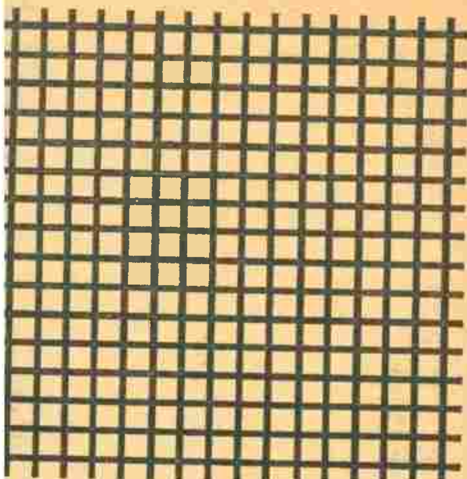


…w the personalities of both candidates as …bout equidistant from this ideal image. …emocrats thought Kennedy approached …e ideal fairly closely, but Nixon failed to …o so; Republicans thought Nixon far closer … meeting ideal requirements.

When asked to explain why they preferred …ne candidate to another, voters often dis…ussed Kennedy and Nixon in terms of poli…cal characteristics, or even simply invoked …e candidate's party label. Actual images … the candidates tended to be stereotyped. …emocrats said few bad things about Ken…edy and few good things about Nixon, …d vice versa for Republicans.

From these stereotyped responses, Dr. …gel concludes that pre-existing party loyal…s are electorally more important than the …rsonalities projected by the candidates. She …sumes that the black-white views that …ters have of candidates are less likely to re…ct careful evaluation of personalities per…ived on TV than a determination by …ople who have been Democrats for dec…es to see nothing good in a Republican …ndidate, for example. But she does not …alyze the minority who switched sides in …60 because of Kennedy's Catholicism and … absence from the Republican ticket of a …n-partisan personality, Dwight Eisen…wer, who won many Democrats' votes in …56.

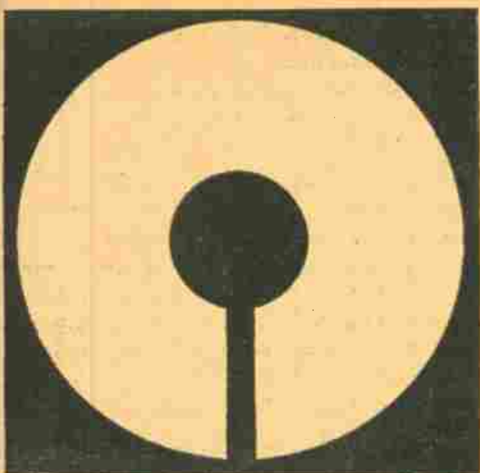
…ENTAL ILLNESS …F STUDENTS

…ere is no evidence to show that factors …culiar to university environment generate …ntal illness. This conclusion was reached … the result of a study done by M. A. …vidson and Corinne Hutt in the Warne…d Hospital in Oxford. (*British Journal of …ial and Clinical Psych.*, Vol. 3, Part 3.)

…he authors found that, although the stu…t rate of admission to the hospital was …e times the national rate, most of the …dents' problems were classed as "not …ous". Many university students find they …e "work" problems or sexual problems …ch are not uncommon in the general …ulation of the same age.

…he incidence of schizophrenic and other …ous mental illness among students was …different from the incidence among non…dents. Many of the more serious student …ents were ill before their entry to Ox…, and had previously been in hospital. …he peak in referral rate occurs in the …ng term for students, but the authors …d that the peak referral time for the …eral population was also in spring.

…ne unexplained factor in this study was … many more students who read Greats … English appear at the Warneford Hos… than students reading other subjects.



ARTS IN SOCIETY

Coronation Street

David Robinson

Coronation Street stands, one supposes, in the suburbs of Manchester, though it could be any Lancashire industrial town. The even numbered side is taken up by a raincoat factory, part of whose basement has been turned into a second rate drinking and social club whose establishment was at first a source of varied outrage and excitement, but which is now generally ignored. On the other side a terrace of seven small Victorian two storey industrial dwellings stretches between a pub, The Rover's Return, and the corner general grocery and post office. Then there is the Mission, whose cleric plays very little part in the life of the street. Maudsley Street runs off beside the Mission, and round the corner is Rosaman Street where the local drapery store stands. Beyond that there is a school, in Bessy Street; and somewhere in the hinterland are a chip shop, a Bingo hall, a cinema, a launderette. Only occasionally have we had brief glimpses of the city beyond them, with grammar schools and art schools, department stores and railway stations. When Martha Longhurst died, we also saw the cemetery and the bleak replicas of Coronation Street on the way to it.

The community of the street is closely knit, and the scripts nowadays assume a fair knowledge of its history (in the early days episodes were much more diffuse from the need to elaborate the setting and characters; now that these are established, the scripts are able to use a sort of allusive shorthand). Of the original 25 inhabitants of the street, 14 have remained to the present; and of the remaining eleven at least half a dozen are still supposed to be leading a day to day existence somewhere away from the street, and can be brought back. At present the regular inhabitants number 18. At the Rover's Return there are Jack and Annie Walker, the licensees. They are around 60 and the brewery thinks that they have not kept their grip on the business. Jack is cheerful and phlegmatic; Annie has slightly grand social and moral ideas and a great concern for the decorum of the house. She scorns Jack in a tolerant way. Somewhere away they have a married daughter who had a bit of trouble with her husband some while ago, and a son (who will probably be returning to the street soon). At the moment they are looking after 14 year old Lucille Hewitt, who was left to finish her schooling when her father and stepmother went to Ireland.

Next door at No. 1 lives Albert Tatlock, an old age pensioner and apparently a bachelor, whose main interests are his allotment and regular glass of rum. No. 3 belongs to the Barlows. Mrs. Barlow Senior died three or four years ago, and her widower Frank seemed afterwards to gain the golden touch. Originally he was a postman but set up in business with a hardware and do it yourself shop. He did very well, then had a big win on the pools and retired away from town. His son, Ken, still lives at No. 9. Ken is a teacher with a sophisticated social sense which frequently exasperates his rather mean little wife Valerie (the niece of old Albert Tatlock at No. 1), who was once, for instance, ready to leave him because he risked his job in order to protest about an unsafe road crossing which threatened his pupils' lives. Valerie carries on a hairdressing business at home, and there are sometimes rather sharp remarks from less well to do neighbours about people with two incomes. She is expecting her first baby.

Minnie Caldwell, a dizzy little widow, lives at No. 5 and helps out her old age pension by taking in a lodger. Her lodgers always tend to be colourful eccentrics. Once she had a charming young con man (who left when the actor did well in TW3). Now she has a failed North Country comedian who works at the club opposite, has a whippet and is called Charlie Moffitt. The Hewitts used to live at No. 7, which is now empty.

The Tanners live at No. 11. Elsie Tanner, the mother, whose husband vanished years ago, is a sexy woman past the bloom of youth. She has golden memories of a good time girlhood in the war, and still has her admirers, in and out of the street. One of her more recent affairs was with a psychotic art teacher half her own age. (She had met him while modelling for life classes.) Her daughter Linda has moved with her husband to Canada, and when Elsie writes to her she puts on a pair of glasses, perhaps unconsciously reminding herself that thanks to Linda she is a grandmother. Her son Denis still lives at home and is as disturbed as you might expect from such a parentage. He arrived on the programme straight from a prison sentence for breaking and entering, but has softened up a good deal since then to become the comedian of the street. His undirected ambition and overimaginative recollections of his contributions to showbiz are a joke taken much more genially now that he seems a bit more settled. He has done a variety of jobs with no success at all, but lately seems to have found his niche in ladies' hairdressing.

At No. 13 there is a new family, the Ogdens—lively but socially a bit rougher than the run of the street. Stan is tough, not overfond of work, an ex-lorry driver. His wife Hilda fights with him and spoils him. She does for the Walkers at the Rover's Return. Their daughter Irma is a jolly, decent girl who works at Florrie Lindley's Post Office and General Stores by day, and as a barmaid at the Rover's by night. Her brother Trevor is clearly going to do well in life, and was up to all sorts of tricks until he pinched money from everybody in the street and went off to London. No one holds it against the family as a whole any more.

Florrie (postmistress) Lindley is a scatty, fortyish spinster with a great crush on a ne'er-do-well Irishman who came to visit and sponge on her recently.

Ena Sharples, the formidable wise woman and *eminence grise* of the street, lives at the Mission, where she is caretaker. Behind the Mission in Maudsley Street is Len Fairclough, the extrovert builder with personal problems (his divorced wife died recently; he's worried about his son's future; and he nurses an old ambition to marry Elsie, which looks as if it must constantly be frustrated). Martha Longhurst, a sad, shrewish little woman also lived in Maudsley Street until she died this spring.

Round the corner, Gamma Garments in Rosaman Street is run by the self-important Mr. Swindley, with the assistance of frightened little Miss Nugent who once almost married him and who now fills her loneliness with nightschool classes in sociology. The drapery links us to an unkinder outside world, for it belongs to Mr. Papagopoulos, a sharp operator who is the terror of his staff.

THE PAST IS SO ALIVE

Behind all this immediate life and present history, though, there spreads a communal memory, an imaginary past in which the viewer is invited to share. Generations have learned their alphabet at Bessy Street School, and sometimes the old ones recall the years there before the First World War. A man who had emigrated to Australia half a century ago recently came back to the street and momentarily sparked off old flames. People recall the Depression and unemployment and the Silver Jubilee. And only a week or so ago Elsie Tanner was saying to Len Fairclough (with no particular relevance, as it turned out): "When them sirens went 25 years ago it started a lovely war for me. I had a smashing time one way and another . . ." When an unexploded bomb was found last summer they all went down the Mission stokehole and ex-warden Ena put on her tin hat and sang "Rock of Ages", and they remembered the good times and the comradeship of the war. And this past is all so alive.

The creators of *Coronation Street* have always defended its basis of reality, and equally defended their duty not to be too real. Derek Granger, who was for some time producer of the programme, has often been quoted on this: "They're not very deep or tragic. My goodness, if they were really deep, it would have to show people going mad and be full of sex. No one under a certain age could watch it. It's close to life to a certain degree. It's naturalistic to a certain degree. It has a very wide range."

There is a great deal of effort to maintain a literal realism. The characters I have just described do not pretend to be a microcosm or a morality or a sociological cross section. They are simply a group which comes, at random, from a strictly limited working class area. Apart from Mr. Swindley who always hints vaguely at better days, the only one who pretends to professional status is young Ken Barlow, and he is consciously loyal to his working class birthright. He drops his h's and his determined egalitarianism has sometimes looked to his neighbours (Len Fairclough, for instance) like a kind of inverted patronage. He and the publican are probably the most comfortably off economically. The worst off financially are Denis Tanner, who doesn't work at the moment and so is

dependent on his mother for cigarettes and pocket money; and the old age pensioners, who are not shown as being positively needy (their rents have presumably stayed low for they are old tenants; or perhaps they own their homes) though they are always careful with their spending, and milk stouts in the Rover's are a luxurious pleasure.

The general economic rule is that everyone lives within his or her income. The Booths, young newlyweds who ran into debt and had to give up their house in the street, were a worry to everyone. The inside of the homes reflects this principle and hence the occupants' financial status. The homes are decorated with slightly varying degrees of opulence in a somewhat dated working class taste, with cheap furniture and knick-knacks that are older fashioned in the older people's houses. Several, but not all, homes have telly. When Mrs. Caldwell bought a set, Ena was as morally outraged, one felt, by the socio-economic pretension as by the means by which Mrs. Caldwell had raised the money for it—on the horses.

Similarly the characters *per se* are literally true. Each is a recognizable working class type, and to that extent I think they are much more real than the characters of the other television series which in general seem adrift from any certain social anchorage. But this literal reality does not of itself constitute dramatic realism; and in this respect even the best of the characters does eventually lack a certain dimension. They are two dimensional in conception in that their response to any given situation is (within limits that are sufficiently teasing) predictable. There is none of the imponderable element that marks real human activity. Even if it was at first sight a surprise that the upright Annie Walker should cover up for Lucille when the child had been playing truant from school, one soon realized that this came from the demands of appearances rather than from any uncharacteristic sense of loyalty to Lucille herself.

LIFE'S MINUTIAE

The characters do not develop and grow under our eyes in the way of characters in a play or novel. There is of course the obvious difficulty that if each character in each episode showed even the smallest trace of a dramatic development, after 400 episodes their growth would have been monstrous. Harry Kershaw, who has been with the programme from the start and now produces it, indicates the distinction between *dramatic* development of a *character* and *real life* development of a *personality*; and seems clear that the latter is more appropriate to *Coronation Street*: "How much do people develop in four years? There has been development in the child, which is quite right because she is going through a sort of vicious period. I don't think that you would get a great deal of development in the older characters. I don't think people change so radically when they get over 50; and many of our characters were over 50—even over 60—when we started. And there has been development, in David Barlow and Frank Barlow and Denis Tanner for instance over four years . . ."

Time broadly follows the real calendar: when we first knew the street it was 1960 for the characters as for us; and now it is 1965 there. But it is always very hard to say what actual length of time passes in each episode, split as they are into eight or a dozen scenes in different locations and at different times. Sometimes one evening in the street will seem to stretch over a week of our time; at others many days seem to have passed between episodes.

The bulk of output demands a certain mechanization. In practice the producer, the script editor and the two story writers plan a series of four, six or eight episodes about two months in advance. The story writers produce synopses for these episodes, which are then worked over by writers designated by the producer. Upwards of 40 different writers have been tried in the course of four years; a hard core of five or six of these has worked from the start of the programme.

Sometimes of course a character can take off without any intention on the part of the creators. Elsie Tanner is a case in point, in which the character that now comes across to the viewer is clearly different from her creators' intentions. The column that appears weekly in the *TV Times* in the character of Elsie indicates the sort of person she is supposed to be—gay, generous, a natural free thinker in all respects. In fact she has turned into a morose mean thinking woman, sharp tongued and an absurdly possessive mother (she steams open suspected love letters addressed to Denis).

The characteristics that link practically all the inhabitants of the street are a healthy, lower class scepticism, a direct patriotic loyalty to the royal family, an instinctive mistrust of authority and the Establishment at large. "The kind of Establishment figures who have largely been the mainstay of most of the serials—the avuncular probation and welfare officers, the kindly PCs and zealous detective inspectors, worldly solicitors and knowing private eyes and omniscient QCs—seldom if ever show their faces down Coronation Street. If the people in Coronation Street have problems, they would seek their own solutions. (What kind of reception would a marriage guidance counsellor get if she called at Elsie Tanner's?)." (Derek Granger.) Last year we saw Ena tackling election canvassers by inviting all three party representatives to call at the same time and then going out and leaving them to it. A more recent incident is an almost sinister illustration of the street's opposition to authority. The father of one of his pupils had tried to bribe Ken Barlow to pass his son through an examination. When Ken reported the incident to the police he was generally cold shouldered by his neighbours.

"The problems of writing *Coronation Street* are never that one is faced with a lack of material but rather that sometimes there is almost too much for comfort. The material proliferates like yeast . . ." wrote Derek Granger. The reason presumably is that if a Coronation Street character is going to work at all, it must be so clearly established and defined that its minutest responses to any given situation are exactly predictable. Every happening in Coronation Street, however small, thus sets off an elaborate chain reaction, from the incident to the characters, from the characters to one another.

And it is not, I think, true to say that *Coronation Street*, in its choice of incidents ducks reality. It will have a go at birth, marriage and death; at politics and the Bomb as far as these impinge upon the thoughts of working people. People quarrel and do each other down. Harry Kershaw calls *Coronation Street*'s attitude "concentrated reality". "We can't show out and out reality. That's impossible. Real life is 70 per cent boredom—that's probably a conservative figure. We're an entertainment programme, when all's said and done; and I can't have boredom for 70 per cent of my 26 minutes. So many more things happen in our street than in any one real street. We are an amalgam of a hundred streets."

To be fair, if reality is not ducked—if it is even "concentrated" in this sense—it tends at least to be doctored. W. J. Weatherby put it well, in an article in *Contrast*: "This is life, not as it is lived, but in a curious way how many of us might like to live it—or even how some of us think we already do . . . Just as *Rawhide* and the other Westerns cater for our nostalgia for what we imagine was a simpler, more open and friendly way of life, so *Coronation Street* presents our back street reality as we would prefer to see it—with all the advantages without our having to pay for them . . . It is like getting the cameraderie of hard times without the hard times, the cameraderie of the Depression with the comparative affluence of today."

And this is true, of course. A few months back unpleasant things began to happen in the street. The presence of an unidentified thief set off all sorts of suspicions and quarrels. Martha had just died. Florrie fell ill. People quarrelled. For a few weeks the whole atmosphere of the street and the programme changed. It may have been truer to life; but I found myself enjoying the programme less, and the TAM ratings took a distinct dip. Now the sunshine seems to be restored, and the ratings are up to the 5 October peak. But by the same token, it must be observed that, at the other end of the scale, if there is not much real unpleasantness in people's lifes, there is not much richness either. There is no cultural or spiritual life at all. Miss Nugent's night classes are a joke; and Ken Barlow's intellectual pretensions were soon quashed by his philistine little wife.

In any discussion about *Coronation Street* one must, inevitably, discuss the programme's relation with reality, simply because realism is its chosen method, just as another programme might be based on fantasy or on manufactured suspense. And for this reason, its very realism must be assumed to be an important element of its appeal. I think that of all the reasons for the programme's appeal the least important is the (currently declining) fashion for working class realistic settings in literature and drama and cinema. The bulk of *Coronation Street*'s 30 million audience must be impervious to fashion in these things, impartial in the cinema between Jack Hawkins as a naval hero or Albert Finney as a factory layabout. One certain reason for the programme's popularity is its sheer skill and quality. The writing can be as good as any in television drama, and its best is when it is most direct and effortless.

Part of its quality is the programme's truth to itself. It began as a local series (it was not immediately networked) and it has never succumbed to temptations to broaden its horizons beyond the North Country and the working class. "The particularity of the setting is undoubtedly one of the serial's most enriching features," said Derek Granger. "This also points to the feebleness of trying to achieve an archetypal type of popularity by trying to create stock figures in a stock formula." Truth to oneself is, in entertainment, often more important than absolute truth. Otherwise Dickens would not be more durable than a Mission report.

Then of course there are the key weapons

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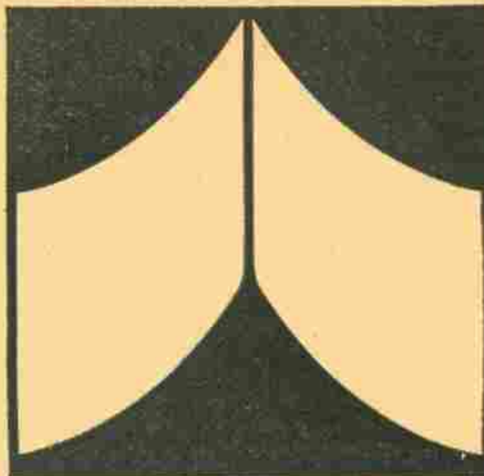
A cartoon in *TV Times* showed a woman who was peeping at her television screen through thick net curtains that she had hung in front of it. "It's the only way she enjoys *Coronation Street*", her husband explains. This is quite a deep observation. *Coronation Street* undoubtedly does supply the curiosity that used to depend on gossip. Gossip eavesdropped in the bus or spied through the curtains does have a tremendous appeal to most of us; and the minutiae of Manchester's soap opera provides this, to an extent, synthetically. "Minutiae" is a better word than "trivia". Undoubtedly the incidents of *Coronation Street* are trivial—the Walker's bar piano, Lucille's truancy, Florrie Lindley's recent nervous breakdown, the Barlow's baby, Denis' hairdressing examinations.

But trivia is a matter of proportion and degree. "I do not see that a father's worry about his child's GCE is any more trivial than Honor Blackman in a judo throw," says Harry Kershaw; and one sees his point. In a work of art the weight of an incident is not assessed by real life measures of importance, but by the treatment and the significance the artist derives from it. (How "important", in real life terms, are the subjects of a Boucher painting or an Austen novel or *A Comedy of Errors*?) There is nevertheless no doubt that the nature of Coronation Street constantly invites one to weigh its incidents in terms of reality rather than art.

Judged on its merits as a simple, popular entertainment, its out and out superiority is measured, if on nothing else, by its overwhelming popularity. *Coronation Street* has been at the top of the TAM ratings since December 1961, and has only temporarily been dislodged by a few *Steptoes*, the Party Political Broadcasts, an episode of *No Hiding Place* and a couple of Royal Variety Performances. On 5 October the programme chalked up its biggest audience ever, reckoned by TAM as 9,435,000 homes—a quarter of a million more than the previous best viewing figure in November 1963.

It achieves something of the colour and robustness and scepticism of the variety stage that was; and this, reasonably enough, accounts for much of its attraction. It may, indeed, be the nearest approach audiences today are offered to the old breed of "character" comedians, like Gus Elen or George Formby or Nellie Wallace, as distinct from the gag comics and sketch comedians, whose counterparts are to be found, respectively, in the working men's clubs and in television series comedy.



BOOKS

Skirmishing on the fringe

Michael P. Fogarty

FRINGE BENEFITS, LABOUR COSTS AND SOCIAL SECURITY

edited by G. L. Reid and D. J. Robertson
George Allen & Unwin 48s

Till a year or two ago, it was a nightmare to try to find material for an intelligent discussion of industrial fringe benefits—pensions, sick pay, redundancy pay or industrial family allowances. Data were scattered in bits and pieces through sources from a dozen countries, and they were often hard to compare.

At last the situation is improving. This study by the University of Glasgow is a useful addition to the material on fringe benefits and is a step towards consolidating it into more manageable form. For manual workers—it does not cover white collar staff—the study brings together a mass of data from Britain, the United States and the European Economic Community; adds the results of a new national survey of manual workers' benefits in British industry; and throws up in its various authors' comments most of the issues for a debate on policy.

I mean no disrespect to the other contributors, but the best chapters are the editors', particularly where they discuss the economic costs and consequences of fringe benefits and their implications for trade unions and collective bargaining. Myths are left slaughtered by the wayside one after another, beginning with the employer's contribution.

The employer, Mr. Reid shows, is unlikely in the long run to meet the cost of so called employers' contributions to either voluntary or statutory insurance. He will probably shift it either to employees through smaller wage increases than would otherwise have been given, or to the consumer (who is usually an employee under another name) through higher prices. In the short run this may not be so easy. But when a social security system has settled down and its long term effects have had time to work themselves out, firms in a country that follows the Common Market pattern of high employers' contributions need be at no competitive disadvantage against firms in a country like Britain that pays for more of its social security by general taxation.

In Britain, what the Glasgow survey labels "supplementary labour costs" for manual workers' fringe benefits were likely to account for $7\frac{1}{2}$ to 15 per cent of the total payroll in medium and small companies by 1960 (the date of the survey's field material). A few companies were below these limits and about 30 per cent of all companies were above them. Fringe benefits were therefore a significant element in wage costs. In relation to total costs they looked much smaller: no more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $3\frac{1}{4}$ per cent, according to industry. But the non-wage costs of one industry are made up in large part from the wage costs of others, and the effect of fringe benefits on the price of goods as finally delivered to consumers is larger than the total cost figures would suggest.

Being so large a part of the wage packet, fringe benefits may be expected to have some effect on the mobility and recruitment of labour. Although their net effect on the proportion of the work force employed in different firms and industries may not be very great, particular patterns of fringe benefit may influence the type of labour recruited and the use made of it after recruitment. The west European practice of high nominal employers' contributions, related to earnings up to a ceiling, encourages the recruitment of skilled labour. Because of the ceiling, fringe benefits add a smaller percentage to the direct wage costs of higher paid workers than of the lower paid and less skilled.

The European pattern also encourages the full use of existing workers, rather than further recruiting, because fringe charges are related to basic wages and not to bonuses and overtime. On the other hand this system may discourage apprentice training because apprentices are subject to the same high social security charges as other workers. The right sort of fringe benefits, the editors judge, may not add much to a firm's power to attract recruits, but they may well help productivity by increasing the stability and sense of security of existing employees. This could be true even if one rules out the undesirable practice of deliberately blocking mobility (by, for example, cancelling the pensions rights of employees who leave).

As a percentage of the payroll, manual workers' fringe benefits seem to have increased only modestly in Britain from 1953 to 1961: much less than in some other west European countries. This low increase is one of the things that ensured British labour costs per unit of output kept markedly more in line with these costs in France, West Germany and Italy than would appear from a consideration of direct wages alone. Fringe benefits do not seem to have increased in Britain at all, as a percentage of earnings, from 1960 to 1963. The pressure to add to them has been growing, but it remains limited. Why?

Is there, as the editors suggest, a threshold: a level of direct pay below which workers and their unions are reluctant to press for fringe benefits as an alternative to direct pay; but above it they do begin to press? On the face of it, this argument is not convincing. In European experience, the tendency has been for lower wage countries to press more strongly towards fringe benefits. The less there is to share, the more important it is to share it fairly. In British experience, low paid manual workers in the public services and nationalized industries, and clerical workers everywhere, have looked for, and got, high fringe benefits.

The editors' more significant point is simply that the hand of history lies heavy on British wage determination. British