of the community health service and from the personal social services. In some areas it is often hard to find a practitioner who will take you on his list. And about a quarter of the patients attending the accident and emergency departments of hos-

Towards a healthier middle class?



pitals have no local general practitioner.

Major improvements in primary health care are essential. These will cost money.

The Acheson report on primary health care in inner London has produced a series of useful proposals—financial incentives to take new patients; the regular inspection of premises with sanctions against defaulters; monitoring the use of deputising services; a retiring age for general practitioners; and modifications to the Medical Practice Committee method of determining whether an area is over-doctored. But the recommendations do not go far enough.

We need a concerted effort to bring together local teams of purpose-trained young doctors who are committed to work together in groups to show how innovative forms of primary health care can work with local communities to raise health standards.

The London teaching hospitals could play a big part in pushing this forward. We must build community participation into primary health care. There may well be lessons to be learnt from the pioneer work of the Peckham health centre some 40 years ago.

Nor can our hospitals be left to rot, or our community care services neglected. Rhetoric on the importance of voluntary action without hard cash to back it is no solution. Cuts in local authority spending have indefinitely postponed plans to reshape services for the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped. Institutional care for the aged is falling behind need, without community services being there to fill the gap.

Last but not least, we should note that, while most people are satisfied with the NHS, there is a growing minority who are not. They are contracting out, or being contracted out—at least for specialist and short-term acute hospital care.

There are five reasons for the growth of private health insurance. First, it has followed occupational pensions as a way round successive government pay policies. Second, television advertising is tending to turn it into a prestige item. Third, the new consultant's contract, hastily conceded by the present government, has encouraged nearly every specialist in acute medicine to get a foothold in private practice. (The effects of this are even spreading to Scotland where private practice by consultants was almost unknown.) Fourth, the 1978-79 winter of discontent, with the likelihood of a repeat performance this coming winter, has reduced public confidence that the NHS will always be there when needed. Finally, our under-financed and un-rebuilt hospitals, with their delays, waiting lists and poor standards of amenities, are becoming intolerable to more and more middle class patients.

If the trend for the middle classes to desert the NHS is allowed to continue, there is a serious risk of a two-tier service, and lack of public support for the necessary spending on those with the lowest health status. The experience of Denmark shows that a publicly financed service can be provided on a scale acceptable to all. It would be tragic if Britain fell behind in yet another area where we once led the world.

Next: David Donnison on poverty policy

The tale of the working class Tory

Tom Forester

A Conservative success story. But will the Tories hang on to their converts?

It's a large, late Victorian terraced house in a fashionable part of town. In the dingy, two-room basement live a retired hospital porter, his wife and their grown-up son. They read the *Daily Express* and vote Conservative. Above them, their landlords, a university lecturer and his wife, a school-teacher, occupy the other three floors. They have a joint income of £19,000 and part-own a cottage in the Dordogne. They read the *Morning Star*—and *Socialist Worker* when they can get it—and vote Labour.

In the topsy-turvy world of British politics, paradoxes like this have always been familiar to election-time canvassers. But as the class basis of voting in Britain—or the "class alignment"—continues to decline, such instances of cross-voting are becoming more common. Middle class radicalism is on the increase, but far more significant in terms of numbers is the increase in working class Conservatism. It may be a sobering thought for those currently fighting it out for the soul of the Labour Party that the only reason why the Conservatives are meeting in Blackpool this week as the party of government is because about five million working class voters opted for Mrs Thatcher in 1979.

The Conservatives are the political success story of the 20th century. As Ian Bradley says in his new book on the Social Democrats, *Breaking the Mould?*: "The one constant element throughout the period has been a strong and united Conservative Party. With its remarkable capacity for organic change and its solid appeal to the self-interest of the propertied and aspiring classes, and to the deference of a section of the working classes, . . . it has managed to weather every political storm and to govern for longer than any other party."

In the middle of the last century, few believed this would be possible. Writing in the *New York Daily Tribune* in 1852, Karl Marx predicted that the granting of universal suffrage would be "the equivalent of political power for the working class of England, where the proletariat forms the large majority of the population." The inevitable result of this "socialist measure" would be "the political supremacy of the working class." On the right, leading Conservatives went into a panic over the prospect of votes for the masses.

The second Reform Bill of 1867 extended the franchise to the urban working class. After redistribution in 1885, they formed the majority of the electorate. Yet since that date the Conservatives have won eleven out of the 15 general elections that have produced clear working majorities, and they

have been in power for threequarters of the time. Only in 1906, 1945 and 1966 has a party other than the ruling-class party won a general election outright.

The Conservatives owe their success to the fact that they have always been able to count on substantial working class support. During the furious debates on the 1867 Reform Bill, it was Disraeli, alone among the Tory leaders at the time, who realised that many working class people had the same values and goals as Conservatives: a belief in the virtues of hard work and individual success; the family; discipline; patriotism.

In a series of speeches, the most notable of which was delivered at Crystal Palace in 1872, Disraeli rebutted the supposedly revolutionary implications of the extended franchise. The Liberal election victory of 1868, he said, was of no lasting significance. In the long term, the extended franchise would lead to the incorporation of the working class, rather than their supremacy. The Tories had nothing to worry about.

Although the Tories were aided by some fortuitous events like Joseph Chamberlain's defection from the Liberals in 1886—which brought across thousands of midlands working class voters—Disraeli was proved right. *The Times* commented in a famous phrase on the second anniversary of his death: "In the inarticulate mass of the English populace, [Disraeli] discerned the Conservative workingman as the sculptor perceives the angel prisoned in a block of marble."

The hapless busman

For the modern Conservative Party, their working class supporters are indeed little angels. They provide millions of Tory votes and demand very little in return, like participation in government. The first wage-earning Tory was not elected to parliament until 1935. Indeed, since the second world war, only two clearly working class Tories have been elected—an electrician, Ray Mawby, who is still MP for Totnes in Devon, and Ted Brown, who was MP for Bath (after attending 40 selection conferences) between 1964 and 1979. Of course, there are a few more Conservative MPs today who are the sons or daughters of manual workers. But manual working class Tory candidates are rare, and they are usually condemned to fight unwinnable seats, like the hapless London busman, Stan Sorrell, who lost his deposit in the recent Warrington by-election.

Although about a third of manual workers (and, once they got the vote, their wives) have voted Tory throughout this century—giving the Tories about half their

otes—it was not until the 1960s that working class Tories were again the subject of attention and study. Their “rediscovery” was marked in academic circles by publication of three important books: Runciman's *Relative Deprivation and Justice* (1966), Eric Nordlinger's *The Working Class Tories* (1967) and Robert McKenzie and Allan Silver's *Angels in Marble* (1968).

Runciman found that working class electors who describe themselves as “middle class” are more likely to vote Conservative than those who describe themselves as “working class.” While emphasising this role of the “middle class,” Runciman also found a link between voting Conservative and the kind of reason given for voting. He asked to explain why they vote the way they do, Tory voters—especially Tory manual workers and their wives—are far more likely to mention considerations of job, status.

Years later, in 1968, in their famous *White Collar Worker* studies, John Goldthorpe and his colleagues argued that “white collar workers” are an important factor in working class voting behaviour. Thus manual workers who frequently come into contact with the family, the neighbourhood or Tory organisations, are more likely to vote Conservative. Those who rarely associate with people other than manual workers live in enclosed working class communities, are more likely to vote Labour.

Goldthorpe's approach had a different emphasis. He argued that while working class conservatism was related to sex, religion, union membership—and views on class conflict and so on—the notion of “middle class identification” was most important in explaining why some working class people voted Conservative. A feeling of relative well-off is obviously a help: “To state the conclusion in a nutshell,” he wrote, “a sense of economic well-being frequently leads to middle class identification, because the workers define themselves as economically secure and comfortable, and see themselves as middle class people as economically secure and comfortable. In turn, middle class identification results in Tory voting due to a dual effect: that this is the ‘proper’ way for middle class people to behave, and that middle class values are most likely to maintain economic well-being.”

Pragmatic or pragmatic?

Mackenzie and Silver claimed to have identified two other distinctive attitudes among the working class Conservatives they studied. “Deferential” voters tended to be Conservative elite as the natural aristocracy of Britain—sensitive to her traditions and obligations, and uniquely qualified to rule by birth, experience and outlook. “Pragmatic” working class voters, on the other hand, judged the Conservative Party's rule to be “the best rulers on more pragmatic grounds,” because they always rate “a superior performance in the government.” It is assumed that they continue to deliver the goods, thus

making everyone better-off in the long run. It is possible that this theory has taken a knock since the experiences of Tory government in 1970-74 and 1979-81.

Like Runciman, David Butler and Donald Stokes, in their seminal *Political Change in Britain*, first published in 1969, emphasised the importance of “middle class self-image” in determining working class Conservative voting.

But one of their main findings—indeed they devoted a whole chapter to it—was that working class Conservatism appeared to be in decline. Working class Conservatives were mainly found to be the elderly children of Liberals and as these older cohorts of voters born before 1914 began to die off, Labour would gradually come into its own in the 1970s. The Labour children of Labour parents would come to form the natural majority of the electorate. You didn't need any theories about the “decline of deference” to account for this trend. Demographic change was enough of an explanation, they thought. The 20th century had been characterised by “the progressive conversion of the working class to the Labour Party.”

In explaining how a substantial minority of younger manual workers and their wives still voted Conservative, Butler and Stokes made short shrift of the theory of “deference.”

Ever since Walter Bagehot published *The English Constitution* in 1867, in which he wrote of Britain being “a deferential nation,” many other writers have taken up this theme. But Butler and Stokes state categorically that “the whole deference argument has proved to be something of a cul-de-sac in British electoral analysis.”

In their study, the working class Tories were clearly pretty keen on God and the Queen; but then so were a lot of working class Labour voters: “It certainly needs no special deference by the socially humble to the party of the ruling class to account for the Conservatives' success in drawing support. We had in our sample a number of respondents who could be described as pure specimens of the socially deferential. But we were much more impressed by the fact that the Conservatives attracted working class support for many of the same reasons they attracted support generally in the country.”

In other words, most people vote Tory because they like Tory policies.

In 1977, Crewe, Bo Sarlvik and James Alt published their important article, “Partisan de-alignment, 1964-74,” in the *British Journal of Political Science*. In it, they challenged two of the most widely accepted nostrums of political theory: that British politics has always been dominated by the two-party system (it hasn't), and that class is the dominant factor in party support.

The February 1974 election, they argued, could mark a “watershed” in British politics, for the pattern of voting (with the Liberals doing particularly well) showed that the class basis of party support “could continue to wither away, regardless of the downturn in the economy and the resurgence of ideological and class conflict,” brought about by

the miners' strike and the three-day week. The difference between the Tory vote among manual and non-manual workers had fallen from 43 per cent in 1964 to 38 per cent in 1974. (It later slumped to 22 per cent in 1979.)

Crewe, Sarlvik and Alt directly challenged the Butler and Stokes orthodoxy which saw a strengthening of the class alignment and in particular a rosy future for Labour. The 1979 election appeared to prove them right.

The Gallup, MORI and the Essex University British Election Study surveys in 1979 all showed (in Crewe's words) that Labour was clearly “less the party of the working class than ever before.” The heaviest desertions from Labour were among manual workers: 52 per cent of manual workers and their wives actually voted for non-Labour candidates; and altogether, taking account of abstentions, 63 per cent of manual workers did not turn out and vote Labour. Labour's share of the vote (36.9 per cent) was the lowest since 1931: its share of the electorate was just 28.0 per cent.

The collectivist trinity

Close analysis of voters' views on the issues revealed that “large sections of the working class regarded Conservative policies and objectives as being more in line with their own interests and values.” On key policy dimensions like unemployment, wage determination, industrial relations, nationalisation, public expenditure and race relations, the Conservatives had a huge lead. There had been a “spectacular decline in support for the collectivist trinity of public ownership, trade union power and social welfare.”

Furthermore, Labour voters were found to be much less hostile to Tory policies than Tory voters were to Labour's. The manual workers' sense of class interest had declined to an even more modest level than before. Their awareness of class inequality and the barriers to cross-class relationships was very low indeed. For example, only 28 per cent of manual workers were prepared to agree that being working class, rather than middle class, made life even a little harder! About 60 per cent said that it made no difference. Only 25 per cent said they noticed another person's class, and only 8 per cent said it was a barrier to friendship. Considering that foreign commentators often hold up Britain as the prime example of a class-ridden society, these figures are little short of astonishing.

Likewise, in his paper, “Class does not equal party,” published last year by the Centre for the Study of Social Policy at the University of Strathclyde, Professor Richard Rose shows that there is in fact less of a relationship between party and class in Britain than in most other European countries. What is more, the link is a declining one. There are now important and growing differences within broad class categories—housing tenure is a major one.

In the Warrington by-election in July, a party formed just four months before took 42 per cent of the vote on a high turnout. 46 per cent of skilled workers voted for



Michael Bennett

the SDP's candidate, Roy Jenkins, and the SDP even picked up 32 per cent of the unskilled, and 43 per cent of the trade union members, who voted.

Whether, at the next general election, the million or so working class voters who switched from Labour to Conservative will stay with them, return to the fold or go for the SDP, as in Warrington, is not clear. (We have the Croydon by-election on 22 October as the next litmus test.) Meanwhile, the Conservatives are trying to firm up some of their new-found working class support. Economic cut-backs at Tory Central Office have meant the dismantling of the famous Community Affairs Department, which spearheaded the Tory campaign before the 1979 election. But through organisations like Conservative Trade Unionists (which is growing in numbers), the Tories are extending their base into new areas of the social structure.

This has been their historical mission. Since 1867, the Conservatives' main task has been to find ways to survive and thrive under the potentially hostile conditions of a widened franchise. As John Bowis, co-founder of the Community Affairs Department was to go out and look for identifiable social groups—the young working class, blacks, trade unionists, skilled workers, etcetera—where we needed to extend our appeal. As one saw from the 1979 results, we were very successful.”

The necessary sweeteners

But since May 1979 things haven't, of course, gone at all well for the Tories. It is the manual working class who are suffering most from record unemployment and the slump in manufacturing industry. As early as 3 February 1980, Peregrine Worsthorne warned in the *Sunday Telegraph* that Mrs Thatcher, in pursuing the monetarist Holy Grail, was pushing things too far.

She should not fail to remember, he wrote, “what the Conservative Party's main function has always been: to win mass support for the preservation of the traditional social hierarchy. For this purpose, economic realism is not enough.” In order to win working class acceptance of inequality, various “sweeteners,” like the NHS, the state education system, and a commitment to full employment, had been necessary, especially after 1945. This had taken the edge off egalitarian demands: “Workers saw no reason to challenge the social structure.” Asking the workers to accept wage cuts, more unemployment and fewer social services, was unrealistic. It could lose the party working class votes.

Up until recently, the Tories had done brilliantly well: “Mrs Thatcher's cabinet,” Worsthorne wrote, “which includes almost as many aristocrats, property owners and millionaires as Disraeli's, is a marvellous testimony to the success of the Conservative Party during this last century in using democracy to safeguard privilege.”

The people who have made it all possible are those angels in marble—the working class Tories.