

THE REDISCOVERY OF THE CASH NEXUS

SOME RECENT INTERPRETATIONS OF TRENDS IN BRITISH CLASS
STRUCTURE

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I

THE focus of debate and research on British class structure has shifted significantly over the past five or ten years. The guiding assumption of much social commentary in the 1950s was the thesis of progressive "classlessness". In company with many other western countries, it was believed, Britain was experiencing a gradual erosion of class-linked inequalities in the conditions of life; a diffusion of power, if not among the population at large, then among a plurality of rival élites representing diverse (but not totally opposed) interests; a steadily closer approximation to a state of affairs in which remaining inequalities neither coincided to produce a recognizable class structure, nor were sufficiently significant to engender divisive social conflict. These were assumptions, not proven facts. The evidence to contradict them, or at least to question their indiscriminate acceptance, was considerable already in the 1950s. But they provided nevertheless the starting point, the commonly accepted premises, of a great deal of social commentary at the time—including that of many professional social scientists.

For many reasons—among them no doubt the sheer accumulation of contrary evidence; the continuing uncertainty of Britain's economic position; the persistence of symptoms of endemic social tension; the crises of conscience and of extra-parliamentary politics in the West at large; the catalytic repercussions of the Vietnam War—for these and perhaps other reasons, the simple assumptions of the 1950s are no longer the accepted basis of professional social commentary, though they live on in several regions of the folklore of contemporary capitalism. Poverty has been rediscovered, even if its rediscovery in Britain has not produced an affluent research industry devoted to its study on the same scale as in the United States. "Positive discrimination" has become the keyword in progressive social policy. Conversely, the opposition to redistributionist reform has increasingly abandoned the argument that the mere passage of time would eliminate residual inequalities of substance; and it has revived older arguments in new guise which accept persistent inequalities as inevitable or desirable or both. (For example, higher taxes on consumption instead of on incomes,

which would benefit the rich at the expense of the poor, have been advocated *inter alia* on the ground that income taxation has not in any case proved effectively redistributive. Greater reliance on market mechanisms in the field of the social services is recommended as allowing "free choices" that are well worth the price of unequal standards of provision. Attempts to develop "comprehensive" in place of selective education have been opposed, in part, on the grounds that a highly stratified educational system is necessary to preserve certain essential class-related minority values.) The dominant theme of institutionalized party political debate in the early 1960s became the "modernization" of Britain—replacing issues of redistribution by the question of which "political team" could run a capitalist economy more effectively. But the protagonists even in this debate often assumed—and still assume—the continued existence of class-rooted attitudes and practices as obstacles to "modernization": management orientations insufficiently concerned with "efficiency", reflecting perhaps an inherited cult of gentlemanly non-commitment; sectional self-interests on the part of workers, shop stewards and unions. In all these ways, the 1960s saw the "condition of England question" revived on a basis that involves explicit recognition of the persistence of class as a dominant theme of societal organization.

One question in particular has attracted a good deal of attention from sociologists in the new ideological climate. Though rarely so formulated, this is the old and crucial Marxist question about the conversion—or non-conversion—of "class in itself" into "class for itself". If marked, systematic and mutually interdependent inequalities of condition, opportunity and power persist—even though against a background of unevenly increasing overall prosperity—why has this inherent contradiction between the promise and the achievement of capitalism generated no more than moderate protest? Commentators of the 1950s derived an assumption of increasing "embourgeoisement" of the working class from an assumption of progressive erosion of the material substance of class structure. Neither assumption was valid in the form stated. But if the working class is not becoming bourgeois, neither obviously is it seething with revolutionary fervour. Working class radicalism is not dead—though it looks that way if one can see no further than Parliament, Whitehall and Transport House. But it is certainly occasional, incoherent and fragmented. If the conjunction of rising expectations and persistent inequalities indicates a potential from which a clear challenge to the established order could emerge, what circumstances account for the apparent repression or dissipation of that potential? And how permanent are these likely to be?

These are old questions, not least in application to Britain. They were asked often in the nineteenth century—by Marxists and

non-Marxists alike; and they were revived again, for example, in an impressive tour *de force* by Perry Anderson a few years ago.¹ The primitive "embourgeoisement" thesis of the 1950s and the debate around it, moreover, stimulated a series of fairly elaborate critiques and studies which in one way or another focused on the question of working class responses to the capitalism of inegalitarian "affluence". The formulation of the problem, of course, was not: "Why no revolution?" in those words. But the preoccupations were similar in nature. It is on some of the main sociological studies of this kind in recent years that I want to comment: in particular, on the Luton survey of "affluent" workers by John Goldthorpe, David Lockwood and their colleagues; W. G. Runciman's study of relative deprivation and social justice; and the enquiry by Robert McKenzie and Allan Silver into the character and sources of working class Conservatism.² A general commentary on these three major contributions in particular seems appropriate not least because, for all differences of approach between them, all three arrive at conclusions that appear to point in roughly the same direction: to a condition of the contemporary working class which would undermine any potential for active and sustained opposition to the established order. The thesis of working class embourgeoisement in its simple formulation is no longer in fashion. But its political corollary has come in again by the back door, with these newer and more sophisticated interpretations of the situation of the "affluent worker".

II

The Luton survey was directed explicitly against the primitive versions of the embourgeoisement thesis. The starting point was the argument that if affluent manual workers *were* becoming bourgeois in any full sense of the term, this must entail, first, their acquisition of "middle class" material levels of living and security; second, their adoption of "middle class" life styles, cultural norms, social orientations and aspirations; third, their social acceptance by "middle class" people, the establishment of everyday relationships between individuals and families of two previously distinct social worlds, on a basis of equality. It was

*This characterization needs qualification in respect of one of these studies—the Luton survey of "affluent workers". The present paper had to be prepared before the publication of the third monograph in the Luton series. In their conclusions in that monograph, however, the authors recognize a degree of "openness" in the socio-political prospects for the future—a latent, prospective support from the "new" workers for more radical and egalitarian policies, though largely a passive support and one not directly related to the workers' employment situation—of which there is no hint in the interpretations of the earlier volumes. This shift of interpretation is discussed in the *Postscript* to the present paper.

unlikely that any changes in the situation of manual workers associated with increased "affluence" would have met all three conditions on a significant scale. It squared better with scattered evidence and impressions that the "new aristocrats of labour" tended to become, at most, home-orientated; preoccupied with family activities and domestic consumption; in various respects insulated from the "traditional" working class world of workplace and community; but still "working class", neither seeking nor achieving assimilation in the middle class world.⁹ The authors set out to test the full-blown embourgeoisement thesis by these criteria; and to do so in a setting which, by providing the most favourable circumstances for the confirmation of the thesis, would also offer the most convincing refutation of it if it should fail to hold water. Hence their choice of Luton, a growing town outside the older, built-up conurbation areas, with a high proportion of well-paid workers in new housing; many of them recent migrants to the town, parents at the most "domestically oriented" stage of their lives; many of them employed in the motor-car industry, the prototype of the new economy of "affluence".

The results of the study, as the authors interpret them, bear out their original expectations. The "affluent" workers of Luton are not becoming "bourgeois"; but they are the vanguard of a new species of worker. Work is no longer a "central life interest" to them. For semi-skilled workers with relatively high earnings, in particular, the job itself carries few or no intrinsic satisfactions. It is a repetitive routine, involving neither craftsmanship nor discretion. But the mechanical and fragmented nature of the work is not a cause of active discontent. It is borne with indifference for the compensatory satisfaction of high earnings. Many workers, indeed, have deliberately left more intrinsically interesting jobs in search of high pay. Nor is work to any substantial extent the source of social ties that bind the "new worker" to his mates. If collective solidarity in the past grew from the shop floor, it no longer does—or at least will do so less and less. The prototypical affluent worker's support for trade union activity—and for the Labour Party—is narrowly based; limited to considerations of the individual benefits which collective organization may produce; and sceptical to boot. So the new worker's orientation to his work is characteristically "instrumental". And as little ties him to his job and his workplace but the wage packet which he gets from it, domestic life, expenditure of the wage on his home and with his family, become his "central life interest". Just as work no longer generates the social relations with mates from which a "communal" solidarity of class could spring, so too the "home-centredness" and consumption-orientation of the "affluent" worker tend to insulate him from those features of the residential community which in the past helped to create an

active consciousness of kind among manual workers. "Instrumentalism" in orientations to work is thus linked with "privatization". The "privatized" worker's world is not that of the middle class: his is a distinctive sub-culture, conditioned and restricted by the circumstances of working class life. But "instrumentalism" and "privatization" alike militate against commitment to collective organization on any but a limited and discontinuous basis. Affluence may not rule out militancy; but it does erode active radicalism.



Runciman, in his study of "relative deprivation", attempted to set contemporary survey data on working class social perspectives in a historical context. In a valuable introductory review of the condition of labour and Labour in Britain since World War I, he emphasized both the persistence—despite all change—of considerable structural inequalities in the society; and the paradoxical concomitant of these inequalities, the moderation of the organized labour movement in its response. The explanation of the paradox, he argued, was to be found in the limited horizons, the low ceilings of aspiration, of the working class. Labour's acceptance of institutional restraints upon its own challenge to the social order, its restricted social vision, were reflected in and partly formed by the political and industrial history of the inter-war years. For confirmation Runciman looked to the grassroots today, by means of a national sample survey of individual attitudes to the central issues of equality and inequality.

The results, in his own interpretation, confirm his thesis. Continuing inequalities of class—that is, of economic situation—produce only limited resentment among manual workers. This is so partly because the persistence of inequalities is masked by a widespread belief that they have been substantially reduced, and by an expectation of steadily rising levels of living. More significantly, discontent is restrained by the low reference points which workers adopt in the implicit comparisons through which they assess their own situation. Manual workers, so he finds, are inclined to set their standards of economic aspiration by the levels actually reached by, or within reach of, "people like themselves". They may believe that inequalities have significantly diminished because they tend to compare their own material levels with those of their fathers; and to compare their own economic position with the relative decline in the position of those routine grades of non-manual workers who are closest to them. Income for income, middle class people—who also believe that inequalities have diminished, and resent it—express more discontent with their economic situation. Their "reference groups" for comparison are higher in the scale, and in part located in a real or imaginary past. So, just because class divisions are

real, and set up barriers between distinct sub-cultures, working class aspirations are contained. True, people set their targets higher than they did; but rising expectations on the part of manual workers are "status-" rather than "class"-oriented. New aspirations are directed to individual achievement and social recognition—and may be satisfied by the prospect that one's child may "make it". Such ambitions are private. Their frustration can generate individual resentment, but can hardly carry a potential for collective class organization of the kind that could arise from recognition of a common situation of economic deprivation. Social tension today thus is "privatized".



The "affluent" workers of the Luton survey are Labour with a capital "L" and conservative with a small "c". Runciman's workers divide their party political allegiances in the usual ratios. But whichever way their votes go, they too are conservative with a small "c"—mostly because the traditional barriers of class culture keep their aspirations within modest limits; partly because those with higher levels of expectation are motivated by individualistic anxieties. McKenzie and Silver focus their sights specifically on that substantial minority of workers who are Conservative with a capital "C". Their conclusions, if accepted, seem equally discouraging to anyone who may still nurse hopes of the working class as the source of a left wing reorientation of British politics and society.

The Conservative Party's electoral appeal to the working class has met with sufficient success for the Tories to retain their position as the "normal party in office" at least into the early 1960s. McKenzie and Silver describe some of the constant elements in the direction of that appeal since the 1870s; and then turn to contemporary survey data to establish its impact today—to characterize the working class Tory, and to identify any changes that may be under way in the nature of the support which the Conservative Party continues to attract from one in every three or four manual working class voters. The authors are less concerned with *who* the Conservative workers are than with *how* they see politics and society. Contrary to conventional assumptions, McKenzie and Silver argue, working class Tories are neither politically ignorant, nor apathetic and "alienated" from the political process, by comparison with the Labour majority. Political and social views usually regarded as Conservative, moreover, have penetrated quite far into the Labour mass: conservatism with a small "c" is not confined to a deviant minority of workers. Labour voters in the working class nevertheless see politics, and the choice between the parties, predominantly in class terms—with emphasis on the general character of Labour as a working class party. Conservative workers, on the other

hand, are more inclined to describe the differences between the parties in terms of particular issues; and their political frames of reference include a concern with the personal qualifications and capacities of politicians, and with notions of a "common national interest", for which there is little or no counterpart among the Labour majority. It is the balance of contrasting socio-political ideas within the Conservative minority, however, which is of central interest. That balance appears to be shifting. Older working class Tories include a substantial proportion of "deferential" voters—people who typically judge parties by their leaders, accept the qualifications of the established *élite* to rule, endorse traditional symbols of authority uncritically, and see the Conservative Party as a custodian of national values. Among younger working class Tories, by contrast, "deferential" voters are being replaced by "secular" voters. They evaluate politics more in terms of specific issues, have higher aspirations for themselves and their children, and look with a more sceptical eye on society, politics and politicians. Their commitment to the Conservative Party tends to be a limited one, pragmatic and conditional upon performance of the party in office.

In this interpretation, the "secular" Tory workers point a finger to the future. They help to account for a "new volatility" in voting patterns. The need to retain their support will force the Conservative Party to place greater stress on promises of material benefits and social improvements. But this requires no major adjustment; for such promises have for long been one major strand in the Tory appeal to the working class, side by side with the party's claims as a "national institution" and of its special "fitness to rule". The latter claim, moreover, may again prove an electoral asset for the Conservatives, even in their appeal to the "seculars", if Labour should appear unable to sustain its own new claim to superior competence in management. More significantly, the emergence of this block of "secular" voters, seen in conjunction with the penetration of wide sections of the working class at large by conservative modes of thought, will impel Labour, too, to seek support from the "secular" vote. The tendencies will be reinforced for both main parties to direct their appeal to a "floating middle"^v—potentially "volatile" in their party commitments, though volatile out of pragmatism, not out of irrationality or political ignorance. Still more than now, politics will become "de-fused": competition within shared terms of reference will prevail over conflicts of principle and class orientation. The parties will be increasingly guided by "instrumental" approaches—to adopt the vocabulary of Goldthorpe and associates. And one main agent for this reinforcement of existing trends will be the new "secular" voters—the "uncommitted Tory" equivalent of the "instrumentally oriented", "privatized", affluent (though still Labour) workers of Luton.⁴

So, by different routes, McKenzie and Silver, Runciman, and Goldthorpe, Lockwood and their colleagues, arrive at characterizations of tomorrow's working class which look similar in their political implications. "Secular" and pragmatic; concerned with domestic matters and individualistic ambitions; "instrumentally oriented" and "privatized" — wherever precisely they may be located in the occupational and political structure, the critical sections of the working class point to a future in which, while demands may be stepped up and may even sometimes be militant, these demands will at the same time be specific and non-cumulative in character. They are unlikely to involve that active linking of issue with issue, that diagnosis of a common situation from which particular deprivations spring, which constitutes class consciousness in the classical sense. The "worker turning bourgeois" has been replaced in sociological commentary by a more complex and more life-like figure. But the "privatized" worker of the new interpretations is no less inclined to live with the society more or less as he finds it, without actively challenging its premises.

III

The empirical documentation used to support these interpretations is considerable. Moreover, the views put forward seem to fit in, at least in some respects, with evidence from other sources on the socio-political passivity of the British working class—evidence from electoral studies, for example, on the diffuse nature and widespread moderation of political ideas in the population at large; or from other recent work, on the low ceilings of aspiration and symptoms of "social resignation" common among many working class adolescents. Lockwood's "traditionalist" workers⁶, like Runciman's acquiescent workers whose expectations are held down by the cultural limitations of their class horizons, seem to represent the "corporate" and "non-hegemonic" character ascribed by Anderson to the historical class consciousness of the British working class.⁹ The trend towards "instrumentalism" and "privatization"—an English version of the American "automobile worker syndrome"⁷ might be seen as the logical late-twentieth century sequel to a class consciousness of that kind, incapable of resisting from its own resources the pressures generated by rising "consumer affluence".

The case for accepting these conclusions more or less as they stand may thus appear overwhelming. I shall argue that it is not. My criticisms are directed less to the intrinsic quality of the evidence presented than to the interpretations which have been put upon it. Certainly, methodological doubts can be raised about some aspects of these studies. None of them, for example, uses samples which can carry the full weight of cross-tabulation required by the ideas which they explore.

The Luton survey, moreover, raises a question about the logic of the research design which the authors themselves recognize. If conditions "favourable" to the simple embourgeoisement thesis were deliberately chosen, in order the more firmly to refute that thesis if it should fail to hold water, just the same conditions happen also to be "favourable" to the "privatization" hypothesis which the authors put in its place. They have thus *selected* circumstances more likely than others to confirm their own thesis. All three reports are inclined at critical points to over-emphasize small contrasts in their data, or to under-emphasize larger ones, in order to achieve consistency of interpretation—a risk to which, of course, much research is exposed, and on which final criteria of judgement are uncertain. Most importantly, the measures adopted of some of the central concepts—"instrumentalism", "reference groups", "status orientation", "party commitment", for example—are of doubtful validity for their purposes, despite the often impressive ingenuity which the authors have brought to bear. These last points, however, relate more to interpretation of results than to the results themselves. And it is upon interpretation that I want to concentrate. In essence my argument is that the images of working class consciousness put forward are an incomplete representation even of the evidence from which they are drawn. In interpreting their data, the authors describe components of contemporary working class "world views", the existence and significance of which are undeniable. But their initial frames of reference have obscured from them the ambiguous totality of those "world views", as indicated even by their own findings. The common line of interpretation in these three major studies, for all their merits, show an insufficient sensitivity to the contradictions of working class consciousness, and especially to the nature of the latent potential for change suggested by those contradictions.



The argument turns primarily on the nature of those "instrumental" orientations to work and politics which—under whatever name, and whether attributed to this or that sub-group—are described as the formative element in the emergent Weltanschauung of the "new working class". The characterization of "instrumentalism" is most fully developed by Goldthorpe and his associates; and there is no reason to doubt its validity as a general description of attitudes to work among significant and "prototypical" sections of the industrial working class. The Luton survey data present a convincing picture of a situation—characteristic especially of machinists and assemblers, less of craftsmen and other specialist workers—in which the worker is tied to his job primarily or exclusively by monetary considerations. The work itself has little or no intrinsic interest, and offers few if any alternative satis-

factions. It is tolerated—hardly more; and toleration goes together with acceptance of a need for everyday cooperation between management and men—for the sake of the wage packet, and essentially for that reason only.

What is surprising about this is not the fact, but the interpretation which accompanies it—in the first instance, the implication that the worker's monetary orientation to his job is somehow a new phenomenon, which is the trigger for a developing "privatization" of the affluent workers' entire social outlook. For this "monetary orientation" seems to amount to something remarkably like a recognition of the "cash nexus", which Marx identified as the main residual binding force of capitalist society well over a hundred years ago. Curiously, the authors in commenting on the industrial situation of the "new" worker, acknowledge the analogy with Marx's analysis and terminology only in passing.⁸ The omission is significant. More explicit recognition of the Marxist antecedents of the concept of "instrumentalism" might have compelled the authors to consider alternative possible interpretations of its significance. For if the prototypical worker is tied to his work only by the size, security and potential growth of his wage packet—if his commitment to the job and to everyday cooperation with foremen and managers depends essentially on the fulfilment of such monetary conditions—his commitment clearly is a brittle one. He may be willing to accept the lack of other interests and satisfactions in the job, for the sake of the money. But should the amount and dependability of the money be threatened, his resigned toleration of the lack of discretion, control and "meaning" attached to the job could no longer be guaranteed. The "cash nexus" may snap just because it is only a cash nexus—because it is single-stranded; and if it does snap, there is nothing else to bind the worker to acceptance of his situation.

On this alternative interpretation, the worker's orientations to his work—and, by extension, to management, the "market" and the wider society which set the conditions of his employment and life circumstances—would be ambivalent, just because these orientations are "instrumental"; and unstable, just because they are ambivalent. High wage payments may inhibit potential discontents at a particular time—perhaps even most of the time in "normal" circumstances. But the single-stranded character of the "cash orientation" implies a latent instability of workers' commitments and orientations which is virtually ignored in the interpretation put forward in the Luton industrial study. It was this point which was emphasized by Robin Blackburn in a brief comment on an early report of the survey.⁹ An outbreak of acute industrial conflict at the Vauxhall motor factory shortly after completion of the study seemed difficult to reconcile with a characterization of the workers there as "disposed to maintain their relationship with their

firm, and to define this more as one of reciprocity and interdependence rather than, say, as one of coercion and exploitation"; and of the industrial situation as "no longer likely to give rise to discontent and resentment of a generalized kind".¹⁰ A subsequent rejoinder by Goldthorpe and his colleagues has not met the central point of Blackburn's criticism. For while they are willing to recognize "co-existence of conflict and co-operation" and a "greater aggressiveness in the field of 'cash-based' bargaining as a very probable development",¹¹ the emphasis in their interpretation is on the limitation of such disputes to a narrow range of issues related to wages. Blackburn's emphasis, by contrast, was on the catalytic effect of the wages dispute in raising wider issues of "coercion and exploitation" as significant overtones, at least while the conflict was in progress.

The point of reviving this controversy is not to settle the empirical question of what was involved in the 1966 strike (or for that matter in later disputes at Vauxhall's)—including the question of the balance between immediate issues and background overtones of wider significance. The point is rather that such questions and their implications in fact are largely neglected in the Luton survey. The study itself has little to say about the character of industrial conflict, latent or overt. And the interpretation presented—which deduces socio-political quiescence from "instrumentalism" by postulating "privatization"—consistently underplays evidence to indicate the precariousness of the balance between attitudes of cooperation and "societal resignation", on the one hand, and on the other hand those conflicting attitudes involving a generalized social discontent which may be released once the single-stranded "cash orientation" becomes strained or broken.



In fact there is a fair amount of evidence—from the Luton survey, the other studies under discussion and further recent work—to show that "social criticism" co-exists with "social apathy" in contemporary British working class consciousness. The essence of this consciousness is precisely its ambivalence and internal contradictions. To take a simple instance first: for all their acceptance of a need for everyday collaboration between management and men as "a team", about three in every four of the workers in the Luton sample believed that their firms could afford to pay higher wages. They were, as the authors concede, "highly conscious of a divergence of interest over the way in which the product of this co-operation is distributed".¹² Yet this admission by the authors does not form part of their general interpretation of the significance of "instrumentalism".

Runciman's data provide some further indications of views about earnings and the distribution of incomes. Concerned as he is to demon-

strate the low reference points by which workers evaluate their own economic position; the author stresses the limitations on working class aspirations which appear to be reflected in his results. Indeed it does seem striking, for example, that about one in every two manual workers in his sample (in 1962) agreed with the proposition that manual workers "are doing much better nowadays" than white collar workers; that just over one in two of them—and rather more among those with relatively comfortable incomes—said in answer to a direct question that they were satisfied with their incomes; and that among manual and non-manual people at roughly similar income levels, the latter—the white collar respondents—were rather more inclined to express some kind of discontent with their financial circumstances.¹³ It is difficult in any case to assess the meaning of responses of this kind. Respondents may assume, erroneously, that they are *expected* to relate their replies to their own limited experience. If so, manual workers asked about white collar earnings may take the question to concern the earnings of those kinds of low-level routine clerks most familiar to them (and the earnings of these have indeed come to compare increasingly badly with those of most manual workers). Or they may assume that a question concerning satisfaction with their own incomes is intended to imply comparison only with what people "like themselves" can *realistically* expect. There are indications that this was indeed the case to some degree.¹⁴ To that extent, therefore, the low "standards of comparison" apparently revealed by the results would be an artifact of respondents' erroneous, but understandable, re-interpretations of the questions. The survey data are thus likely to understate the extent of economic discontent, among manual workers and low-paid people in particular. Yet for all that, in fact, nearly one in every two of Runciman's manual working class respondents *did* express direct dissatisfaction with their incomes in answer to a straight question on the point; and only one in four of them, when asked what they thought was a "proper" income "for people like yourself", gave a figure roughly equivalent to their actual income. The great majority wanted more¹⁵ This is hardly surprising. What is surprising, again, is that such simple points form no part of Runciman's interpretation.

It would be misleading to make a great deal out of evidence of this kind. All that one can say is that economic discontent, overt or latent, seems more widespread than is consistent with Runciman's stress on the persistence of traditional limitations on working class aspirations. The prevalence of some such discontent, however, is not by itself incompatible with the postulates of the "privatization" thesis. Economic resentments may be weakly held. Though common, they may not be openly shared. Or, even if they are sufficiently strong and "public" to generate industrial militancy (as Goldthorpe and associates recognize

in respect of their "affluent" workers), such resentments may still be incapable of transforming militancy into radicalism, unless they are linked with more generally critical attitudes to the social order at large. Here again, however, there is a good deal of evidence to show that such critical attitudes are common among contemporary workers, diffuse and ambivalent though the ideology is of which these views form part. Nearly three in every four of the manual workers in the Luton sample, for instance, agreed with the view that there is "one law for the rich and another for the poor". About three in every five assented to the proposition that big business has "too much power" in the country. McKenzie and Silver found much the same proportion in their larger and more representative sample of working class respondents. About one in every two of the latter sample, and nearly two in every three of the Labour voters among them, also agreed that "the upper classes . . . have always tried to keep the working classes from getting their fair share".¹⁶ Moreover, it is a finding common to these and other studies that the Labour-inclined majority among manual workers typically, or at least very often, explain their support for Labour in terms of class interest. Well over four in every five working class Labour supporters in a national sample interviewed for Butler's and Stokes' recent study (but only one in every four middle class Conservatives) described politics as a matter either of directly opposed class interests, or of some representation of class interests though without the same emphasis on overt conflict.¹⁷ It is true that working class support for Labour as the party most likely to represent their class interests is often sceptical and has a limited character; the significance of this will be discussed later. The point at present, however, is a simpler one: that the bulk of the manual working class clearly feel that they have interests in common to defend or promote in a society in which power is skewed against them.



Economic dissatisfaction and more general social discontents are thus fairly widespread among the British working class, including its "affluent" segments. Of course, polling techniques in social surveys tap the complexities of attitudes only in a fragmentary way. Variations in the wording and context of questions, in the selection of samples and the definition of sub-samples, as well as in the socio-political climate of the moment, make it unsafe to rely on the figures thrown up by this or that study for much more than general indications. But the general indications—though they cover only a limited range of issues—are cumulative and consistent enough to show the presence, among the bulk of working class, of a "counter-ideology" critical of the present social order. It is a "quasi-ideology", an ideology at half-

cock—not a full-blown radical (let alone revolutionary) ideology—because its elements are contradictory, and lack the coherence implied in classical concepts of working class consciousness; and because, partly for that reason, its political potential is uncertain, ambivalent and to a considerable extent latent. Social criticism co-exists with attitudes that involve a practical, everyday acceptance of established institutions. The Luton workers' assent to a "team work" analogy to describe relationships between management and workers is an example of the latter. Yet they did not, after all, accept the distribution of the product as equitable; and over half of them anticipated unfavourable, or partly unfavourable, reactions from their workmates if the respondent himself were to "join management" as a foreman.¹⁸ The fact that only minorities of workers—though not insubstantial minorities—wish to see the House of Lords abolished or the monarchy changed is hardly important one way or another, despite McKenzie's and Silver's use of these points as indicators.¹⁹ For the substantive role of these institutions is peripheral. But it is of some significance, on the one side, that over one in every two of the workers in these authors' sample felt that they had no or very little influence over government.²⁰ On the other side, it is symptomatic of the diffuse character of grassroots ideology in Britain that opinions on specific issues and measures of policy often are far from clearly crystallized, stable or coherently held as part of a firm constellation of political ideas.²¹

It is obvious that the British working class is not seething with rebellion. It is equally obvious that components of a "counter-ideology", critical in general terms of the established social order, are in no way as negligible or as fragmentary as postulated in recent interpretations. The phenomenon of "privatization", and its allegedly repressive effects on collective expression of social criticism, have not in fact been demonstrated. Runciman, for example, does not succeed in validating his hypothesis that, in so far as workers' aspirations rise above their traditional limitations, they tend to take a "status"- rather than a "class"-oriented form, and therefore are essentially individualistic in character. For none of his measures of "status" orientation can be at all clearly interpreted as such.²² The authors of the Luton study *infer* "privatization"; but that is all. The mere fact that workers aspire to "individualistic" goals—that they want money, security, "a good time" and individual advancement, for themselves, their families and children—is no proof of "privatization". "Individualistic" goals are not foreign to class conscious workers' organization—reformist, radical or revolutionary. What characterizes such organization is a diagnosis of society which, with varying degrees of clarity and coherence, concludes that these and other goals are both interdependent and impossible to attain without some general restructuring of society through collective action.

The "counter-ideology" of the contemporary working class has something of the character of such a diagnosis: "individualistic" aspirations are linked with a sense of social injustice and of the exploitation characteristic of an unequal power situation. Though it is—certainly at present—only a "counter-ideology", defensive and lacking in coherence, there is more to it than just a set of commonly shared but privately oriented and disconnected individual resentments.



It is another question again how far this "counter-ideology" finds expression in collective organization today, or may become sufficiently crystallized to do so in the future. Unfortunately, however, this is a question on which these recent studies have little concrete to say. Goldthorpe and his colleagues find support for their translation of "instrumentalism" into "privatization" by reference to the limited and tenuous character of the prototypical affluent worker's allegiances to the established organizations of the labour movement. The great majority of the Luton workers—in fact, a surprisingly large majority—were Labour supporters, though habitual rather than enthusiastic supporters. Their commitment to the trade union movement was much more conditional and uncertain. Two in every five of the workers in the Luton sample agreed with the assertion that the trade unions have "too much power"—a good deal fewer than said the same about big business, but a very substantial proportion nevertheless. As many as one in every two assented to the view that the trade unions should be separate from the Labour Party—thus apparently rejecting a central assumption of the labour movement since 1900.²³ The workers in the sample showed considerable involvement in the unionism of the workplace, in shop floor organization and activity. But this, as the authors point out, was "very largely *dissociated* from what they regard as the official activity of the unions". It was, they go on to argue, "the particular conditions and problems of their own employment" that concerned these workers: ". . . unionism has little significance for them other than in relation to the immediate 'bread-and-butter' issues of their own work situation. . . ." Support for shop floor organization implies only an ". . . 'instrumental collectivism' . . . directed to the achievement of individuals' private goals, outside the workplace."²⁴

The implication, however, that involvement in shop floor organization is inherently and narrowly limited to preoccupations with day-to-day "bread-and-butter issues" and with purely local circumstances is a postulate for which none of the data presented are satisfactory evidence. Most shop floor activity most of the time must, of course, involve these preoccupations—though it is of some incidental interest that contact with workmates provides one of the main opportunities for political

discussion.²⁵ What is at issue is the apparent assumption that a neat and permanent distinction can be drawn between narrowly focused issues of an essentially local character and issues of larger significance with industry-wide or society-wide implications. The potential catalytic role of local issues in crystallizing wider issues is not disproved. Nor is evidence presented to discount the possibility that the new shop floor organization of the 1950s and 1960s may generate a network of extra-local links, through which once parochial issues may be "nationalized" and "politicized". Such questions—central questions today, on which impressions and speculations generally substitute for hard knowledge—are simply left aside or quickly dismissed.

The limited and conditional nature of the affluent worker's commitments to the established organizations of the labour movement is certainly significant. But the significance is by no means necessarily to indicate the absence of a basis for collective organization of any but a parochial kind. To conclude that would be to assume that working class radicalism today can be measured by the strength of support for the Labour Party and the "official" trade unions. Such an assumption is increasingly doubtful. Taken in conjunction with the evidence for a diffuse but socially critical "counter-ideology" at the working class grassroots, it seems more plausible to interpret the scepticism of many workers towards the established organizations of "their" movement as, at least in large part, an expression of disillusionment. It would be a natural outcome of that process of elaborate institutionalization of class conflict which has made the Labour Party and the trade unions visibly ineffective as instruments of social protest and societal change. It is rather striking in this context that nearly one in every three of the Luton workers who intended to vote Labour at the next general election felt that it would 'hot make much difference'⁷ which party won the election²⁶—this already in 1963/64, before the advent of a Labour government had spread disillusionment, and at a time when party activists were generally united by euphoric expectations of the consequences of electoral victory.

McKenzie and Silver, too, make a good deal of the relatively weak organizational allegiances of the Labour majority among manual workers. Their attempt to demonstrate that Labour voters in the working class are *less* strongly committed to their party than the "deviant" Conservatives to theirs, and are also less politically informed, is unconvincing. The measures they use for these purposes concern views on policy issues which, by their own and other evidence, are more "salient" for Conservatives than for Labour supporters; and tests of political "knowledge" which relate more to Conservative than to Labour perspectives on politics.²⁷ Different measures might nevertheless have proved the point. Or they might at least have been appropriate for

examination of a central issue, which in fact is left largely unexplored : the question precisely of those dilemmas of political commitment which arise for workers—by no means only left-wingers—who on the one hand share some generalized sense of social discontent and look to Labour as the representative of their class interests in an inequitable society, while on the other hand they have increasingly few illusions about the effectiveness of that representation. Certainly, the evidence presented by these authors—like some of that in Butler's and Stokes' recent study—confirms the Luton survey data on the high proportion of workers who look with suspicion or hostility at the power of the established trade unions.²⁹ There is no reason to suppose that anti-trade union views of this kind derive *only* from disillusionment with the unions as "agents of radicalism". But the increasing ineffectiveness of the established unions as genuine representatives of their members—the duality of roles which they have acquired by accepting a partial responsibility as society's agents in the maintenance of industrial discipline—provide a fertile soil for the spread of antagonism to the unions on other grounds as well; and for public, including working class, receptivity to anti-union campaigns in the mass media. McKenzie and Silver do not follow up implications of this kind. They imply, simply, that weak and uncertain allegiances on the part of Labour workers to the unions and to their party reflect a pervasive and a-political conservatism, a growing indifference to the "traditional" appeal of the labour movement. The crucial role in the future complexion of British politics they attribute to the new element of "secular"—"instrumentally oriented"³⁰—voters among the *Tory* workers.

Their conclusions on this point are again unconvincing. It is of course very possible, as they argue, that the emergence of a new group of voters of this kind, without firm party attachments, will encourage both main parties to seek their support by similarly directed appeals.³¹ It would be quite in line with contemporary political developments for the parties—the Labour party not least—to accept McKenzie's and Silver's "advice" to do just that. If so, the existing tendencies will be still further strengthened for the parties to be divided only by a narrow range of pragmatically defined issues, to compete with each other in terms of rival claims to superior skill in the implementation of very similar policies. This in turn would mark still more clearly Labour's abandonment of policies directed to basic societal changes, in favour of changes only through mild reform and "efficient" operation of a capitalist economy. All this seems very likely to occur. But it does not follow that it is the only possibility; that Labour in particular, even in terms of narrow electoral considerations, has no alternative but to follow this prescription. If McKenzie and Silver are right, the shift towards "secularism" among working class *Tory* voters provides Labour with

its first effective chance to detach substantial numbers of this "deviant" minority from their previous political allegiances—something practically unattainable so long as the dominant orientation among working class Conservatives was one of "deference" to the established order. It by no means follows that, in order to use this new opportunity to cut into the working class Tory vote, Labour must establish itself still more squarely inside a narrowing political spectrum tied firmly to the maintenance of neo-capitalism. The new "secular" voters, as McKenzie and Silver indeed emphasize, are more inclined than their deferential "predecessors" to recognize societal obstacles to their personal aspirations, to be critical of the power of "big business", and to favour increased government expenditure on social services even at the cost of higher taxation.³⁰ None of this, of course, means that they are new recruits for the left today (though McKenzie and Silver conclude that the competition between the parties for their support is likely to lead the Conservative Party to strengthen the social welfare and utilitarian strands of their traditional appeal to the working class). Nevertheless, the emergence of the "secular" voters may well signify a widening of the sources of recruitment for the left in *the* future. For if the party political commitments of the "secular" voters are volatile today, the commitments of their successors to the wider social order may be equally uncertain tomorrow. The shift towards "secularism" may well lead to a spread of that working class "counter-ideology" to which "deference" was previously an impenetrable barrier. If so, the Labour Party—which risks the loss, through political disillusionment, of part of its "traditional" working class support if it stays to the right³¹—could gain new support while moving to the left. Even by criteria which substitute tactical assessments of electoral prospects for political values, a left-wing reorientation is likely to strengthen Labour rather than to weaken it. McKenzie and Silver would apparently discount this possibility, on the grounds that even the Labour majority in the working class has a perspective which "is profoundly in accord with the Conservative view of the balanced, pacific, and consensual society. . . ."³² But this kind of interpretation, as I have argued, goes against the evidence by over-emphasizing the acquiescent elements of the working class world view at the expense of the socially critical ones. The latter are recognized—as in the Luton industrial study—only to be dismissed for the purposes of overall interpretation.



One significant feature associated with the Luton study is a typology of the styles and sources of working class images of society which, on examination, seems to allow no place for working class political orientations of a radical, and at the same time "universalistic" or non-

parochial, kind.¹³ Contemporary "privatized" workers are contrasted with "traditionalist proletarian" workers. The latter see the world in oppositional terms, by reference to a dichotomous model of conflicting class interests. But they are a dying species, it is argued, because their "solidary collectivism" stems from conditions which are vanishing: from the central role of work in their lives; from a marked overlap between the social relationships which arise from work and from leisure; and from the relatively closed and homogeneous character of the communities in which they live and work. Miners, dockers and other workers characterized by strong "occupational communities" are prototypical examples. The new "privatized" worker, by contrast, is tied to his work only by cash considerations, and tends to live in a "community of strangers" dissociated from his job. Neither work nor community milieu can provide the basis for more than an "instrumental collectivism" directed to limited objectives. The latter argument is a highly dubious one for the reasons already put forward.¹⁴ But the "solidary collectivism" of "proletarian traditionalism" implies no less a limitation of collective objectives—though Lockwood and Goldthorpe do not draw this inference—because it rests on parochial insulation and on affinities essentially of locality and local kind.¹⁵ If so, working class movements which are universalistic in character (in the sense that they transcend local and sectional boundaries, and that their commitments are more to policies and ideals than just to people as "kith and kin")—such universalistically oriented labour movements would appear to be a logical and sociological impossibility. "Proletarian traditionalism" breeds a kind of tribal solidarity, it seems; "privatization", no solidarity but limited cooperation to push up wages. But even the British labour movement, though it has elements of both, has also past and present elements of ideology, idealism and universalistic commitment which go a good deal beyond that.



It would be hazardous to predict that a sharp left-wing reorientation of politics is imminent in Britain through working class dissent. It is no less misleading to assume that "instrumentalism", "secularism" and "privatization" will be steadily eroding the basis for any such active radicalization. For that is to ignore, first, the ambivalent character of class consciousness among British workers, its continuing mixture of acquiescence and dissent. Second, it is to ignore the new potentialities of a situation characterized by persistent structural inequalities of the society at large, by heightened aspirations among workers, and by increasing transparency of the cash nexus. These potentialities are themselves ambivalent. The response to frustration of aspirations, and to the strains to which the slender cash nexus is vulnerable, may be

fragmented, inchoate and "privatized". The political paralysis of the established organizations of the labour movement encourages such fragmentation. But the conjunction of circumstances points also to an alternative possibility: to a future crystallization and cohesion of discontents, and a recreation of collective organization for their expression, triggered precisely by the vulnerability of the cash nexus. It is these divergent potentialities—partly visible in the internal conflicts of the labour movement in recent years—which are the essence of the contemporary situation.

Opinion polls and attitude surveys dissociated from observation of concrete political and industrial action are not in any case sufficient to answer such questions. It might be tempting, in this context, to regard the increase in industrial unrest of recent years as a portent of a coming swing to the left. But the signs again are very uncertain. For one thing, Britain is still not markedly strike-prone by any reasonable measures, however much that fact clashes with establishment opinion and left-wing romanticism alike.¹⁴ For another, although Goldthorpe and his colleagues draw the distinction too sharply, increasing industrial militancy certainly does not automatically produce socio-political radicalization. Shop floor action, the new-found aggressiveness of various white-collar groups, the tensions created by successive governmental incomes policies and by the official unions' half-reluctant recruitment as agents for such policies—all these are certainly important contemporary developments. But they would remain little more than grumblings of the social structure—and highly susceptible to taming through extensions of the apparatus of conflict institutionalization—if their effective targets were just higher wages, recognition in collective bargaining, or the rewards of professional status. Yet there are straws in the wind which point to more than that. One is the shift in strike propensity, from old industries characterized by "occupational community" and the solidarity of "the isolated mass"—notably coal-mining; to new industries of "affluence"—engineering and not least motor manufacture. This shift, and the emergence of shop floor organization as a new focal point of collective bargaining and industrial action, may be the main causes of the anti-strike hysteria of the past decade. Their potential socio-political significance lies precisely in the evident exposure of the single-stranded cash nexus as a feature of these newly strike-prone industries; in the additional vulnerability of the cash nexus which arises, in sections of those industries, from fluctuations in job security and earnings associated with the policy-conditioned cycle of stop-and-go in production; and in the signs—little charted though they are—that even industrial disputes formally confined to wages and immediately related questions tend to bring wider issues of control, authority and economic policy at least temporarily into focus. Issues

of that kind, in fact, which go beyond the straight bread-and-butter question of pay, seem to be of growing importance as triggers of industrial conflict—not least in motor manufacturing, the prototype "affluent" industry. This does not square readily with the Luton authors' assumptions.³⁷ Another straw in the wind is the adoption of new forms (or the revival of old forms) of "direct action"—squatting by homeless families and rent strikes by council tenants are the obvious examples—in attempts to by-pass the paralyzed conventional political machinery, even though such direct action is still peripheral in coverage and effect. It is naive to look to the "revolt" of activist youth and militant students—in any case noticeably "British" in its restraint by comparison with many other countries—as a potential "detonator" of revolution in Britain. But that "revolt" is significant as part of a climate of opinion in which the assertion of established authority is more open to challenge than it was; in which recognition of party political and union paralysis has spread widely; in which diverse sources of tension and resentment may become linked in a common diagnosis—or may not. In short, a realistic diagnosis today cannot end with a full stop: it can set only a series of tantalizing question marks.



POSTSCRIPT

The crucial weakness of the interpretations discussed could be summed up by reference precisely to their tendency to set a full stop in place of question marks—their insufficient recognition of the contradictory possibilities inherent in their own findings and in the situation to which these relate. This comment, however, now needs modification in one respect. The present paper had to be prepared before the final instalment of one of the studies had appeared: the third report in the Luton "affluent worker" series. The publication of this report, only shortly before the present volume goes to press, makes a postscript necessary.³⁸ For the third Luton monograph appears to show a definite shift of interpretation by comparison with its predecessors. Certainly, at least, it ends with a diagnosis the ultimate conclusions of which are in no way foreshadowed in the earlier monographs. The essence of those conclusions is a recognition by the authors of just such an uncertainty, just such contradictions, in the prospects for the future as had been absent from their interpretations in the previous reports.

Goldthorpe, Lockwood and their colleagues maintain and elaborate the central elements of their initial diagnosis in the final monograph. The "affluent" worker, the prototype for the future, is not "turning bourgeois". He does not aspire to assimilation in the middle classes;

and there are no signs in fact of such assimilation. The essential constraints on his life are, as they were before, his permanent dependence on the sale of his labour; his subordinate position in the market, at work and more widely; his absence of practical prospects of self-advancement, promotion, or regular and personal increments in earnings related to seniority. But he is also a worker of a new species. Work and leisure are separate worlds to him. The former is a source of money only, for use in the "other world", His "central life interests" are consumption-oriented, family-directed and "privatized". It is at this point, however, that the weight of interpretation shifts in the third monograph. For while the affluent worker's "instrumental" orientation to work militates against any radicalization stemming from his employment situation, new and more radical demands may well be engendered by the clash between steadily rising aspirations and the barriers to their achievement in the world *outside* work. As old wants are satisfied, new ones may take their place, which are less domestic in nature and cannot be met except through changes in public policy. Such potential support among the "new workers" for more radical policies in education, welfare, urban planning and other fields, for measures of an egalitarian slant, constitutes a latent demand which the Labour Party *could* bring out, form and develop to the point of electoral success—if the party could overcome the institutionalized inhibitions that rule out a swing to the left for the leadership today.

There are clearly quite close similarities between this diagnosis and the argument which I have tried to advance, in criticism partly of the interpretations presented or implied in the earlier Luton reports.¹⁹ Even so, a few further comments may be worth while, in order to question some aspects of the conclusions with which the authors end the series. There are three important, and related, points worth taking up here.

The first is the assumption—maintained from the earlier reports of the study—that production relations, the worker's employment situation, are unlikely to be a source of social tension or to engender more than localized and "instrumentally" directed conflict. The authors have a good case in their criticism of some contemporary Marxist commentators—notably in France—for a dogmatic exaggeration of the primacy of employment relations *per se* as the source of "alienation" and potential revolutionary change; for a dismissal of consumption orientations and private aspirations as "false values", which merely reflect the alienated situation of workers in contemporary capitalist societies; and for the use of a concept of alienation sometimes so formulated as to defy empirical verification or refutation. But the Luton survey authors' own postulate of an increasingly sharp separation of work from life outside work—similar to that implied by some of the commentators whom they criticize, but in reverse order of priority—seems equally

unrealistic. For it ignores, as I have argued, the significance of the "exposure" of the cash nexus; its liability to strain or severance, when the dependability of earnings is threatened or increases in pay fail to keep pace with rising demands; and the likelihood, in those circumstances, that other features of the workers' market and work situation, "normally" borne with indifference, may be transformed into sources of active discontent and conflict. The prospects for a radicalization and politicization of protest lie just in the *conjunction* of such discontent, rooted directly in the relations of production, with the frustration of rising demands concerned with the world outside work.

The second point arises from the description given of the characteristic "social imagery" of the new affluent workers. These workers, say the authors, drawing on replies to a series of "unstructured" questions about ideas on class, not only show no concern with "status"; they are just as little "class conscious" in the classical sense of the term. Their picture of society is couched in terms, not of a "power model", but of a "money model". They see class divisions essentially as differences between people and groups at different levels of income and wealth, and thus unequal in their capacity to satisfy private wants. But again the distinction—though it has significance—seems both exaggerated and somewhat artificial. Differences of income and wealth, even if referred to only as differences in consumption capacity, imply differences of interest. Differences of interest in turn, when they are embedded in inequalities, imply differences of power. Indeed, the Luton evidence itself and other data show that ideas with connotations of power, and inequalities of power, are certainly part of the contemporary working class "counter-ideology", whether or not workers refer to these directly when asked to talk about "class" as such. Such connotations surely are present, for example, in the view that the product of industry is divided inequitably; that politics is a matter of class interests; that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor; that big business—and for that matter the official trade unions—have too much "power".

The point is not unimportant. For on it turns, in part, the third question for comment here. If the new workers in their social outlook show little concern with issues of power, and if in addition their solidarity with workmates is attuned only to demands for higher wages and better conditions on the spot, they are unlikely by themselves to prove an *active* force towards a left-wing reorientation of politics and policy. Whether their latent support for this kind of reorientation is activated and crystallized would then depend very largely on action by the Labour Party leadership—in its own interest—to "create" a demand which would otherwise remain for ever at best embryonic. Indeed, this is what the authors seem to imply; and they stress the self-

imposed restraints which are likely to prevent the party leadership from taking such action. They are right to emphasize the partial autonomy which established organizations like the Labour Party have as agents of social change or non-change, in a society where pressure and protest have long been channelled in highly institutionalized ways. They are right, too, to reject the naïve kind of "grassroots sociology" by which politicians ascribe their own inactivity to a passivity of the common people which they themselves do a good deal to promote. But the all-decisive role which the authors allot to the established Labour Party once more seems to strain the argument too far. For this argument assumes a near-total autonomy of the party leadership *vis à vis* its grassroots. That assumption in turn hinges on the further assumption that the new working class is essentially passive in political terms, though *not* positively acquiescent. And this assumption again derives from the joint premises that work and non-work are increasingly separate worlds, and that the affluent worker's social consciousness goes little beyond the limits of a purely "monetary model" of society. Thus the foundations of the argument are weak. The possibility that the "autonomy" of the Labour Party leadership may be challenged is an open one. New forms, and older but revived forms, of collective organization—a possible "nationalization" and politicization of shop floor organization, an extension and coalescence of "direct action", a transformation of grumblings within the established labour movement into effective dissent, perhaps a new importance of local politics in channelling pressures for changes in national policies—these could be the modes of a left-wing reorientation; or they may come to nothing.

Goldthorpe, Lockwood and their colleagues acknowledge that the possibilities are open in a way which has only too rarely been recognized in recent commentary. But the situation is still more open, the potentialities for change are both more diverse and more uncertain, than they allow. If this is so, it is just because the transparency and vulnerability of the cash nexus add further emphasis to the contradiction between rising aspirations and persistent inequalities in the society at large.

NOTES

1. P. Anderson, "Origins of the present crisis" in P. Anderson and R. Blackburn (ed.), *Towards Socialism*, 1965. (See also E. P. Thompson, "The peculiarities of the English", *Socialist Register* 1965; and P. Anderson, "Socialism and pseudo-empiricism", *New Left Review*, No. 35, 1966.) Two other contributions to Anderson and Blackburn, *op. cit.*, summarized evidence and arguments against various versions of the "classlessness" hypothesis: J. H. Westergaard, "The withering away of class" and R. Blackburn, "The new capitalism".
2. J. H. Goldthorpe, D. Lockwood, F. Bechhofer, J. Platt: *The Affluent*

Worker: (1) *Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour*, 1968; (2) *Political Attitudes and Behaviour*, 1968; the third monograph, *The Affluent Worker in the Class System*, 1969, was not published at the time of writing, but meanwhile some of the results had been summarized in an anticipatory review of the study as a whole, "The affluent worker", *Sociology*, 1 (1), 1967. (Other relevant papers from this stable are: D. Lockwood, "The 'new' working class", *European Journal of Sociology*, 1 (2), 1960; J. H. Goldthorpe and D. Lockwood, "Affluence and the British class structure", *Sociological Review*, 11 (2), 1963; and D. Lockwood, "Sources of variation in working class images of society", *Sociological Review*, 14 (3), 1966.) W. G. Runciman, *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*, 1966. R. T. McKenzie, A. Silver, *Angels in Marble: Working Class Conservatives in Urban England*, 1968.

Some sections of non-manual workers might, for other reasons, be experiencing a progressive detachment from the established middle class, without becoming—or accepting that they were becoming—"proletarianized". Routine clerks and others of a similar level no longer commanded a premium in the labour market, and were probably losing the traditional compensations of promotion prospects, auxiliary participation in authority and so on, which in the past had attached to low level non-manual work. But if thereby they were moving, from a different starting point, to a position similar to that of the domestically oriented, insulated, "affluent" manual workers, the double process was one of "convergence", not of "embourgeoisement".

McKenzie and Silver find further support for their interpretation of future trends, *inter alia*, in some tendency for the Conservative minority vote to increase *down* the income scale among older workers, but to increase *up* the income scale among younger workers.

D. Lockwood, "Sources of variation in working class images of society", *op. cit.*

6. P. Anderson, "Origins of the present crisis", *op. cit.*

7. E. Chinoy, *Automobile Workers and the American Dream*, 1955.

8. For example, the term "cash nexus" seems to be used only once in the monograph devoted to a detailed analysis of the "instrumental" character of workers' orientations to work. (*The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour*, p. 32.)

Robin Blackburn, "The unequal society", in R. Blackburn and A. Cockburn, ed., *The Incompatibles: Trade Union Militancy and the Consensus*, 1967, pp. 48-51.

10. J. H. Goldthorpe, "Attitudes and behaviour of car assembly workers", *British Journal of Sociology*, September, 1966, p. 239.

J. H. Goldthorpe and others, *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour*, pp. 195-196.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

13. W. G. Runciman, *op. cit.*, pp. 200, 207 and 204, respectively.

14. The fact, for example, that about one in every five of Runciman's "low income" respondents and more than one in every four of the "medium income" respondents—manual and non-manual together—said that they did *not* think that there were "any other sorts of people doing noticeably better at the moment than you and your family" (*op. cit.*, p. 193) strongly suggests that they either construed the question in non-economic terms or

assumed that the interviewer intended a comparison only with "people like themselves". However low their "real" standards of comparison for evaluation of their own position, they can hardly have been entirely ignorant of the existence of groups considerably better off than themselves.

15. *Op cit.*, pp. 207 and 204, respectively. I have had to calculate the ratios from the data given because, characteristically, Runciman omits to present the simple overall ratios for all manual (and all non-manual) respondents, in his preoccupation with the subtleties of variations between sub-groups. Thus, commenting on the table on p. 204, he emphasizes a tendency for non-manual workers to set their sights higher than manual workers of the same income level. But he fails to point out that, because low incomes are common among manual workers and much rarer among non-manual workers (and because financial discontent as expressed in these data is inversely related to income), an aggregate calculation shows that the proportions of all manual and of all non-manual workers who set their sights little or no higher than their current incomes are identical, and in both cases minorities of little more than one in four. That the majority set their targets higher than that is the more noteworthy because the question (with its reference to standards of living "proper . . . for people like yourself") in this particular case was explicitly loaded in a way that might reduce the "levels of aspiration" expressed.
16. J. H. Goldthorpe and others, *The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour*, pp. 26-27; R. T. McKenzie and A. Silver, *op. cit.*, pp. 127, 135.
17. David Butler and Donald Stokes, *Political Change in Britain, 1969*: p. 92.
18. J. H. Goldthorpe and others, *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour*, p. 122.
19. R. T. McKenzie and A. Silver, *op. cit.*, pp. 147, 150.
20. *Zbid.*, p. 124. (This was during the period of the Conservative government, before 1964.)
21. The latter point has been made in a number of electoral studies—most elaborately by D. Butler and D. Stokes, *op. cit.* (footnote 17 above), especially chapters 8 and 9. Their analysis, unfortunately, does not deal with class differences on issues of policy; and their demonstration of the low "salience" of the terms "left" and "right" to many electors is of more linguistic than sociological interest. Nevertheless, the data they present underline the low degree to which ideological orientations are crystallized around specific issues in the population at large, and therefore also in general terms in the working class. The simultaneous existence of a socially critical "counter-ideology" in the working class is nevertheless markedly evident from their working class respondents' use of a frame of reference relating to class interests in describing politics (p. 92); but this is ignored by the authors in their discussion, in chapters 8 and 9, of "issues" and "ideological awareness".
22. See W. G. Runciman, *op. cit.*, chapter XI. It is difficult to accept Runciman's assumption that a manual worker's preference for a non-manual job for his son (when even initially very low paid non-manual jobs may still offer—or be believed to offer—better advancement prospects, better amenities and perhaps greater security), and his expression of a desire to move to a different "kind of district", are measures of status-oriented aspirations little concerned with material benefits.

23. J. H. Goldthorpe and others, *The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour*, pp. 26-27.
24. *Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour*, p. 106.
25. *Political Attitudes and Behaviour*, p. 29.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 23.
27. R. T. McKenzie and A. Silver, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-117 and p. 122. Of five areas of politics by which respondents' commitments to their own party were tested, three concerned foreign relations, relations with the Commonwealth and Empire, and the "patriotism" of the political parties; one, the parties' capacity to ensure national prosperity; and only one a more "Labour-oriented" question, the concern of the parties with "the interests of everyone in the country". The tests of "political knowledge" involved naming leading politicians.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 127. See also D. Butler and D. Stokes, *op. cit.* (footnote 17), pp. 167-170. It is, for example, striking to find in the latter study that no fewer than 60 per cent of union members in a 1963 sample, and 65 per cent in 1964, expressed agreement with the view that the trade unions "should stay out of politics", even though respondents' (possibly quite varying) interpretations of this sort of proposition need investigation of a kind which they do not receive in this or the other studies under discussion.
29. *Ibid.*, especially p. 258.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 202-208. These, and other, differences between "seculars" and "deferentials" are in several cases not very striking ones. To the extent that this is so, the general socio-political significance of the shift towards "secularism" is debateable, whatever interpretation of its possible consequence is adopted. But the authors, while exercising caution in their speculations about the future, emphasize the differences visible today between new "seculars" and old "deferentials" as the emergent signs of a shift which is likely to become more evident in future.
31. A local panel study of the 1964 general election interestingly indicates that, while the election campaign—following the emphasis especially in the Labour Party's direction of its appeal—substantially increased voters' perceptions in general of economic growth (the "modernization" question) as a central issue, that issue remained a subsidiary one by comparison with issues of welfare and employment for manual workers, and especially for non-skilled manual workers who were hardly affected by the campaign emphasis on this question. See J. G. Blumler and D. McQuail: *Television in Politics: its Uses and Influence*, 1968 (pp. 171-176).
32. R. T. McKenzie and A. Silver, *op. cit.*, p. 246.
33. For the most cogent, and a very interesting, formulation of this typology, see D. Lockwood, "Sources of variation in working class images of society", *Sociological Review*, November 1966. Cf. also J. H. Goldthorpe and others, *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour*, especially pp. 32-42.
34. Nor is it at all certain that the secular shift in the character of working class local communities must have the kinds of consequences postulated. One-industry communities of the character of mining towns and dockside areas are no doubt decreasingly common. But it is very doubtful whether residential class segregation is or has been declining; it may well have increased, though there is not adequate and comprehensive evidence on the point. Manual workers certainly still typically live fairly near their

work, and cheek by jowl with other manual workers though not necessarily their workmates. Such communities are less closed and locally insulated than they were in the past; and the lives of workers and their families are probably more "domesticated" and less focused upon the street, the pub and other local institutions than before. But the former point is a necessary precondition for any organization to rise above parochial limits and parochially defined objectives. And while the latter point may present new obstacles to collective organization, it does not preclude such organization (expressed, for example, through industrial militancy), or the "radicalization" of collective organization through common recognition of an interdependence in the social sources of "private" frustrations.

35. It is just to such parochial features of the traditional working class situation —to cultural barriers arising from the character of classes as quasi-communities — that Runciman attributes the limitations of working class aspirations. Though the validity of the argument is questionable today, it has considerable historical relevance.
36. See, e.g., H. A. Turner, *Is Britain Really Strike-Prone?*, 1969.
37. See, e.g., H. A. Turner *et. al.*, *Labour Relations in the Motor Industry*, 1967. The Luton authors' decision, on grounds of doubtful logic, to select firms for study which had records of "good" industrial relations, not only prevented them from exploring the nature of industrial disputes in any depth, despite their comments on the subject. It also resulted, as Blackburn was the first to point out (see note 9 above), in the inclusion in the sample, as representative of the "affluent" motor industry, of a firm (Vauxhall's) whose record in this respect was then as yet *atypical* of that strike-prone sector of industry.
38. This third monograph, *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*, was published in December, 1969. See especially Chapter 6, pp. 157-195.
39. The authors indeed explicitly point to "certain obvious affinities" between their conclusions and earlier arguments by Perry Anderson and myself which in some ways anticipated points made in the present paper. See *op. cit.*, p. 20.