

Bermondsey Wed. Nov. 9. 1938

L. Stedman - pyjama factory. Machinist.

" I used to belong to a Church - and a Church Club, - for eight years. But I left. They didn't like you to discuss any of these questions about the working class and politics. Any way it didn't satisfy me...."

I then mentioned the stuff of the enquiry - for the second time. Asked if she was interested: if she would care to help. She would, very much. "But I should explain to you that I have never done anything of this sort before. Only I should be glad to do what I could."

I asked whether she had considered or studied socialism at all. " oh yes - I get it stuffed into me by my eldest brother" . I asked what he was. "A stevedore down at the docks. But he can't work now - his leg was damaged. Lives on half pay. He's had a bad time" Is he organised? Affiliated to anything? "He says 'no', but I think he is all the same - " " And he belongs to the Left Book Club . Reads all the books. He doesn't believe in my going to these LCC classes - says they are all one-sided and really against the workers. But I tell him he is one-sided." Does he know what we are doing in our group, I asked. "Oh yes I told him. Especially the talk about the Austrian workers . That was an eye-opener to me. We didn't know about all that going on in Vienna. When I was at school all we seemed to know about Vienna was music and aristocrats."

I enquired whether the workers in her part of the world really expected anything much out of life or looked forward to anything. No, she didn't think they did. (She had told me earlier that they organised their clubs etc. very well, but thought politics and international affairs should be left "to those that have the brains." Then she said those who do take on any work - "like those that get on the borough council or such like, they soon forget who they come from. I really believe they never think about us any more. They like mixing socially." I've seen some of that, haven't we? Well, I mean Jimmy - ! After a bit she added "Look at my sister. She married a garage proprietor ; they live in St. Alban's. Sometimes we go to see her. Well, I've told you what my brother is - 'working class this ' and 'working class that'. Well, she doesn't like it. She always says we make this class business by talking about it , and we should give it up."

We spoke also about her factory - a small one. I asked if they were organised. "No". Could they be, I enquired. Here she looked at me for a long moment as much as to say "how much can I trust you?", and then said "I've got three or four I could count on. But we are managed by our boss's daughter - about as old as me . And she doesn't like us to be too outspoken ."

* She used these very words!

Jenny Hammond

1.

28 Dawlish Road
Leyton E. 10
Feb. 21/39

Dear Mrs. Grant,

Dr. Jardine sent me an enquiry, upon which I have endeavoured to make some replies and comments.

I hope the enclosed may be of some help to you, but I think you should know they are the observations of one who has had very little experience of travel--association with middle-class, and only an elementary school education--up to 14 yrs.

Thanking you for your interest.

Yrs sincerely

Jenny Hammond.

[1937?]

MINUTES: INQUIRY COMMITTEE MEETING, April 22, 25 Fyecombe Corner

Present were Marjorie Young (Chairman), Ted Edwards, Jean Edwards, Jeannie McConnell, Kenneth Muir, Mary Muir, Irene Grant, and later in the meeting, Donald Grant and Karl Polanyi.

Minutes of the last meeting read and accepted.

Letters to the press: It was reported that copies of the letter had been sent to: Tribuna, Plebs, Highway, Wheatshaf, Finchley Press, Fireroft Old Students, Hilleroft Old Students, Record (T.G.W.U.), Forward, Hendon paper. A letter had been sent to the Herald giving Kenneth Ingram as reference, but no answer or results had been received. Highway had responded unfavorably; otherwise no results of any kind had occurred from any of the letters sent. A letter from Norman Chubb's contacts at Morley College, regarding the Morley College magazine and other matters was read, and no action in reference to it was decided on.

It was decided to continue with the following: Jean to send to Willesden paper; Marjorie to Islington; Irene will make efforts with A.E.U.; Trade Union papers: Jeannie will get names and addresses, select about 6 of most important, and Elinor will send letters to these.

Document: Copies have been sent by Irene to Memorial Club in the East End, a group of about 50 members, mostly ~~XXXXXX~~ dockers and machinists, left wing people; to Harry Evans, member of T.G.W.U. and C.P., formerly chauffeur in Spain; and to Lex Miller, working in Birmingham Housing Estate.

Replies to document: ~~XXXX~~ 3 new ones had been received; to be typed, distributed, and discussed at next meeting.

Meeting with contacts: In view of the impossibility of getting people to come to London, it was decided to go to people by car, possibly taking along a London contact, e.g. Mrs. Hammond. The Grants and Muirs plan to see Simpson in June. Jeannie will write to Paddy about a possible meeting in South Wales on May 26, and asking him to suggest some other date for a meeting in Shropshire if the Wales meeting is impossible. For the week-end of May 13, Donald will write to Varley; and send the document to Varley's sister and communicate further with her; Ted will write to Hope and ask if he can be collected on the way to the Varleys. Ted and Jean can meet the group; Irene and Donald, Marjorie and possibly Karli can go from London by car. The possibility of planning a visit to Ipswich later was mentioned.

Finances: Duplicator account: has a balance of 13/5d. It was decided that a fixed price per hundred sheets should be arrived at by comparison with prices of M.G.A. and Golders Green typing concern. Elinor to make tentative decision and report. Accounting of other expenses held over till next meeting.

Plan for next meetings: Try to assemble London contacts for Saturday evening of the meeting (3 in East Ham, 1 in Leyton, 1 from Memorial Club). Irene will ask Norman to write to his

people, and will invite Mrs. Hammond; Norman will be asked to be present if possible.

Upper class reaction to the document: Marjorie Silcock unable to make any suggestions. Kenneth and Mary will talk to Dobree about possibilities.

Future documents of all kinds: All should be sent promptly to the secretary, Elinor Uiman, 38 Belsize Road, London N.W. 6.

General Discussion: If the letters to the press bring insufficient publicity, it may later be healthy to get the people already interested to gather wider groups to be addressed at week-end gatherings. This would fill the double purpose of stimulating ~~some~~ positive action on their part, and of further testing the correctness of the line of action through wider publicity.

The material so far gathered gives valuable information; shows that the fundamental assumptions on which the document was based are correct. But it shows little if any understanding of the significance of the material on the part of those answering the questionnaire; these people have not yet shown signs of moving to any action because of it.

The great success of Picture Post is significant in relation to the Enquiry, and it may be capitalized upon in further contact with the people concerned. It must be used as a force for building a socialist consciousness based on an acceptance of working people by themselves; an acceptance of the values of working-class life as real, serious, and human. It must be pointed out that the underlying wish for change can be made real only by conscious revolt against middle class conventions.

Members of the committee should meditate on specific suggestions which we can offer on meeting with people at week-end gatherings. Discussion of the kind of changes we have made in our own lives might prove stimulating, e.g. clothes and attitudes toward them.

A.C. Holmes

St. Mark's College,
Kings Road
S.W. 10

1st May 1939

Dear Miss Young,

I have treated your interesting document as a questionnaire and enclose my answers. My observations are based on experience of the working class in Derbyshire, Lancashire, and Yorkshire.

If there is any other way in which I can help you or if you desire more detailed or specific information on any points I will gladly do my best to be of service.

Yours sincerely

A.C. Holmes

Hospitality.

Friendships with people in other towns are rare, primarily because the typical working-class person detests writing letters and has difficulty in expressing himself (or herself) on paper. Soldiers regard writing home as equal to a fatigue punishment. Hence when friends leave the district contact is seldom maintained, and connection with people in other places is almost confined to relatives. No provision is made for overnight hospitality and such visits as are made are usually day or half-day excursions, but arrangements are readily improvised in an emergency, generally by packing the children into one bed so that adults can share a bed.

Meals are readily offered to visitors, who normally share the ordinary family meal unless they have come "courting", when someone sneaks out for a tin of fruit or salmon.

Cycling has greatly increased the frequency of visits of young relatives--cousins, nephews, nieces, grandchildren, who often make a distant relative the objective of a Saturday or Sunday run.

Average meal-times for those who can get home at mid-day:- Breakfast 7:15 am, dinner 12:30 pm, tea 6:0 pm, supper (if any) 10-0 pm. For those who take sandwiches to work:-Breakfast, 7:15, dinner 6:00, supper 10:00. Food is wholesome but monotonous, cooking bad, tastes more regional than individual. Such refinements as fish-knives are almost unknown. For the kinds of food one has only to look around a Co-operative grocery shop. Co-op shops typify the artisan class.

Housing

The kitchen-living room is common but in most towns not usual. There is a strong tendency to live in the living room but the parlour is now less commonly reserved for parties and coffins. In varying degrees courting couples are allowed to use it and members of the family can receive their friends in it, but it is unusual for anyone to spend a whole evening in it, for two reasons; that it is regarded as unsociable and even rude to stay in a different room from the family, and that the room is usually so cold in atmosphere and unfriendly that no one would wish to remain in it. It is sometimes used for homework or practice on musical instruments in the summer, but in the winter few parents would make a fire just on account of homework. A fire in the parlour signals some unusual event. Bedroom fires are usually lit only in cases of illness. I have been in hundreds of working-class bedrooms and never seen one that was used as a bed-sitting room.

Minimum bedroom furniture:- bed, wardrobe, dressing-table (in the slums there is frequently bed only).

Minimum sitting-room furniture:-table and chairs, sideboard or dresser, one easy chair, cupboard or drawers, wireless set. Additional furnishings:- curtains, picture on each wall, two vases. It is usual to buy a suite. Taste in decorations is lamentable. Little thought is given to convenience of movement and economy of effort in cleaning.

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Health

In my observation the working class is both more hardy and less careful of health than the middle-class, but more apt to suffer from minor affections of the skin etc. Health is seldom perfect and minor complaints are lightly regarded. I think venereal disease is less common than in the middle-class, as resort to prostitutes is not common, for a variety of reasons.

Some black-coated workers may feel resentment at the panel system but most people now take it for granted. On the whole relations between doctors and panel-patients are admirable.

Little attention has been paid to the relation between health and diet but there is now a growing consciousness of its importance, although unfortunately the principles of good diet are not well known and amount to a vague idea that fruit and greenstuffs are "good for you"--in itself an immense step.

The school medical service is increasingly efficient and is welcomed by most people. Children of the unemployed almost invariably suffer from under-nourishment and most children do not get enough sleep. I would not say that accident or breakdown in health of children are a heavy burden and I do not think children have any consequent timidity.

Holidays

I recently met two girls aged 10 living in a large industrial town who had never been in a vehicle of any description. Travelling by a train is something of an adventure. Very many children have never been away for a holiday, although they are commonly taken for a day trip to a resort of the Blackpool type during August. Holiday camps have, however, greatly increased the number of families that spend a week by the sea. Adolescents and young persons go for holidays with friends of the own age, generally camping holidays of some kind, and in the North and Midlands at least Cunningham's and Butlin's are household names. Saving for holidays is usually done through a holiday club at work.

The long-established conventions regarding the buying of clothes at set times are rapidly breaking down, and holiday dress is cheap, extremely informal, and not meant to outlast the holiday. In this matter the workers have led the way and the upper classes have followed: the wear of Juan les Pins and Antibes is a costly imitation of what Blackpool saw several

years ahead.

The increase in camping, hiking, and cycling holidays has immensely increased facilities for the sexes to mingle freely without supervision in situations where urban customs are out of place and urban habits are suspended, in an informality is the keynote. The result may be the beginning of a new working-class system of conventions based on reality. At the same time camps lend themselves to promiscuous contacts and some are hotbeds of loose conduct.

Education

The working-class as a whole fights shy of anything suspected of being educational or highbrow. A minority seek to improve themselves from political or material motives, but love of learning is rare in the extreme, probably more rare than it was in the heyday of Liberal Nonconformity. The general attitude is apathetic or hostile, and the individual who seeks to educate or cultivate himself may be admired but is regarded as eccentric and fought shy of. Secondary education undoubtedly promotes snobbishness and can cause a cleavage in a family. The adolescent of secondary education has petit bourgeois tendencies.

I regret that I cannot feel that the working class is as competent either in industry or government as the other classes, and much leeway urgently needs to be made up. The question is difficult and speculative but I think there is a very serious lack.

Qualities of leadership--successful leadership--are far too rare, and conditions are against the production of them.

It is, I think, most desirable that the working class should learn to speak BBC English, solely because at present they are overawed by those who do speak it.

Every means should be used to give working men and women experience of serving on committees or as officers of societies of any kind whatever.

Schools theoretically desire the co-operation of parents and in some cases it is actively sought, but the attitude of parents to the school is mostly apathetic and often hostile.

Amusements and Sports

Almost the whole of the leisure of most members of the working class is occupied with amusements and sports. Those who devote time to political, educational, or voluntary service activities are a minority. Football and cricket and in a much lesser degree tennis are the working-class games out-of-doors. Indoors a great deal of time is spent in card games, chiefly whist, solo, and cribbage. Older men mostly frequent the pub and play darts. Younger men and the women prefer the

cinema. It is chiefly the older generation that patronizes the music-hall. Dancing is popular, though less than it was a few years ago and the preference is for dances at which day clothes can be worn. The number of girls who possess a dance-frock must be vastly less than it was ten years ago. Informal dancing on holiday is popular.

The apparent increase of outdoor life and exercise due to cycling is specious: cycling has gained at the expense of the outdoor sports, cricket especially. This is true only of men, for few working-class girls play games after leaving school. Hiking is not a pursuit of many manual workers. Dramatic, choral, and handicraft work is practised by only a negligible minority. With married men gardening is tremendously popular.

Football pools and sweeps are a drug, a futile occupation for empty hours and a mild excitement in the weekly routine. Their tremendous popularity with both sexes is wholly deplorable from all points of view.

Drink has become a lesser evil, and heavy drinkers are comparatively few. The patrons of the pub fall into two groups--the regular moderate drinkers for whom the pub is a social retreat, and those who periodically get drunk in an orgiastic spirit. The dance-hall bar has more evil effects than the pub.

In general it may be said that the youth of the country has discovered the countryside and the pleasure of travel. I see no political significance in this.

Political and Religious

Churchgoers are now a small and still decreasing minority, mainly female. Nonconformity is much nearer to the people than the C of E but cannot now claim to be representative of them. Religious beliefs based on theology which the theologians have now discarded still retain a stronger hold than is generally thought on those who do not go to church. So far as it is done religious observance is more real and less nominal than in the last century.

Not many young people are interested in party politics or political theories and most women workers are apathetic to trade unionism. Those who are keen meet few deterrents.

L. Priestley

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152 Adnitt Road,
Northampton,
May 14th, 1939

Dear Miss Young,

In response to your request to write out a detailed reply to the questions raised in the document sent, I have, to the best of my ability, wrote down my conclusions. As far as possible I have studied the questions objectively, but naturally, have had to answer many on my own personal experience as a member of the working class.

1. Housing.

The kitchen-living room is definitely unusual, while the parlour is certainly dying out in working class homes. A room for special occasions, such as birthday or wedding celebrations, Christmas parties, or the visit of particular friends, is still kept. It might be added, however, that this practice is becoming more and more conventional. Children who reach secondary school prefer privacy and quiet in which to do their homework, and as in most cases there is a fireplace in bedrooms, the use of the latter is not uncommon. ~~Bed~~ Bed-sitting rooms are most unusual. In a majority of homes it is impracticable to accommodate overnight guests in downstairs rooms, while limitations of space prevent activities or games that can be enjoyed in upper class homes.

The minimum of furniture required for a properly furnished bed-room as follows:- bed, wardrobe, dressing table, chair. For a sitting room:- two easy chairs, settee, two ordinary chairs, small drop-leaf table. Carpets and pictures may be regarded as essential additional furnishings. Young couples today generally purchase a suite on the hire-purchase system. The modern attitude towards furnishing seems to tend toward simplicity and utility.

Hospitality.

The exchange between friends is definitely limited by the lack of overnight hospitality. When friends visit one another, supper is regarded as essential. Supper because most visiting is done at night, as work has prior claim in the daytime. Sunday, naturally is different, and it may be safely said that the majority of visiting takes place on this, the workers one free day. It is unusual for guests to stay overnight, but if so, members of the family will turn out to give the guest a bed. Guests, if invited, naturally expect clean sheets, and would not bring their own sleeping bag or blankets. If someone came in uninvited, he would in most cases be asked to share a meal, and something special would be prepared if time and means allowed. Cycling has made an enormous difference in the exchanges between friends. Owing to the limited means of the working class foods do not vary to any great extent. Breakfast and dinner are always, or practically

always, cooked, while as to the times of the meals, whereas the upper and middle classes mostly have dinner at night, working households have dinner at midday.

Health.

As regards late nights, general dissipation, etc, the working man has far more regard for his physical condition than the upper classes have. The majority of the working class go to bed at a surprisingly early hour. Probably owing to the fear that ill-health might cost him his job, and the certainty that sickness means a reduced income, the worker as a rule, will not consult a doctor until forced to. There is no conscious superiority over the lower middle class owing to the growing effectiveness of health insurance, while on the other hand there is no resentment at being "panel", except in the fact that workers feel that doctors give preferential treatment to richer private patients. Workers generally have no leanings towards a scientific basis of diet. Child illness is certainly a burden, but not an overbearing one except in cases of exceptional poverty. Consequent financial timidity does not greatly affect the child, who is apt to regard his illness as a means of escaping the school routine. A lot, of course, depends on the age and intellect of the child.

Holidays.

If means allow, annual holidays are taken as essential and necessary. Family visits are very common, possibly because they are generally much cheaper. For instance, board and lodging are taken for granted, and therefore not paid for. In most working-class homes, the money for the holiday is saved throughout the year, and if means will not permit a week's holiday, the usual length of working-class holidays, day excursions are taken advantage of. Paid holidays make an enormous difference to the worker, who will take advantage of his relieved financial burden to the utmost extent. Children are generally taken on day trips and excursions. Working class families like to be well dressed away from work, and new clothes are looked upon as essential for a successful holiday. Shops, theatres, picture houses and other amenities of civilisation are generally regarded as indispensable for a good holiday, particularly by young people and the female members of the working class. Camping may be said to be the most popular form of holiday-making among the urban proletariat, although it appeals to the younger generation most. The traditional forms of relationship between men and women are undoubtedly breaking down, though there is still a strong sense of Puritanism pervading the working class. This was effectively demonstrated by the wave of public hysteria at the time of the King Edward-Mrs. Simpson affair. Puritanism is particularly strong among the women of the working class, possibly because marriage is looked upon as a sort of social insurance. Chastity, however, is on the decline as one of the cardinal virtues.

Education.

The working class attitude to education is generally hostile, probably due to inability to appreciate the modern psychological trend of education. There is, however, a more positive attitude to technical and high school education, for the material advantages accruing, not for the sake of education itself. There is a general feeling of apathy towards the class nature of British education, and the working class in the main seize all the opportunities available to "better" themselves. Secondary school education to a great extent estranges workers from their own class, as it gives them different interests and better chances of social advancement. It is true that the working-class regards itself as competent in industrial affairs, but not in matters of government. The main factor here is again apathy, mixed with a definite feeling of social inferiority. Tradition, too, plays a great part in maintaining the rule of the wealthy classes. Another influence is the overwhelming reactionary press, against whose thunder the voice of socialism is but faintly heard. It is my experience that the Labour Party is looked upon with suspicion by many working class people, though it is to be admitted that there is some cause. The Communist Party is also regarded with mistrust, in fact, to call one's self a Communist is to be looked upon as "not quite nice". At the present time there is great dissatisfaction with the leadership of the upper classes, but it is still tolerated with the feeling, "They know best". A great deal more socialist propaganda is needed to swing the bulk of the British working class to the Left. Co-operation between working class parents and school teachers is practically non-existent.

Amusements and Sports.

The majority of the working class prefer to watch rather than participate in games. The younger workers, however, seem to be taking advantage of increased facilities for outdoor exercise. While the popularity of cycling is increasing, hiking appears to be restricted to a small section of the community, and does not seem to be enlarging its scope. There is a steady growth of dramatic, choral, and craft groups. The cinema is becoming a definite habit, with a consequent lack of discrimination. This is no doubt in part due to "escape complex" among workers. The cinema habit is most marked among working class wives, who probably need distraction from the monotony of their daily life. Children's cinema programmes, in this district at least, seem to be singularly lacking in educational qualifications. It is certainly time for a new anti-gambling drive in the working class, but I have grave doubts as to the issue of such a campaign. Gambling, and to a lesser extent, drink, are further manifestations of an "escape complex". The working class needs educating in the use of its leisure time if harmful pursuits are to be eliminated. Drunkenness is on the decline due to the modern trend in public houses. This growth of sport and amusement is

L. Priestley

4

definitely not safeguarded from a reactionary development, particularly in view of recent conscription measures.

Political and Religious Activities

The Christian Church today is definitely in alignment with reactionary ideas. The Catholic Church in Spain has shown this by their open championship of Franco and his rebels. This is natural as the Church has always stood for Privilege and Property, and today, when the struggle between the workers and their class oppressors becomes daily more obvious, we must expect the Church to range itself on the side of Capitalism and private property. Though the church is still active, it is having a hard struggle against the growing indifference of the working class. Socialists should be definitely anti-clerical, though in my personal opinion, the propagation of atheism should be discouraged, as this tends to defeat its own object. Lenin himself warned us against this. The working class of Britain are midway between Christianity and Paganism, and too much activity on either side would only substitute religious divisions for political. Our Labour leaders are much too greatly inclined to rely on pious reputations rather than action. This certainly has a paralysing effect on trade union and political life. As Leon Trotsky remarks, "British labour leaders still believe in the magic potency of churchly incantations". Women, in Church and political activity, though in a minority, seem to be more enthusiastic and zealous than the men. Certain courses of technical education stimulate, rather than interfere with political activity. That section of the working class which attends evening classes is usually intelligent enough to take an interest in politics. The opposition of parents counts for very little against the political activities of their sons or daughters.

I trust that the above will be useful to the inquiry, and will be acceptable to you. I have endeavored to be as concise as possible, and hope that I have understood and answered correctly the questions raised.

Yours sincerely,

L. Priestley.

MINUTES: ENQUIRY COMMITTEE MEETING, May 21, 1939, 47 Lawns Court, Wembley Park

Present were Marjorie Young (Chairman), Karl Polanyi, Irene Grant, Ted Edwards, Jean Edwards, Donald Grant, Jeannie McConnell, Elinor Ulman.

1. Addendum to minutes of last meeting: Ted stressed the importance of having all meetings at times when Karl can be present; also of having general discussion of the purpose and progress of the Enquiry at each meeting, in addition to routine business.

2. In preparation for discussion with contacts, letters from Jennie Hammond, Harry Crowe, Nellie Depree, were re-read. It was decided that the committee must first ask for their criticisms and contributions in relation to the document. Second, the committee should present plans for future activities in which these people could take part; such as proceeding along lines already adopted but on a larger scale.

3. Report on week-end at Hiddings was read by Jean. In addition, it was mentioned that discussion occurred about changed attitudes of the younger generation and conflicts between parents and children. Suggestions arising from the week-end were 1) to get into touch with each other like-minded people in local districts, and 2) to hold a summer camp for further discussions.

4. Report on Correspondence: Marjorie reported that answers had come to the letter published in the Herald and Flebs. In response to the document and requests for comments, full answers had come from Edna Umpleby, A.C. Holmes; from Priestley (Northampton) a short answer and later a full comment; other correspondents had been reminded about the document, but no full answers had been received. The following action was decided on: Umpleby and Holmes will meet members of the committee at Marjorie's during Whit week. Marjorie to write to Priestley saying a member of the committee will call on him when in the neighborhood. In regard to J.C. Dunkley, Morley, Elinor will write to Geoffrey Miller inquiring about him. Correspondent from Isle of Wight to be dropped without further reply. Marjorie to write to illegible correspondent in Bristol thanking him for his trouble and saying that if a member of the committee finds himself in the neighborhood we will get in touch with him further. Irene will arrange to see correspondent in Stepney Green. In regard to correspondent from N. 9 who expressed interest in military affairs, no further action will be taken unless he is heard from again. Document has been sent to a correspondent in Edinburgh; Holmes has passed the document on to a friend named Fleming.

5. Discussion with Mrs. Hammond, Mr. Crowe, Vic Steynor, and Nellie Depree.

In summary of the material already gathered, it was mentioned that a unanimous pessimism about the British working class was evident in all the answers to the questionnaire. The younger (and less experienced) workers seemed somewhat more hopeful. Crowe pointed out that working class organizations supposed to work toward socialism were drab, weak, and uninspired. Donald suggested that the same could be said of middle class and church

groups, and that perhaps it was indicative of the character of the whole of present day society.

Vic Steynor said that the document was all right in principle but that very few workers would understand it; that the personal approach and a gradual introduction of new ideas were necessary. Both he and Nellie Depree said that they had become interested in the Enquiry through discussion with Norman Chubb before they ever saw the document.

Crowe pointed out that working class organisations do not handle their own finances but that working people prefer to confide their funds to members of the middle class. They are afflicted with a middle-class morality which places security as the only ideal; socialists are looked on as agitators, merely as a factor disturbing the status quo. The working man knows that the Tories are against him; but he sees the communists only as people who will take away his precious savings. Crowe cited examples: it would be revolutionary for a working woman to sleep downstairs instead of up, to do the washing on Friday instead of Monday.

Karli summed up the purpose of the Enquiry as follows: Socialism will come for objective reasons, as the only solution of the political and economic crisis. The working class will have to play a role, despite its surface appearances or its own conscious desires. The problem of the Enquiry is how to fit working class people for leadership? In the political movement, the cultural aspect has been overlooked. Socialist consciousness cannot be fully expressed by leaders culturally enslaved to the middle class. Changing the forms of their life may be a significant symbol of change on the part of socialists. Response to this initiative can only be expected from a few. It is up to us to discover the facts and see if the response occurs. If the political parties fail, socialism may have a solid root in the people who have made this change. Irene added the question: In what people will socialism remain when its recognized political organisations are uprooted by a fascist regime? Vic Steynor said that the way of handling life in one's own home is the expression as well as the "symbol" of change.

Different opinions were expressed on the degree of importance to be attached to "education" for revolutionary understanding.

Crowe suggested that the worker's ideal of the home as an exclusive unit must be changed; the communal kitchen and laundry would be great practical steps. Objection to school meals was cited by Mrs. Hammond as an example of the same misconception. Mr. Crowe closed with a "pious prayer" for communal wash-houses and nursery schools.

6. Discussion of future activity. People in East Ham and Ipswich will rewrite document in a form they consider simpler and more usable. Several people suggested that personal contact has had more effect than the document itself, although it has served to get us into touch with people. It was decided that Marjorie

should write to all the people who have answered the questionnaire and ask them whether they would be interested in coming to a camp over August Bank Holiday week-end if one could be arranged. It was felt that contact with the younger people would be particularly valuable, since Hope and Verley had shown themselves too crystallised in old ways of thought and too tired as ex-pioneers to make new and positive contributions.

Karli expressed conclusions: The document already prepared is valuable and on the right line. It is time to go ahead on a larger scale with the help of the people already met. Possibly the publication of the negative picture obtained may have weight. The document in the process of use may be made clearer and more purposeful. A larger scope will change the character of the Enquiry if it has real meaning; it may thus be the basis of some type of movement.

It was decided to produce a second document, more purposeful and challenging, an indictment on the basis of the evidence so far collected; a document raising 4 or 5 questions, e.g. in regard to education, and asking what can be done about them. No definite action can be proposed as yet; we may look to the camp or other gathering to produce this, possibly.

7. Dates of future meetings: June 24, 10:30 A.M., 47 Lawns Court, Wembley Park; July 22, 25 Pyccombe Corner.

NOTES: 1. The letter to the press has been sent to the following trades union journals, as well as papers previously listed: Cotton Factory Times; A.E.U. Journal; Colliery Workers Magazine; Garment Workers; Boot and Shoe Operatives; Records; Monthly Journal N.U.G. & M.W.

2. Decision on prices to be charged for duplicating was confided to Elmor, who decided as follows: Quarto, per hundred, 1/6d; further hundreds 10d.

Edna Umpleby

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824 Harvey(?) Road
Alvaston
Derby.

6.5.39

Dear Miss Young,

I found the document very interesting and as I am not quite sure what sort of comments you wish for (i.e. how do I or my friends do such-and-such--or how do I think other people do it--.) I am commenting on the questions from a personal angle. I may add that (to the complete disgust of my fellow office-workers!) I regard myself as a member of the working class and am neither proud nor ashamed of the fact. I am 23 years old, work in an L.M.S. office, went to a secondary school, and am interested in left wing politics (that may be more accident than design--it's "in the family", so to speak, but I show no signs of straying!)

Housing. ~~XX~~ The kitchen-living room is fairly common in some districts, but not, I find near Derby. In the old houses there is a tendency towards a smallish scullery, a medium-sized living room and a sitting room (the latter not being frequently used in many cases). As for the new houses the tendency seems to be more towards 2 rooms downstairs--either a kitchen-living room and a sitting room (as in the case of my own home at Sheffield)--both rooms being frequently used.-- or a scullery and a living room, the latter being used for everything except washing, washing up, and cooking. That is the case in the house I now live in.

There is, of course, the cellar-kitchen type of house with two rooms on ground floor.

Unfortunately secondary-school children frequently have to do their homework in the general living-room to the accompaniment of chatter of grown ups and all-pervading wireless. When I was younger we lived in a house which had a separate ~~XX~~ sitting room where I could do my homework if I needed to be absolutely quiet. I also did quite a lot of learning-homework in bed but cannot say how common this practice is.

Heat the bedrooms? And nobody ill? That unfortunately is the normal reaction amongst the working class. Bedroom fires are only lit in cases of serious illness and as for anyone using a bedroom as a sitting room--I'm afraid most working class people would regard it as "plain daft". There seems to be a convention amongst the working class that it is improper to want to be alone. "But why do you want to be alone?" People suspect heaven knows what at the mere suggestion of solitude.

I think it is unusual for guests to be put up in the living room--in fact guests don't often stay except by definite

invitation at holiday times, when a general shuffle-round ensues to accommodate them.

A properly furnished bedroom requires, a bed, a dressing-table, chest of drawers and/or wash-stand (yes! Even in a house with an upstairs bathroom that is often considered a necessity) and a wardrobe (unless there is a built-in cupboard, tho' people frequently have both).

For a sitting room--a 3-piece suite--well, for a room which is to be used only for a sitting room, little else is really necessary--a small table, of course. Bookshelves are highly desirable. (Where else can you put your books? And if you're not to have any, what are you to do in said sitting-room? Literally ~~XX~~ "sit"?) Cannot say what young couples do when buying furniture but guess they buy suites and ~~match~~ up the smaller pieces as best they may.

Atrocious decorations are favoured! In fact it seems as tho' people will not buy furniture with plain surfaces. Always those appalling fretwork bits stuck here there and everywhere--on sideboards, mantle pieces, bureaux etc.

Hospitality.

No, I don't think friendships are much affected by lack of overnight accomodation. Broadly speaking working class people find their friends locally so that accomodation problem does not often arise. I think friendships are far more likely to suffer from lack of occasional meals with ones friends. A too often it's a case of "Come to tea on Sunday" and out come one's best frock and party manners. Such a pity. I've only recently made my grandmother realise that when I bring a friend to tea, I want nothing extra. (I live with my Grandmother who is 71 and remarkably adaptable for her age, but nevertheless she clings to some old ideas). I think she thinks it looks "rude" to give guests the same as one would have alone. My fiancé comes to tea frequently when he is in Derby. He also goes home with me occasionally. I believe this sort of thing is accepted as quite normal by my family. That seems to be the general convention round here (I speak of the Midlands--Derby and Sheffield--as far North as, say, York where I have also lived). Once the boy-friend is accepted as the boy friend he is treated as one of the family--stays to supper, enters the house without knocking etc.

Guests would, I think, expect clean sheets (I should, anyway and I would not take a sleeping bag. Is this common in some districts?) An uninvited guest would certainly get a meal--share what we had at dinner time--or a tin of fruit might be opened at tea time.

Cycling certainly seems to have made a difference. I frequently hear friends say "We'll cycle over to Auntie --'s at XX --. She won't mind". In such a case where the arrival would be unexpected, cyclists frequently take their own sandwiches and rely on the hospitality of the aunt for a drink--tea etc.

This kind of thing is frequently practised by my brother (18) and his friends.

In Sheffield 9 families out of 10 have late dinner, but they don't refer to it as that! They talk of "having my dinner when I get home". In Derby and York on the other hand, it is usual for the men folk to go home at the mid-day break and have dinner then. This is merely because it's more convenient-- Sheffield being large and homes far away from work. It certainly is not an imitation of the upper classes. Lots of sandwiches packed. Meat and potatoes form main portion of evening meal (unless the main meal is taken at mid-day of course).

From my observation fewer people go to the doctor than one might expect. Frequently one sees panel patients with bad colds etc. and tho' it would cost them nothing to get treatment they neglect to do so. (Suggest lack of intelligence-- or at any rate education).

Until the innovation of camping holidays and holidays with pay, comparatively few working class people could afford holidays. Children are less frequently taken on trips. Very definite rules of dress--must have new clothes for Whitsuntide-- girls used to prefer white frocks in my younger days but this fancy seems to be dying out. But the children demand something new at Whit.

Shops are not I should think regarded as essential to a good holiday. Whether you would call "fun-fairs" and figures of 8 "amenities of civilization", I don't know, but they are certainly demanded by the working class on holiday!

I think camping is spreading to families.--we have camping holidays--particularly to families with small cars-- as in my own case.

Education.

I think the attitude towards education varies greatly. The better type of parent co-operates with the better type of teacher; but there are often faults on both sides. Parents rather in awe of teachers--altho' teachers are very frequently the children of working class parents. (As in the case of several of my own friends). I don't think the average parent ever thinks about the class nature of British education. The only way the problem worries them is from the aspect of "Can we afford to keep John at school 2 more years?" or "What's he going to do when he leaves that he couldn't start doing now?" From working class parents' point of view education is 100% preparation for vocational purpose--they never think about the cultural side; I doubt whether they are aware of it.--hence the hostility towards languages, algebra, geometry etc. From this point of view, if a subject is not going to help John get or keep a job, it is waste of time for him to learn it.

I suppose secondary education of children of working ~~middle~~ class parents must bring an estrangement with it. I suppose I have been more fortunate than most people--my parents have always encouraged me. But then, tho' they have had only elementary school education, they are more intelligent than most parents. At all events, I have never felt any "difference" because of my education.

I know little of the attitude of labourers etc to trades ^{unions} but the attitude of my own colleagues is lamentable--particularly amongst the girls. They "don't believe in unions" (except when it comes to deriving benefit therefrom). It's my personal belief that they are too mean to pay the sub. and can see no further than the nose-end.

I should like to see a spreading of BBC English (-grammar, if not pronunciation!) I realise that dialects have played an invaluable part in the building up of the English language--but I still don't like them except in small doses, occasionally.

Amusements. These vary greatly. Some people go regularly to the cinema others never. Indoor amusements--wireless (an easy first--tho' too often used just as a background for something else)--reading, knitting, sewing. Outdoor--gardening, cycling, games such as tennis, cricket etc. For those people interested in politics, activities connected therewith fill up most of the spare time--meetings, canvassing of one sort and another, socials, whist drives, discussions etc.

If people like gambling why stop them? I see no harm in it, provided people don't exceed their means. I never gamble but I do smoke and drink.

Political and Religious activities.

It seems that the young people too often use politics and religion as a means to cheap entertainment--socials etc.

Evening school probably interferes with political activity quite a lot. In my own case, I attend classes twice a week. Since I have left school I have attended several kinds of classes--W.E.A. and University Extension, Art School etc.--these attendances varying from 1 to 3 nights a week.

Possibly the opposition of parents enters but little into the question. If there is opposition, younger people probably let their parents think they are elsewhere; older children can frequently please themselves where they go and what they do.

What a ~~xxx~~ pity this enquiry has to be carried out by correspondence. So many points need following up. I shall look forward to hearing from you again.

Yours sincerely
Edna Umpleby.

Edna Umpleby

5

P.S.

How many people responded to your enquiry? Are they mostly people from round London? Men or women? I should very much like to know what kind of other people are interested in this sort of thing.

The following comments are based on the experience and impressions gained in visiting unemployed persons and refer, in the main to the lower grade of the "working class".

The persons visited are almost wholly unskilled, untrained, have had but little aspiration to "learn a trade", have drifted from one unskilled job to another, have left school at the earliest possible age, as is the custom of their class, and have, therefore attained very little more than the ability to read and write and do the simplest arithmetic.

(1) Mobility

They don't as a rule visit distant places--if a member of the family carries it is usual for that member to settle down within walking distance or nearer--even in the house next door.

(a) The house such a person lives in is usually the house at the cheapest rent rent is the factor governing selection--the kitchen is the living room in which everything is done--friends and relations meet on an intimate footing--here they foregather round the fire--here the children read, play and do their lessons--here the baby is attended to. Here the man of the house is in the bosom of his family--when he is at home--~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ he spends most of his time outdoors. The "parlour" is not so intimate a room its the place where the good furniture is--it is a receptacle for discarded outdoor garments--At heart the housewife realises it is a concession to convention and her reaction to it is tinged with tolerant amusement--The "parlour" is, I think, left out of the calculation of the architect in new working class homes

(b) A strong mark of polite manners is for the visiting women to offer and to participate in the work entailed in the preparation of and washing up after a meal--the women depart to the scullery--the men to the local pub. The men don't ask permission to smoke--that would be "putting on airs". But it is observed that this class of people don't make many friends--their friendships, which are not very deep, are confined to their neighbours. On the other hand their sympathies and services are very practical towards a sick neighbour--it is considered, almost, to be a duty to be of the utmost assistance to a sick neighbour. "It's the poor that helps the poor" is a true saying

(c) As a rule when a day trip is possible the whole family go probably dictated by the fact that the care of small children cannot be arranged for

(d) These facilities are not contemplated by this class of society

XXI

(2) Personal life:-

"Birds of a feather flock together" In this class of society I think that much satisfaction is obtained from exchange of views--conversation about the goings on around them the discussion of local affairs and arguments over football and such like but there is very little original thought--almost none in fact--opinions are based upon what the headlines of the local paper suggest. In fact opinions and expressions can be said to be "Head lines" and no more. They don't read books and they don't read the newspapers apart from football results--they don't use the wireless intelligently It is remarkable to note that there is an instrument in the majority of houses which is kept going incessantly and which is almost always tuned in to Luxemburg ~~EE~~ the station that broadcasts advertisements plus catchy and popular tunes

(a) Pictures--the cheapest places--the local football match I have not yet met a man of this class who expressed appreciation of the beauties of the countryside or who went fishing, for example

(b) holidays--this class realise the value of holidays but well!--no money--no holiday--Public holidays just come and go without any outstanding feature

(c) Their political and religious views are hard to discover--they fly to the H.P. to air a grievance whether he be a conservative or socialist or liberal or anything else

3 Use of resources in light of real needs

The wife is the manager, invariably--the man retains from his wage what he considers to be the amount he needs and hands the remainder over to the wife and lets her get on with the job of "making both ends meet" without interfering unduly. The wife usually has a very tough problem. It is exceedingly difficult to provide much more than food--clothes and books are the bugbear. As a rule the lowest priced article whether it be food or anything else is sought She is a good manager in a very rough and ready way but she doesn't show a great deal of intelligence or appreciation of food values--She purchases clothes on H.P. terms and pays dearly--and, moreover, she is well aware of it, but what other can she do? She is not a good seamstress and what sewing she does is "cobbling"

The wrong in the above is the retention of part of the family income by the man--In fact the man is not thoroughly domesticated and only follows the custom of his class when he turns over the management of the home to his wife and seeks his pleasures(!) and his social amenities elsewhere

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Housing:

- (a) is the kitchen living room usual--see above
 (b) is the parlour dying out--Yes in consequence of the design of the houses of the Municipal housing schemes but it should be noted that in-door sanitation and baths with H and C water are now being installed in the houses for this class of society--a phase which is a distinct innovation
 (c) homework for secondary school children--the children of this class seldom--very seldom--attain this stage of education They are taken from school at the earliest moment--. Such continuation of education is not envisaged
 (d) heating of bedrooms--building by-laws require a fire place in bedrooms (but not always)--this is seldom used for economic reasons

Bedrooms are not used as sitting rooms--I don't think any one of this class would retire to his bedroom to seek solitude--he'd go out into the streets--I think it would be considered impolite to sit apart in another room. A courting couple would be left alone most religiously in the parlour but if they were to go upstairs it would be the height of impropriety and exceedingly bad manners to say the least

Furniture

Whatever else is lacking curtains must be provided for each window--at least for the windows looking on to the street! This is an unbreakable convention bed,--table, ~~chair~~ chair, there is usually a built in cupboard It is generally realised that a suite of bedroom furniture is necessary and desirable but economically impossible In the sitting room there is usually much more furniture than is necessary but I think the essentials are a "side board" or bureau for the family treasures, a sofa and a table--a floor-covering is considered to be absolutely essential

Hospitality

He is an hospitable creature within his limitations He doesn't put his friend up for the night because it is an impossibility--He will be at some trouble to accommodate a near relative--his adult son for example--in an emergency but the accommodation available will be the sofa in the parlor

There is a definite code of manners in this class of society--the visitor must have the best chair--he must be offered every dish on the table--it is not impolite to come to table in shirt sleeves. I can remember being present as a guest at a meal where the men actually removed their coats before sitting down and this was in an insurance agents home--a grade of society superior to this under review--I think the underlying thought was the injunction to "make yourself quite at home"

It is not customary for guests to stay the night--the accomodation is so limited--a young girl or boy may share the bed of the daughter or son but I don't think there would be a lot of anxiety over the lack of clean sheets

An uninvited guest would probably share the tea-time meal--or might not--its a case of economic limitation again

No--I don't think cycling has had any effect upon Hospitality

HEALTH

The man of this class risks his health to a great extent he is a hardy individual and so is the woman No--I don't think the more prosperous man faces the rigours of the climate to the same extent--you see, he's not forced to--he has the means to buy another pair of boots or an overcoat--I don't think the more prosperous man possesses greater stamina by reason of his better economic position--The incidence of mild illness is, if anything, less amongst the class under review than amongst the superior grades. Illness is more on view because of the limited accomodation

National Health Insurance--"Panel"

I don't think this man feels superior because he is nationally insured but I think he has a sense of relief in the thought that medical treatment is sure to be forthcoming when necessary--he knows he doesn't get expensive treatment for ordinary ailments and he knows he doesn't get a "bedside manner" He also knows that he will receive treatment commensurate with his need e.g. Tuberculosis

Education

This class of society have been drilled into a ~~ESSENTIAL~~ realisation that the law compels parents to send the children to school. Generally, the parents think in terms of elementary education only, and look forward to the time when the child will be free from school and become a wage earner. If the child is sufficiently bright to be passed to a higher grade of school the parents still look forward to him or her becoming a wage earner at the earliest possible moment

They are aware of the existence of the secondary school but have almost no knowledge of the educational ladder--They are more aware of the vocational training classes of the elementary school and the classes of the night schools to which they lead--They are keen to display the handiwork of their boys who are members of these classes--their mentality is that the boys have passed the academic stage (if this word can be used here) and are now being taught a trade and thereby are progressing toward wage earning. I don't think they aspire to leadership through education--they are apparently not aware of this avenue--If leadership is attainable it is

L.G. Taylor

revised 5

reached by work and employment. I think that admission to membership of a Trade Union is looked upon as a step forward e.g. It is a distinct mark of superiority to be a Registered Port Worker at Gravesend and Tilbury--this confers valuable preferential status in casual employment at the docks but this is an economic advantage only--the man is still in the rank and file of workers--he doesn't thereby become a ganger or leader of a squad of men.

I think this class of man is proud of his experience and knowledge as a worker--he feels he is at the root of things--he knows! but he doesn't realise his limited outlook

SPEECH

Generally, this class of man speaks quite good English--fairly free from dialect here in the south East tinged with Cockney, but quite good but his vocabulary is very limited--1,000 words would be a generous estimate. As before said, his conversation is principally head lines--statements and no real argument

In conclusion:-

I get the impression that this class of society is a water-tight compartment. They don't "mix"--they keep to themselves as much from choice as from compulsion--they have their own code of manners they have fair ideas of morality and religion--They dispense with the marriage ceremony to a small extent--their marriages are successful within their class but are disastrous otherwise. They realise their economic impotency and they are resigned to their environment solely because of their inability to alter it. They don't combine in a common effort.

MOBILITY.

1. There is a growing tendency to meet friends and comrades at informal social gatherings organised by T.U. political organisations, churches, parents v teachers, clubs, etc., Young people seem to manage to visit distant places, but once home is started the coming of children makes this almost an impossibility. Young people ~~EM~~ also make good use of hiking, youth hostels, etc.,

2. It is very difficult to enforce freedom to shape personal life. It is usual to tolerate in part, the wishes and views of others - in amusements, holidays and even political activities - thereby sacrificing one's desire to be and to act alone, often in a futile effort to obtain harmony.

A. A newly married couple usually commence with minimum accommodation for 2 - viz. - living room, bedroom and sitting room. When children arrive, unless the income has increased, ultimately the sitting room has to serve as bedroom. Furniture is not usually bought "bit by bit". Numbers now have gas or small electric fire in bedroom and sitting room, convenient but certainly not cheap. Modern libraries now have a room for children to do homework in, or the sitting room has to be used.

B. It is not usual to expect or provide overnight hospitality, but tea and evening gatherings of friends are common - also Sunday day visiting. If a friend stays for the night the members of the family usually turn out and "make shift". Certainly clean sheets! very unusual to bring sleeping bag. Uninvited guests share with family regarding meals. Christmas is generally the recognised time for extras, and special preparation. Times of meals vary according to work. If possible all have cooked midday meal. Where workers cannot get midday meal at reasonable prices away from home, then sandwiches midday, and cooked meal in the evening.

C. Workers take National ~~EMIA~~ Health as matter of course. Still some jest about Panel Dr. Scheme falls far short of being effective. Wives and dependents not included. Patients never seen until they report for treatment. There should be periodical medical examinations. There is a growing desire to study food values among working women.

D. Hundreds had first holiday with pay last year, though still Easter, Whitsun, August and Xmas means short weeks. (shut out two or three days.) Many firms have holiday clubs. Still the habit to save hard and spend hard. Question whether a year of "going short" is recompensed by one week's holiday. No hard and fast rules regarding necessary essentials. Clothes just worn on Sunday is dying out. Camping spirit is growing and relationship between men and women far more natural.

E. Majority welcome increased facilities for education and aim at secondary education for the children, though chances still very limited. Afraid the dominant idea is to "better

oneself". Elementary education compulsory from 5 (unless some satisfactory alternative provision is made). At 11 all children are tested for entrance into Secondary, Central or Jnr. Technical School, where they remain until 16 or longer. The new Act raises elementary school leaving age from 14 to 15 in September, 1939. The curriculum is much broader today, and much depends ~~on~~ upon the Head Teacher. Every child should be taught one foreign language. Elementary Schools should be reorganised on Secondary School lines. Number of children are deprived of higher education that they are capable of using.

Working Class do not usually feel less competent to govern. Absolute business acumen not only or even best qualification. - too one sided. There is increasing co-operation between the parents and the school. A number of Head Teachers encourage this.

G. All school children encouraged to play organised games - continue in Old Scholars' Clubs. There is a growth of dramatic and choral groups - also hiking. Large numbers flock to watch outdoor games. Cinema regular weekly entertainment - attend automatically, no matter what the programme is. Gambling in Football Pools etc., regular pastime, absorbing a weekly 1/- to 2/- of working mens' wages that could be better spent. Excessive drink does not seem to be general. There is a danger when people do not realise their own responsibilities, too apathetic to make intelligent use of their own power, of a reactionary Fascist regime.

G. Numbers have positively relinquished the Church. Unsatisfactory attitude to Peace. Apathy to social reform. At the same time many have definite religious views, but do not belong to any community. Religious opinions are not questioned in R.U. or Labour Party. In some political groups women have no difficulty regarding status ~~♀~~ - they show marked administrative ability. I believe this is to be found more in the Labour Party than the Conservative Party, who seem to still feel that women do not understand politics. Evening School interferes a good deal with political activity. Just the type who would like to study politics also recognise the necessity of attending evening classes. Parents have not such a decided influence on the political consciousness of the adolescent.

Working class still cling to old traditions and are clogged by conventions. If they could only become conscious of their absurdity and futility, what a great step forward it would be.

Housing

The ~~XXXX~~ kitchen-living room is not used to a very great extent. Most post-war houses have been built with kitchens hardly large enough for use as a kitchen. The parlour living room is as popular if not more in vogue than ever, the whole of the family activities are confined to this room which serves as the childrens nursery-bathroom-study--and very often meeting place for their friends. Undoubtedly the front room (or sitting room) is kept for special occasions. E.g. Xmas-time or the entertaining of company. It is seldom otherwise used, and very often strictly out of bounds for the children as the room "must be kept nice, in case anybody comes in".

Home work is invariably done in the living room, which is generally the only heated room in the house. The wireless is almost bound to be on and probably two sets of conversation. During my own days of study I found that although this was a setback one can get used to it, and I am at present able to study and write with the wireless, which stands on the top of my bureau, going at full blast.

It is beyond the usual working class income to heat bedrooms for regular use. ~~XXXXXX~~ Although most bedrooms have fire places, these are more often only used in case of illness, and in many homes are completely boarded over as an unnecessary draught hole. I can think of no acquaintance who has a bed-sitting room. This is entirely out of consideration, as in most cases it would double electricity costs (or gas), and increase coal consumption by about one third. This would mean-- ~~XXX~~ apart from the extra furniture needed--that at least another 4/- to £ 5/- a week would be needed, which, in the ~~XXXXX~~ majority of cases is not possible.

Modern furniture is made strictly to serve one purpose, not to serve the dual purpose that the working class could put them to. With the dying out of the sofa in the living room it is difficult to put a guest up in this manner, in any case it would not be considered "the thing" to put a guest at such inconvenience. The guest is generally considered to be a privileged person, to whom every attention must be given. E.g. whilst all of the family (both sexes) have to use the kitchen sink for their toilet, the guest will probably have a jug of hot water taken to the bed-room and will wash in the wash stand.

The newer houses are eliminating the washstand from the bedroom however, but it usually finds its way to the bathroom, which, whilst containing a bath and cold water tap, seldom contains a sink (wash basin) or a water heater.

The minimum furniture for a bedroom usually consists of bed--wardrobe--chest of draws (modernly known as a tall-boy)--dressing table and a chair. It would be considered essential to have a wash stand in the guest-room if the house did not

possess a bath room.

A properly furnished sitting room would contain the orthodox three piece suite--with one or two dining room chairs and a small table--in some cases these are supplemented by a sideboard. Decorations usually consist of "art pots" and a striking clock.

Practically in every case a young couple will buy their furniture in the "suite", heedless of what their individual needs may be.

XXXXXXXX Hospitality

Yes, the hospitality problem is obstructed by many things. Firstly lack of space--secondly lack of means. except in the case of a very intimate guest, the house itself will assume a strained and artificial atmosphere. "Manners" must be put on, words chosen with care, and attempts made to impress the guest that he is in the company of "nice well mannered people". The result is usually a complete "flop", and lack of understanding friendship between host and guest. It is therefore more frequent to find friendly relationships going on between the working class in the shape of Sunday afternoon tea parties. Which runs to a set programme--afternoon conversation, followed by tea (best cups and saucers--specially prepared food), then in the evening another chat or a game of cards. The company return home for supper or else stay to receive a drink and biscuits, cakes, or sandwiches.

With regard to the unexpected guest, undoubtedly a special meal would be prepared, it is doubtful if a visitor would be asked to stop for a meal unless something presentable could be offered. It cannot be said that cycling has made any great difference to this hospitality problem.

Food. Meals usually consist of breakfast, (eggs and bacon), dinner (midday) two course, tea, and supper. The mid-day meal is gradually becoming known as lunch. In this district (Suffolk) there is a habit of serving pudding and gravy before the meat and veg. This is definitely a proletarian custom which is now dying out.

Health. There is definitely a feeling of inferiority at being on the "panel". This very often is encouraged by the doctor, who will treat the private patient as a "customer" and the panel patient as a nuisance. The working class definitely do not get a correctly balanced diet, although in many cases they do not get sufficient. Those who do get enough cannot afford to buy properly balanced foods. This is proved by the rapid increase in gastric complaints in recent years. Many families never have any fresh milk but live entirely on cheap skimmed milk (tinned).

Children. In the main it is discovered that the children who are undernourished are the quickest to pick up a disease and the slowest to learn their lessons.

Holidays. These usually consist of visits to relations. To many workers a holiday is only a few days lock-out with the consequent "short week" to follow. Among the "labourer" class there is no such thing as "holidays with pay". The north country habit is definitely not practised in this district. Children are always taken on excursions thus limiting the scope of travel and making the excursion a days hard work. I would not say there is any special time for buying new clothes, most workers buy one best suit in about three or four years. Thus at the seaside the excursionist can often be seen in black coat and bowler hat, for the simple reason he has not other clothes than those he works in.

Quiet spots are not popular with the workers, they invariably go to a place with numerous amusements (fairs shows etc). This is because the high speed pleasure takes their minds away from the worry which is continuously with them.

Camping is more often confined to car owners than cycling clubs.

Education. Many parents consider the new school-leaving age with apprehension, mainly because the wages of the fourteen year old are badly needed. Technical education has not yet progressed far in elementary education.

The class nature of British Education is not generally realised by the working class. Scholarships are regarded as something to be won by a freak with exceptional brain power. They are certainly looked upon as a means of bettering oneself. The question of service to ones fellow beings never arises.

Few of the proletariat regard themselves as fit to control the country, mostly they believe the moneyed class are better fitted. The fact that Trades Union and Political Leaders are usually considered to be in this class, supports this belief. If you have not sufficient mental abilities to be "in the money" you are incapable of ruling. This is often brought home sharply at local elections, where a middle class candidate (Labour) can often succeed where a more true representative of the workers has failed.

Amusement. Undoubtedly the sport and cinema drug is the chief pastime of the worker. Pops have been the chief reason for the increased interest in sport.

Theatricals and crafts are mainly still the monopoly of the middle class.

An anti-gambling drive at the present would be considered

as a interfering with rights, subtle propaganda in the way of showing up Fools Company's profits and competitors chances of winning might be useful.

Drink does not in my opinion, constitute a very big problem. The price does not allow the normal worker to indulge to any great extent and "pubs" are mainly empty except at week-ends in most provincial towns.

The cinema is the most dangerous weapon in the hands of the Fascists. The working class movements have been too slow to "get in" on this ground and are still a long way behind. Patriotic and racial emotions are played upon, and very often in an argument of present day affairs a worker will state something he saw on the films as a basis for his beliefs-- oblivious of the fact that this was absolute fiction.

The church may still be considered of importance in village or very small town life, but in the main it has been deserted by the working class. The children are usually forced by their parents to go to Sunday School until they are fourteen, but very few stick to the Church after that.

Parsons in general are looked upon as just another man who has got to make a living, and not as the helper and advisor of the family. Religious secularism in Trade Unions is not very marked, although the Catholics often can be found attempting to take control of local movements.

Women, whilst it is true a lot of work can be obtained from them, do not take an active part in the government of working class organs. This is because in the main they do not study political theory to any great extent but are governed by their emotions.

Yes the class can be freed from enslavement if it can be proved that a working class culture can bring with it the real comforts of middle class surroundings.

Alfred Simpson

Alf Simpson works in the railway workshops for 45/- a week. His wife is a member of the C.P. He has one son, aged 12. Most of his leisure time is spent acting and producing for the People's Theatre at Newcastle, and he gets a little extra money when the theatre broadcasts. He sometimes takes drama classes with the unemployed. He is well read, especially in the drama, and he has a fine taste. He paints water-colours but cheerfully admits that his son paints better. His wife has recently taken up sculpture in wood, somewhat in the manner of Henry Moore.

His work at the People's Theatre has brought him into contact with middle-class people. He has met J.B. Priestley, and there are ten pages about him in English Journey. He knows Sir Charles Trevelyan. Occasionally he stays with members of the upper middle class, largely for the sake of a free holiday, but he consciously refuses to leave the working class.

He is disillusioned and despondent about the future of the working class. The ordinary worker won't bother to educate himself, and only wants such relaxations as betting, pools, and films. They find it difficult to believe that Alf Simpson doesn't get paid for his acting and producing.

He first became interested in books, plays, and politics through an Educational Settlement, and for this reason tends to over-value education, learning, and the intellect. He thinks that if the workers could be educated, we should get socialism in England; but that this education must take place at school and not after, as the worker is then too much occupied in earning a living.

Alf Simpson is nearest to the Communists in his political views, but probably not a member of the party, as he criticises the Popular Front line because of its effect on working-class consciousness. His wife reads the Daily Worker with complete faith, but she arrived at her political views not by intellectual reasoning but by "religious" conviction.

He was a bit suspicious of us at first, because he thought we were "Christians", but he was reassured when we explained our religious views.

He has a grand sense of humour, and he is a very able talker. He can speak King's English, but purposely refrains except on the stage.

He does not feel that our Enquiry is likely to have much effect, but he is willing to try it on.

Hospitality. Seeing of friends, in large town, limited by ~~RSLS~~ fares. Guests do not sleep on floor. Someone arriving at meal time will have meal, something extra if that can be provided. Cycling has made little difference.

Health. Children are not limited by fear of risks. Adults fear being stopped from working and therefore prefer patent medicing to seeing doctor. Little confidence in panel doctors.

Holidays. Cycling has made little difference. A few people camp. Most workers have never been away for real holiday. Holidays with pay will made difference; but most will not go to the country--fear of country, and wouldn't know what to do; would go to crowded sea-side places. Children taken on day trips.

Education. Only valuable in so far as it helps to get a job. Most parents cannot afford to leave children at school longer than necessary.

Amusements and Sports. Chief amusements are cinemas and pools.

Political and religious activities. Very few are interested in politics, only few interested in Trade Unions. Young workers are not interested in religion. Older Trade Union leaders came from Non-conformist church and this was the source of their energy and feeling of responsibility.

MINUTES: ENQUIRY COMMITTEE MEETING, June 9, 1939, 38 Belsize Rd., N.W. 6. Present were Marjorie Young (Chairman), Donald Grant, Jeannie McConnell, Karl Polanyi, Kenneth Muir, Mary Muir, Irene Grant, Jean Edwards, Ted Edwards, Elinor Ulman.

1. Camp: Marjorie reported on answers to suggestion of Camp over August Bank Holiday week-end. In the light of discussion, it was decided that Marjorie should write to the interested people indicating that the camp was postponed to allow time for further preparation, but that a week-end discussion would certainly be held, probably in London; the new document in preparation will be conceived as an invitation to such a conference; the conference will discuss means for working in community centers and new housing estates; an expert in this field (Paddy?) must be present. All these facts to be announced.

2. In order to develop action along the lines suggested by the Enquiry, groups such as community centers, new housing estates etc. must be reached. Question whether the National Council is so reactionary as a whole that all work must be done where it has not a foot-hold, or whether dissatisfied workers within it can be helped to foster revolt against its policies. Conditions in the new centers and estates and possible ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ places and people where National Council is working must be investigated. Committee to make this investigation: Ted, Jean, Jeannie. People mentioned who may be helpful: Olive Lee; H.A. Mess (Irene will see him); Eleanora Aydsell.

The decision to work along this line does not preclude continuation of the type of work with the questionnaire already undertaken.

3. New document: Not in form of questionnaire, to be made as brief as possible. Sub-committee to prepare a draft: Irene, Karl, Donald, Kenneth, Jeannie. The document should state several critical points about which something ought to be done. General: 1. Socialist working class consciousness and the symbolic character of conventions. 2. Nature of the present situation: Preparation to face change in the world. 3. Give examples from experience in Vienna. Specific points agreed upon: 1. Privacy. 2. Furniture. 3. Guests without meals. 4. Death to the sitting-room. 5. Gambling: because its function is to foster the notion that the worker can and should get out of his own class; because its basic irrationality contradicts the socialist view. It was suggested that the discussion of these points should be based on a positive general statement on what it means to be a real socialist: purposeful discrimination, realistic outlook. It was agreed that the document should be clearly socialist. The wireless was mentioned as the most widespread drug, and it was suggested that it might be treated as an aspect of privacy. The class nature of education might be treated in the ~~general~~ general introductory portion of the document, but not as one of the specific points of challenge.

MINUTES: ENQUIRY COMMITTEE, JULY 14. 1959, 16 Highbury Grove Court.

Present: Marjorie Young (chair)

Ted Edwards, Jean Edwards, Irene Grant, Donald Grant,
Kenneth Muir, and at the end of the meeting Mary Muir.

1. Reports: Irene Grant reported on the visit to the Honor Oak Housing Estate Nursery School Parents' Evening. The head mistress sympathetic to the Enquiry and ready to co-operate. The talk on Post-war Vienna to the Mothers aroused such interest and some questions and remarks. Housing estate without any kind of plan for filling out the existence of those in it.

Kenneth Muir reported on the visit to Newcastle to see Alf Simpson and his immediate circle. (Workers in railway shops.) Jim Elder, Teesdale, was visited en route. A discussion on the enquiry material with him, his wife and one other working woman. The women seemed to understand the thing better than Jim. In Newcastle a long evening's discussion with Alf and Lottie Simpson, one young blind worker and two others revealed an agreement with our analysis but no suggestion as to how they themselves could tackle the changes about which we spoke. Common agreement on a few things: Intense anti-Catholic feeling; contempt and distrust of the National Council of Social Service; a desire for and belief in "education", and a conviction that 1926 was a beating and that they have never recovered from it. The Simpsons themselves are in many ways living the kind of emancipated life we speak of; here again the woman understood best, and is considering what she can do to waken other women with whom she works to a similar understanding. Lottie Simpson herself a first class contact from our point of view.

Ted Edwards and Jean Edwards reported on conversation with L. Priestley from whom we had earlier had a very intelligent comment on the Enquiry. They report very positively about Priestley as a contact for the Enquiry work. He is a conscript, a disillusioned member of the L.P. Does not see what can be done in Northampton, and is anxious to come if at all possible to any meeting or conference we arrange.

2. Discussion on getting into Community centres and housing estates. It was agreed that, except in certain individual cases it was no good trying to get in through the N.C.S.S. Certain exceptions such as Jeannie McConnell's or Ted Edwards in Northampton (Bert Taverner) were mentioned. Nursery schools, (one in Gateshead with which the Simpsons also have contact) were regarded as a hopeful line, and it was decided to try to learn more of the possibilities here. Enquiries to be made through Joan Cass, Irene Broochall and Gipsy Hill Training College. It was remarked that mothers with children of nursery school age, and fathers too, are compelled to go in for quite drastic changes of their habits anyway.

3. It was decided to try to call a conference for the week-end of the first of October. In preparation members of the committee are asked to

consider the new draft document which they have received with a view to improving it and putting it into a form such as can be used as an invitation to a weekend conference. (It is to be made clear to those invited that the committee is now definitely considering a line of approach through centres of group or community life.) All comments and suggestions about the document to be made within the period up to July 24th and returned to Irene Grant.

Comments made at the committee:

Ted: Document is lucid to us but still not clear to outsiders.

Should be re-written by and for a worker.

Other suggestions: "leave out such words as "Potency", "transformation".

The drafting committee is asked, on the basis of the suggestions which come in to have the document in final order for the next Committee.

Next Committee July 27th, 6 p.m. at H.Young's, 16 Highbury Grove Court.

Names suggested for invitation to the Conference to be held in London,
Sep 30 & Oct 1, 1939.

Alf and Lottie Simpson.
L. Priestley.
A.Hope and Mrs Hope.
AlVarley.
S.Platts.
S.Unpleby
A.Holmes.
Mrs Hammond.
Steynor family.
H.Crowe.
Jim Welsh's contact in
Melton Mowbray,
Tysons, Northampton.
Honor Edwards
H.Ridley.

Committee members:

H.Young.
Jean Edwards
Ted Edwards
Kenneth Muir
Mary Muir
Irene Grant
Donald Grant.
Karl Polanyi
Elinor Ulsan.
Seannie McConnell

COPY.

Karl

Editor of Plebs,
15 South Hill Park Gardens,
London N.W. 3.

Sir:

It is proposed to undertake an enquiry into the influence of middle class conventions on the forms of life of the working class in this country. Conventional forms of life of middle class origin are widely accepted by the working class, and the prevailing influence of these conventions is one of the mainstays of the present social system. The enquiry is not intended merely to collect information on this subject, but to focus the interest of the working class on this vital question. Any one who is genuinely interested in this matter is asked to communicate with me at the address below.

Yours etc.,

Marjorie Young

16 Highbury Grove Court,
London N. 5.

March 31, 1939.

Sent also to
Tribune
Wheat sheaf
Hillcroft
Plebs
Family Press
Highway

and 7- to
his study these needs?
H. M. J.

AN ENQUIRY INTO THE INFLUENCE OF MIDDLE CLASS CONVENTIONS

The scope of personal life and social intercourse is narrowed today in many respects by customs and habits which do not correspond to the real needs of the people concerned. Anything that tends to restrict the mobility and freedom of personal life must result in a weakening of the working class in carrying out its task. Prevailing conventions of this nature inhibit working class people from making the best use even of their limited resources. Yet the clearer it becomes what are the conditions under which a fuller personal life and more creative social relationships are possible, the more are we able to distinguish between real and artificial needs. Many of the latter spring from middle class conventions which the middle class itself has already discarded, and which certainly restrict the life of the working class. Real needs are either personal and not conventional or else spring from those useful conventions which are based on actual conditions and which provide an appropriate framework for the life of a working class which is fitting itself, individually and collectively, for its mission in society.

The following are some of the relevant aspects:--

1. Mobility.

i.e. facility and freedom in meeting friends and comrades, in visiting distant places and people, and in making use of leisure and so on. Apart from cheap fares, mobility depends upon such things as:-

- a. the use made of housing space,
- b. the conventions of hospitality and conviviality,
- c. whether children are necessarily included in day-trips,
- d. how far use is made of hiking, youth hostels and other facilities provided by open air life.

2. Personal life.

i.e. the freedom to shape relationships with friends and acquaintances according to personal needs and inclinations, and, where necessary, the freedom to be alone. Apart from the conventions concerning the use of housing space and hospitality, the freedom for shaping personal life depends also on other factors, such as:-

- a. forms of amusement,
- b. holidays,
- c. political and religious activities.

3. Use of resources in the light of real needs.

4. Estrangement of workers from their own class.

.....

We propose to collect material for the application of the above criteria to such subjects as:-

- a. Housing.
 - b. Hospitality.
 - c. Health (insurance etc.)
 - d. Holidays.
 - e. Education.
 - f. Amusements and Sports.
 - g. Political and Religious activities.
-

HOUSING

We are well aware that the existing resources in working class housing are inadequate, but to what advantage are those available used? Is the kitchen-living room usual? Is the parlour dying out? Is a room kept for special occasions? Where do children who reach secondary school do their homework?

Is it possible cheaply and easily to heat the bedrooms? Are these used as bed-sitting rooms?

How far does the nature of the furniture prevent the use of the rooms for a number of different purposes? e.g. Can a guest be put up in the living room or parlour?

What is regarded as the minimum of furniture required for

- a. a properly furnished bedroom?
- b. a properly furnished sitting room?

What additional furnishings are regarded as essential? In the case of a young couple furnishing "out of income", do they buy their furniture piece by piece, or do they purchase a "suite"?

The no-polish problem. What kind of decorations are favoured?

HOSPITALITY

Is the exchange between friends limited by the lack of overnight hospitality? What is the active tradition of hospitality? Sunday visiting.

Do guests other than relatives on holiday, ever stay the night? Is a guest allowed to sleep on a living room floor? Or a sofa? Or do members of the family turn out in order to give the guest a good bed?

Do all guests expect clean sheets? Would they bring a sleeping bag?

If someone comes in uninvited does he necessarily get a meal? Would such a meal mean sharing whatever the family happened to be having or would something special be prepared? If means do not allow for special meals for guests are they still invited to share what is going?

Has added mobility due to cycling made a difference?

Times of meals. Kinds of foods. Amount of cooking regarded as essential. Are S. Wales and N. England, e.g. held by a local tradition which affects all classes, or is it also a middle-class tradition copied?

HEALTH

Hardiness; does upper class security lead to readiness to take more risks than the working class can?

Working class superiority over lower-middle class owing to growing effectiveness of health insurance. Is there a conscious superiority? Or rather a resentment at being "panel"?

Food habits.

Health of children. Accidents or breakdown in health of children a heavy burden. How does consequent timidity affect the consciousness of the children?

HOLIDAYS

Annual holidays. Family visits. Excursions. Financing holidays. The north-country tradition of saving hard and spending hard.

Special holidays. New holidays with pay arrangements.

Are children taken on day trips and excursions?

What habits of dress prevail with regard to holidays? Are these hard and fast? (New clothes at Whitsun?)

Are shops and other amenities of civilisation regarded as essential to a good holiday?

Is camping spreading to any great extent? Or only among certain groups? e.g. cycling clubs?

Results in traditional forms of relationships between men and women.

EDUCATION

Attitude to education generally - hostile? More positive attitude to technical education, high school etc.

Class nature of British education - is it accepted or resented? Does the working class envisage seizing all the opportunities available

1. "to better oneself"? or
2. to become fitted and competent in leadership?

Secondary education. Estrangement of members of the working class from their own people.

A national system of education? Qualification demand in all preparatory school teaching would make it a fact.

Is it true that the working class regards itself as, and actually is, competent in industrial affairs, - e.g. trades union life - but as less competent in matters of government? What are the factors here?

Class weapons - Speech. (B.B.C. English is a foreign language.) Training in responsibility. Leadership and hardiness

in the upper classes.

Do parents show any co-operation with the school? Is it accepted or expected by the school?

AMUSEMENTS AND SPORTS

The place of amusements and sports in working class life. In what groups are they practised and enjoyed?

Active: Growth of outdoor life and exercise. Immense increase of cycling. Biological regeneration? Participation in games. Growth of dramatic and choral groups? Also craft groups? Hiking?

Passive: Crowds watching games. The drug of the cinema. Children's cinema programmes?

Gambling - its increase. Breakdown of the anti-gambling movement run on a thrift basis. Is it time for a new anti-gambling drive in the working class and in the interest of working class effectiveness in its class struggle? Ditto drink?

Towards what is all this growth directed? Is it safeguarded from a reactionary, even Fascist development? (cf. German Youth Movement?)

POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

The church and the working class. How far is church activity still real? How far nominal? How far positively relinquished? Why? "The chapel up here used to stand for us". (Durham miner.)

Nonconformist idealism, moral and ethical hangover, carried over in secular form into trades union and political life. Its paralysing effects.

Status of men and women in Church and political activity. "The women raise the money and the men do all the talking".

How far does evening school etc. interfere with political activity? How far the opposition of parents?

ENQUIRY INTO THE INFLUENCE OF MIDDLE CLASS CONVENTIONS

Housing.

I think there is a tendency to replace the kitchen-living room plus seldom used 'parlour', by a living room and a smaller kitchen used only for cooking, washing up, etc. Modern flats and small houses seem to be planned in this way; I have in mind some new "Council Houses" in Chatham and remember that the watchman in charge of them strongly approved of the arrangement. He wanted to move from his own house because the 'parlour' had to be used as a bedroom leaving only the kitchen as a living room. Personally I think a 'parlour' is only desirable if it is going to be used; if the parlour is not going to be used I consider the living room and kitchen the better arrangement, but I do not know how far a 'parlour' is still considered desirable as a mark of respectability.

Bedrooms. Only in modern houses where there are gas or electric points can bedrooms be heated easily. I should think that heating a bedroom is fairly generally considered luxurious.

Bedrooms are not often used as sitting rooms in my experience, except when people are living in lodgings or small flats. In some middle class homes which I know, where the house is a modern one, the children's bedroom is arranged so that it can be used as a sitting room and home work done there. If the same families lived in larger houses they would arrange a separate study for the children. I do not think this arrangement of a bedroom as a place for doing homework in would be found in a X 'working class' or a poorer middle class home, owing to the expense of heating and lighting.

Furniture. In a house where there is a bathroom, I consider that the minimum of furniture for a bedroom is:-a bed; a small chest of drawers; and some arrangement for hanging clothes (cupboard, curtained recess or more preferably a wardrobe); a mirror. Alternatively: a bed and the kind of wardrobe which has both shelves and hanging space. Most people seem to consider a chair essential, but since it is more often used for putting things down on than for sitting on I cannot think it really essential. I have known people with very little money who have bought dressing tables with large and complicated mirrors, and "trinket sets" with which to furnish them.

I think a sitting room needs a couch. I should probably buy one which could be turned into a bed; comfortable chairs--the number would depend on the number of people likely to use the room at once and would rather be too few than too many; X a small table; shelves or a book-case; rugs or a carpet; curtains. To this minimum amount I should like to add: vases for flowers; cushions; a reading lamp; a piano; a wireless. If I possessed pictures or ornaments which I really liked I would probably

put some of them in my sitting-room, I should not buy any specially because I should consider a sitting-room unfurnished without them. I think a good number of people would consider pictures and a wireless-set essential. A class of fourteen-year old girls wrote me compositions on furnishing a flat recently: four or five out of the twenty furnished the sitting room with nothing but a radio-gramophone and a cocktail cabinet! I should imagine the pictures responsible for that.

Buying Furniture. I think most people buy a "suite" of furniture: shops certainly try to persuade people to do so and most houses I go into have a "suite" in either sitting room or bed-room, or both. On the whole, I personally think it a bad system: if I buy a "three piece suite" for a sitting room, I get, two arm chairs, both of which are too large for me, and a couch which cannot be used in any other way than the one the manufacturer thought of: if I choose the three things separately I can have two arm chairs of different shapes and sizes and a couch which can be used as I wish.

Hospitality.

Cost of travelling is more likely to prevent friends who live in different towns from visiting one another than lack of hospitality.

On the whole I think the guest is given the bed and a member of the family the sofa, but I should imagine that depends a good deal on the relative ages and sizes (in relation to the sofa) of the guest and the host. Clean sheets are usually provided for a guest but I do not think the lack of them would prevent the host offering hospitality for the night unless he or she, felt that the guest would look down on some one unable to produce clean sheets. I do not think anyone would appear with a sleeping-bag unless asked to do so.

Guests at meals. I do not think uninvited guests would be given a meal unless they came at meal time or had had a long journey. Some people would invite a guest to share what ever they had but there ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ still is a feeling that special preparation is necessary. This has a restraining effect on guests who often do not visit friends unexpectedly because they fear giving trouble. We have some friends who will never be persuaded to stay to supper when they visit us in the evening, unless they have been definitely invited, because they fear it will be "a bother"--actually waiting for supper until they have gone is more nuisance for we should not make special arrangements for them. My landlady always provides "something special" if I have a visitor to tea. Some friends of mine here were talking about this recently and agreed not to provide anything special for one another at lunch or tea so that they could visit one another with less restraint: these people were mostly undergraduates or people who had recently been students.

Meals. Often in working class homes several members of the family are away from home at mid-day, and the main meal is in the evening, usually about six o'clock. This tends to make casual hospitality harder than for middle class people for whom tea is a more easily prepared meal, and for whom it is less important if the meal has to be shared among more than the number for whom it was designed.

Holidays. I wonder whether the growing tendency of schools, and clubs to arrange special holidays for children may not affect the parents in two ways: when the holidays arranged for the children are inexpensive camping or walking holidays they may provide an opportunity for the parents to have a freer holiday of their own; when the holidays for the children are expensive excursions, or exchanges with foreign children probably the result is that the parents give up their own holidays. I think this second consequence should be prevented by school grants or bursaries to the children who, it is thought, would benefit by the excursion.

Men and women. The convention that on any sort of excursion the man pays for the woman dies hard and needs killing.

Education.

Among large numbers of people there is hostility to any kind of education which is not practical, and ~~the~~ criterion for this is whether or not the education takes the form of manual work; thus the ability to express one's needs in words so that others will understand them is not usually considered of practical importance.

The class nature of our educational system seems to be accepted unconsciously rather than recognised. This attitude is seen in middle-class parents who refuse to send their children to infants and Junior Schools, preferring much less efficient and often less well equipped 'private kindergarten' schools; it is seen again in the endeavour to thrust into secondary schools children who would be much more fittingly provided for in a senior or central school: a child in a senior or central school would be glad to be transferred to a secondary school, but I have never heard of any headmaster or mistress daring to suggest a transference in the opposite direction. This class prejudice is making it difficult to put the schemes outlined by the Hadow Report into practice. I think it will make the same difficulties for many of the schemes in the new Spens Report, for both ~~the~~ reports consider classification of children on purely educational grounds and ignore, to a considerable extent, class prejudice.

The choice of work by children leaving secondary schools shows that secondary education does tend to estrange people from the working class. Certain kinds of work e.g. domestic service for girls, are looked down on as only fit for people from elementary schools. The strength of this attitude varies

from school to school, and can be modified to a certain extent by the head master or head mistress.

Why should B.B.C. English (if it really exists) be considered a foreign language? Do you consider the language of e.g. Shaw's prefaces not English because it is not the kind of English most people use in writing their letters home?

Cooperation between school and parents. Many schools now have "Parents Associations" to encourage co-operation between teachers and parents. Discussions on homework and careers are often arranged. (I think there should be similar discussions on rules and school uniform and other details, and that parents might join in school excursions and expeditions sometimes--this may be done in some places but I have not heard of it). In some of the villages near Cambridge the schools have been planned not for the children alone, but as centres for the life of the whole village; they are centres for evening classes, garden-clubs, choral societies as well as for teaching the children.

Amusements.

Hiking, camping and cycling seem to me spontaneous amusements but I think a good deal of the games playing and 'keep-fit' movements are organised "from above" rather than springing from real desire for them.

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Church.

Church organizations seem to me to mix up the 'respectable' and the good and I wonder whether ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ this is not one of the reasons why the churches are no longer real social centres. I do not think this should be--I think the church ought to be a strong force for disentangling what is good in itself from what is conventional.

Final text

Kawli

Final text of covering letter for Enquiry workers.

A group with whom I am working in London is concerned with the question whether the working class of this country can fit itself better for its socialist task by consciously freeing itself from ~~the~~ middle class conventions in its habits of life. A suggested enquiry is described in the enclosed document, which we would ask you to consider carefully, sending us your comments and reactions.

We are aware that, as a result of its history and development, the working class of this country believes that change must come gradually, and disbelieves today that any essential change can come from within itself. Nor does it look forward to ~~the~~ ~~encompassing~~ and far-reaching transformations in the structure of society.

But in our present world changes are being forced upon us from without. International events are breaking in upon us, and are already shaking the foundations of even the stable English social structure. As events come to a head, developments in this country will inevitably follow which will give a new meaning to working class life. If working people can see anew the importance of the part which they will ultimately be called upon to play in the emergency which is upon us, they will be armed with the knowledge of their vital significance as a class, and fitted for leadership at a historical moment.

The enquiry we suggest in the enclosed paper might be the instrument for arousing such a consciousness. It is, of course, in no way intended to initiate a "free life" or reformist movement. The need is for a realisation by the working class of its mission in society, and such changes as might be made in its forms of existence would be ^{more in the nature of} symbols of the repudiation of middle class influence and leadership in the political as in all other spheres of society.

CULTURAL SLAVERY AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

Can the working class of this country fit itself better for its socialist task by consciously emancipating itself from middle class conventions in its own habits of life?

To any one concerned in the struggle for socialism, the hampering effects of middle class conventions on the life and habits of working class people in this country must be evident. The question arises whether this handicap could be removed by the working class itself. Such a possibility suggests an enquiry to discover what changes can be made in its habits of life by the working class so as to make it more effective in the class struggle.

Such an enquiry would, of course, be based on the conviction of the paramount necessity of the socialist economic change.

Socialism cannot be lived in a capitalist society, but that is no reason why socialists should not seek to become more effective in carrying out their tasks, by actual changes in the forms of their existence.

Conventional forms of life of middle class origin are widely accepted by the working class, and the prevailing influence of these conventions is one of the mainstays of the present social system. This tends especially to paralyse the effectiveness of leaders because their duties as representatives of the working class bring them into more intimate contact with middle class modes of behaviour and middle class institutions. The ascendancy of the middle class is not restricted to intellectual matters: it affects the practical details of living. It is with these that the enquiry would deal.

Questions of public policy* would not be raised by this enquiry, nor is it aimed merely at collecting information. The enquiry itself, carried out as it would have to be, mainly by working class people, might be a means of reawakening a revolutionary spirit, like that of Chartist times, and of appealing to that consciousness of common humanity which still lives on in the British working class, by which alone it can fortify itself for its mission of leadership in the inevitable transformation of society.

* e.g. the demand for cheaper railway fares or the policy of local authorities concerning housing schemes.

FOR THE CULTURAL EMANCIPATION OF THE WORKING CLASS.

A group of socialists have recently carried out a preliminary inquiry into the cultural outlook of the British working class from the point of view of the socialist mission of this class. ~~working class~~. The results of this survey appeared to bear out

~~appeared to bear out~~ what ~~might have been suspected~~ from the start

~~that~~ i.e. that the working class is very far from having emancipated itself from the cultural ~~bondage~~ bondage of the upper classes. ~~The~~

~~fact~~ and that its effectiveness in the class struggle is hampered by this fact. There is a wide spread consciousness of this fact among socialists,

but very little if any active effort at emancipation. ~~actions~~

~~unknown~~

Draft for discussion drawn up by J. McC. I.G. K.P.

FOR THE CULTURAL EMANCIPATION OF THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS.

feel
The present period of ~~transformation and~~ crisis will bring *to Traup* radical changes in social life and structure. *back the* The working class in this country may be unshakably sure that no change can come from within itself, and may preserve its conviction that change, if it comes at all, must come gradually; - but events are already overtaking such a position. Startling and radical changes are even now being forced upon us from without. The domination of the working class by cultural intimidation must be challenged and overcome if they are to play their leading part in coming events.

to emphasize 4 of ones, then
At present the working class in this country is maintained in a condition of helpless inferiority by a class system of education of great potency. It is dominated by conventional forms of life and habits of middle class origin, many of them already thrown over by the middle class itself. Belief in themselves will release in working people the power which will overcome their paralysis.

The change towards a more whole and equal society, which life in its natural growth is demanding, cannot make any real headway until the working classes become aware that they, and they alone, are the people who can bring it to birth.

Therefore it is our concern to discover how to bring about this awareness, awareness that if society is to change they must come forward as people who matter - more than that, as people on whom all are dependant.

Such a change in standards of life which are irrelevant to the working class and its tasks was carried out by the workers of post-war Vienna. In that city, in social habits, in manner of speech, in questions of education, of housing, furniture, amusements and many other activities, the workers not only rejected the standards of the middle class, but built up a culture of their own so much more alive and appropriate, that it gave them superiority in the content (?) of their existence and strengthened their militant revolt against the domination of the middle and upper classes. Such a revolt as this has not yet begun to make itself felt in this country.

Habits which would make working class life, even on its present inadequate material basis, fuller and more adequate, might well be built up and, indeed, become the symbol of an independent culture and of rejection of the middle class. The scope of personal life and social intercourse in the working class is narrowed today by customs and habits which do not correspond to their real needs. Anything that tends to restrict the mobility and freedom of personal life must result in a weakening of the working class in carrying out its task. Prevailing conventions of this nature inhibit working

class people from making the best use even of their limited resources. Real needs are either personal and not conventional or else spring from those use-

ful conventions which are based on actual conditions and which provide and appropriate framework for the life of a working class which is fitting itself, individually and collectively, for its mission in society. The militant worker would regard even small changes in his way of life as important not only because they freed or enriched him personally, but because they helped him as a socialist to carry out his task, and served as a symbol of a new freedom.

Many such changes are possible. A recognition of the importance of privacy (so continuously invaded by unintelligent addiction to the wireless) or a readiness to entertain guests without feeling compelled to provide a meal for them, might, in fact, have a releasing effect on the social life of working people. Newer and simpler habits in the question of furniture ; the relinquishing of the parlour as a special room, and living in it instead, such changes would have a freeing effect. A conscious refusal to be intimidated by an upper class "accent", and an unceasing demand for a national system of education which would exclude class discrimination , would have dynamic results. Gambling, from the point of view of a class conscious worker would be seen for what it is - the fostering of an illusion which weakens those who take part in it, and renders them less capable of conscious revolt.

In some such ways the working class must express its ~~recognition~~ recognition of its own importance and significance as the class which is called upon to lead in bringing in a new order.