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**THE
CONDITION OF CLERICAL
LABOUR IN BRITAIN**

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LABOUR IN BRITAIN**

by
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**With a Preface by
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ERRATA

Page 37.—Line 33, read " £427 10s. od." instead of " £247 10s. od."
Line 37, read " Fair " instead of " Poor."

Page 86.—The date of the announcement of the new Midland Bank scale was December 10th, 1929, not 1929, the scale to operate as from January 1931, not 1930; the figure of 1930 in this passage and the table should therefore be changed to 1931. For " Irish offices of the Midland Bank " read " Irish affiliation offices of the Midland Bank."

Page 88.—First line, fourth paragraph, for " The tendency to offer salaries " read " The tendency to offer *lower* salaries."

PREFACE

THE study of the conditions of clerical workers in Britain which is given in this book is to be welcomed for a number of reasons.

In the first place, it fills a conspicuous gap in the literature of social conditions, for there is no existing study, so far as I know, which covers this field as a whole, although particular areas of it, such as the Civil Service, have been dealt with in other studies.

In the second place, the field of clerical labour, seen as a whole, illustrates, perhaps more strikingly than almost any other, the manner in which capitalism works and the nemesis which eventually overtakes it. And the illustration is the more striking because the process whereby the clerical worker has been down-graded from lower-middle-class to proletarian levels has been compressed into little more than a couple of decades.

In the third place, the study is particularly valuable because of the profound political importance of the social type with which it deals. In every Fascist reaction in Europe the professional classes have played an important part. In the main it has been to the de-classed elements of the working class and the petty bourgeois clerical, professional, and shop-keeping classes that Fascist propaganda has been directed, and from which it has drawn most of its numerical strength. A widespread and clear understanding by clerical workers of what is happening to them and why, is essential to preventing their use as the raw material of Fascism in Britain. To this end the study which this book provides is a valuable initial contribution.

I myself have spent some twenty-five years of effort in one large area of clerical employment in Britain—the clerical grades of the Civil Service. In that time I have witnessed at first hand the process which this study traces in clerical employment as a whole. Those twenty-five years can be divided into four main periods: the period of pre-war respectability; the period of post-war revolt; the period of relapse after revolt; and the present period of doubt and confusion, from which anything may come.

In pre-war days the "superiority" of the clerical worker over the manual worker was still not in question. Nor was the desire of the workman to see that his son should, if it could be contrived, "rise" from working-class employment to the black-coated occupations. In those days Civil Servants and clerical workers generally were thoroughly reactionary in their outlook, and thoroughly ill-equipped to defend their own interests. In the Civil Service there were indeed Associations, but they were financed by subscriptions on a "shilling-a-year" basis, and were incapable of doing anything more than forwarding petitions from time to time to the Treasury. The Associations were eminently respectable, and took great care that their petitions should be in the time-honoured form. They opened with the injunction or hope—"May it please your Lordships"—(which it never did)—and they closed with—"Your petitioners will ever humbly pray." These petitions produced results so meagre as to give rise to grave doubts about the efficacy of prayer. These pre-war Clerical Associations had no connection with "party politics," which were taboo, nor with the Trade Union Congress.

The war threw Civil Service clerical workers into the Army in thousands. Contact with workers of all kinds of industries in the Army broadened their outlook. When the war ended they returned full of the spirit of revolt. Trade Unionism appeared in modern form for the first time. Subscriptions were raised to 6d. a week, full-time officers appointed, premises acquired, amalgamations arranged, and so on. The example of my own Association, which was the pioneer in this process, was followed by others, until a really high level of efficient organisation was attained in the Service generally. The clerical grades, joining forces with the Postal workers and others, secured in the immediate post-war period big improvements in pay, hours, leave, conditions of service, and in the machinery of negotiation with the State. Moreover the clerical workers broke with the non-political traditions of the past and linked up with the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress. That was the second period.

Then came the reaction. The first of the post-war economy campaigns developed. The Geddes Committee was followed by the Anderson Committee. Broadly the big forward movement of the immediate post-war period was brought to a standstill. For the first time Civil Servants collectively understood how completely Trade Union effort was conditioned and limited by the social environment in which it operated. It was this, to a very large

extent, which enabled Associations like my own to back the Trade Union Congress through the General Strike period and to pledge their financial resources in support of the miners.

There followed the last of the four periods, which has been one of great doubt and some confusion. From 1926 to 1935 there have been ups and downs. Sectional advantages, here and there, have been, and are being, won. But as against these have to be put the drops in Bonus up till 1931, and the Economy Cuts of State Servants (only partially restored so far) of that year. Side by side, too, with the series of battles in regard to standard conditions of service there have been other and grave factors at work which bear out the analysis of this study. Without altering standard conditions, the Government has enormously increased, during the last decade, the proportion of women employed on clerical work, and the women are paid on lower rates than men. Again, the machine has invaded the field of clerical labour, just as earlier on it invaded the field of manual labour. The typewriter, the adding machine, the comptometer, have resulted in the replacement of thousands of clerks by what are in effect machine tenders. And there is no end of this process in sight.

More and more the Civil Service clerical worker recognises that what he is struggling against is something much more than the narrow-minded opposition of Treasury officials. He is struggling to avoid the consequences of an immense and inevitable social tendency. This, in the ordinary way, would have intensified the post-war line up of the clerical workers with the manual workers. In form, that was precluded by the 1927 Trade Union Act, which forbade Civil Servants to be members of Unions affiliated to outside political or industrial bodies. But it is not the form that matters. There are many ways round legal prohibitions of this kind if the will is there. But the truth is that the will is not there. The post-war urge to unity with the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress has received a shattering blow from the failure of the Industrial side of the Labour Movement in 1926 and the successive failures of the Labour Governments of 1924 and 1929-31. Civil Servants no longer feel any confidence that a Labour Government will be appreciably better, so far as they are concerned, than a Tory one. Their mood is one of cynicism; and in this the great danger lies.

Clerical workers, like the manual workers, are in the grip of a declining capitalist system which, in obedience to its own law that the motive force of industrial activity and the clerical pro-

cesses associated therewith is profit, and faced with the necessity of trying to overcome the tendency of profit to fall, seeks at every stage to restore the level of profit by reducing directly and indirectly the standard of life of the worker by hand and brain alike. Thus the attacks on wages, thus the passing down of work from one class to a lower paid class below, thus the displacement of men by women on lower rates, thus the introduction and extension of machines.

From the consequences of that system there is no escape, save indeed by getting rid of the system itself and substituting Socialism in its place. The proletarianizing of the clerical profession parallels the down-grading of the skilled engineer and artisan to unskilled labour rates of pay. The minor differences between one section of workpeople and another, between hand and brain worker, between skilled and unskilled—(differences which tend, when Capitalism is in a rising or stable condition, to obscure the real character of the system)—are ironed out under pressure of capitalist necessity when capitalism is past its zenith. However gravely the industrial and political wings of the Labour Movement have failed in their respective spheres makes no difference to the character of the problem which faces brain worker and hand worker alike. The conclusion to be drawn from this study is that the clerical workers should be lined up with the manual workers and the technicians in common effort (through existing channels if they can be made to serve, or through new ones if they cannot) to bring the system which conditions men to poverty during their lives, and to early and untimely death in battle, to an end.

May, 1935

W. J. BROWN.

INTRODUCTION

THIS book offers a study of clerical workers, who form the largest and most closely knit section of the lower middle class in this country. It seeks to show the economic basis of that social stratum; to ascertain its political affinities; and to reveal the forces at work which drive it respectively into the arms of the capitalist class on the one hand or the working class on the other. Although much of the argument is detailed and statistical, the purpose of the book is by no means academic; the facts presented are intended to form the necessary basis for the political argument which constitutes its main concern.

The differentiation of social classes remains as clear to-day as it was in the days when Marx and Engels made their famous social diagnosis on a class basis, though the structure of society has naturally undergone many changes. Thus the capitalist or bourgeois class remains clearly distinguishable by its ownership of the means of production; the elements within that class to-day are more homogeneous than when Marx wrote, since the owners of land and of industrial capital and the financiers no longer represent separate sections but are one and the same group.

The essential mark of the proletariat remains the fact that it owns no capital and depends for its livelihood on the sale of its labour power, having no control over the disposal of the product of its labour.

The social strata which lie between the capitalists and the proletariat do not constitute a class in the true sense of the term, for they perform as a group, no specific economic function. These intermediate strata partake of the characteristics of each of the main classes. Some are small capitalists; some are persons possessing no capital and distinguished from the proletariat only by the relatively high price at which they dispose of their labour power; while others get their living partly by ownership and partly by selling their labour power.

It is with a part of these intermediate strata that this book deals. In spite of their lacking a specific economic purpose, their

position is one of great significance. Marx has described the vacillating role of the petty bourgeoisie alternately siding with the capitalists and the workers; clinging to the mentality and habits of life of the former while driven more and more down to the economic standards of the latter.

The middle class has undergone large changes in its structure since the middle of last century when Marx wrote. The peasantry, the independent handicraftsmen, and the small shopkeepers have declined in numbers, but they have been replaced by a "new middle class" of salary-earners directly dependent upon capitalist employers. Small owners of businesses and the lesser dealers have now become the employees and agents of large concerns, while the ranks of the intermediate strata have been swollen by a host of clerks, salesmen and other non-manual subordinates of capitalist undertakings.

The change in the structure of the middle class has not basically altered its political character. To-day, as when Marx wrote, it tends to pass from one political camp to another, in periods of prosperity joining in the forward movement of the proletariat and seeking to improve its economic position by raising salaries, and when the slump sets, retreating in fear for the security of its employment to the respectable ranks of supporters of capitalism. It is this vacillating tendency which gives the social stratum we are here discussing its special interest, an interest which is enhanced by the advent of a political tendency which depends for its realization largely on this section of society; fascism, the instrument of capitalist dictatorship, makes a special appeal to the petty bourgeoisie from whom it draws its mass support and whose ideology it uses as a mask for concealing its true character. A detailed analysis of the economic position and the ideology of the petty bourgeoisie as a whole can alone provide the necessary data for determining this true character of the fascist programme. For determining, that is to say, whether that programme really expresses the true interests of the middle classes, whether the corporate state does in fact offer a "third solution," differing substantially both from proletarian and from capitalist dictatorship, or whether fascism is the last desperate attempt of declining capitalism to avert a change of front on the part of the middle classes, a change to the side of the proletariat, which follows logically from their economic interests but which their ideological heritage makes them hesitate to accept.

On the replies to these questions depends the possibility of

co-operation between the workers and the middle classes in the overthrow of capitalism. For this reason the subject matter of this book has an interest by no means limited to the social stratum with which it is directly concerned. The questions raised must be answered in full to furnish a complete solution of the problem of securing this co-operation. That task, however, transcends the limits of the present study, which is confined to one section of the lower middle class, that of the clerical workers; but the fact that this section is the most numerous and the most homogeneous section of this class gives it a position of unique importance.

Before proceeding to a detailed presentation of the facts relating to clerks alone, I propose to sketch a general background by indicating the position of the clerical section within the middle classes and the position of those classes as a whole in the class structure of this country to-day.

The occupation tables of the 1921 census of England and Wales enable us to make a fairly detailed analysis of the class structure of English society at that date. Unfortunately that analysis cannot be extended in full to 1931 since one of the most important classifications from the present point of view, namely that of distinguishing employers from managers, was not repeated in that year. Other changes in the method of classification make comparisons with earlier censuses very difficult, but sufficiently homogeneous groups can be obtained from the 1851, 1881, and 1901 census results to give a fairly reliable picture of the general trend of development.

The following occupational groups enumerated in 1921 can be taken to include the middle classes and the border groups between the middle and the working class proper :

	Total number (000's)		Males and Females per cent. of all occupied.
	Males.	Females.	
<i>Urban Occupations:</i>			
<i>Semi-working class sections :</i>			
Clerks, Shop Assistants, Travellers, etc.	1225.9	861.1	12.1
<i>Workers on own account—not employers :</i>			
Manufacturing and Transport ...	227.1	102.8	1.9
Retail Trade	178.7	79.5	1.5
Hotel, Boarding House, Domestic Service	68.0	84.9	.9
Brokers, Agents, etc.	18.5	1.2	.1
Total	1718.2	1129.5	16.5

	Total number (000's)		Males and Females per cent. of all occupied.
	Males.	Females.	
Lower Middle Class :			
Lower Professions	138.9	323.6	2.7
Higher Professions	212.2	54.5	1.5
Higher Officials (Banks, Insurance, Railway, Merchant Marine, Govern- ment)	96.6	3.0	.6
Managers : Industry and Transport ...	96.0	6.0	.6
Wholesale and Retail Trade	95.7	19.8	.7
Hotel, Restaurant, Enter- tainment	33.7	69.2	.6
<hr/>			
Total	673.1	476.1	7.3
Grand Total	2391.3	1605.6	23.2
Total Employers (Industry, Wholesale and Retail Trade; Hotel, Restaurant, etc.; Transport	381.5	60.4	2.6
<i>Agriculture :</i>			
Farmers, Gardeners, Fishermen, on own account, <i>not</i> employers ...	145.8	9.8	.9
Farmers, Gardeners, Fishermen, employers	141.2	10.0	.9

If we leave the working class out of account, the only groups not included in this table are such minor groups as the police and other armed forces (1.8 per cent.), proprietors of banking and insurance enterprises, stockbrokers, moneylenders, company directors (less than .2 per cent.) and costermongers, hawkers, and organ-grinders (.4 per cent.). The working class proper consists of 70 per cent. of the total occupied population; 54.8 of this figure are workers in mines, industrial establishments, and transport enterprises, 9.5 are workers in hotels, etc., and in domestic service, 5.7 in agriculture.

The most striking fact in this enumeration is the infinitesimal number of persons of which the finance-capitalist class is composed. It must be remembered that the employers' groups merely contain those people who themselves own and run business enterprises, owners of joint stock companies do not appear anywhere as a separate entity; quite apart, therefore, from the fact that all small employers, even those with only one or two workers, are included, and that these small employers certainly form the majority of those enumerated, the people who control the majority of the large commercial and industrial enterprises of this country do not appear under this heading. Some of them appear under the officials' and managers' headings, others in the bankers', etc., group not included in the table, while a considerable proportion will probably be found among the 200,000 odd (male) capitalists,

tramps, gentlemen of the royal household, institution inmates (not officials), rentiers, gipsies, doctors of philosophy, lunatics, Members of Parliament, etc., who are returned as unoccupied, but not school children, students, or persons retired from their previous occupations.*

If we turn to the working class it is interesting to note that even without agricultural workers, domestic servants, hotel workers etc., the workers in industry, transport, and mining have a clear majority among the occupied population of this country. They have this majority, even if the 230,000 foremen are excluded. Their real strength, however, is understated by these figures, since there are three times as many unoccupied women as there are occupied women, and since the majority of these are wives and daughters in working class households. A more correct picture of the actual strength of the working class of this country is, therefore, probably to be obtained from the figures of occupied males alone: here the proportion of workers in mining, manufacturing, and transport is 60·4 per cent., that in agriculture 7·8 per cent., that in domestic, hotel, etc., service 1·9 per cent. One understands how important the British capitalist class find it not merely to maintain the middle classes as their reserve, but in addition to maintain the passivity which decades of colonial domination have enabled them to instil into considerable sections of the working class. So far as this country is concerned the problem of the middle classes must, therefore, necessarily be taken to include the problem of the "exceptionally high" "number of factory and office workers who lead a petty bourgeois life owing to the practical enslavement of hundreds of millions of people inhabiting the colonies that 'belong' to England." (*Lenin on Britain*, p. 209.)

In the middle classes, leaving the agricultural section aside for the moment, we can distinguish four major groups: (1) subordinate commercial employees in offices, shops, and on the roads; and subordinate workers in other offices, including those of the government; (2) the officials' and managers' groups; (3) the professional groups; (4) the groups of workers on their own account, i.e., independent workers whose businesses are not large

* The extraordinary limitations of the dominant school of social science in this country are illustrated by the conclusion drawn from this fact by Professors Carr Saunders and Caradog-Jones: since the capitalist class cannot be statistically detached in the classification adopted for entirely different purposes by the British census authorities, they argue that it does not exist. (*The Social Structure of England and Wales*.)

enough to employ labour other than that of their wives and children. Closely related to this last section, though on a higher level, are all those employers who own small workshops with only a few employees. For the productive, as distinct from the trading, section of employers their proportion is indicated by the fact that over two-thirds of all enterprises covered by the 1924 Census of Production employed ten or fewer workers.

The first of these groups is by far the largest; it contains about half of the total number of middle class persons in this country and 12.1 per cent. of the total occupied population; of these 7.1 per cent. are clerks. Workers on their own account follow next; their proportion is 4.4 per cent., or, if small employers are added, their total strength will probably lie between 6 and 6.5 per cent. The lower professional group includes teachers, nurses, musicians, social and political workers, librarians and professional sportsmen; it accounts for 2.7 per cent. of the total occupied population. The remaining professional groups, such as doctors, lawyers, scientific workers, and actors, raise the total for the professional section to 4.2 per cent. Managers, higher officials, etc., total only 2.5 per cent. of the occupied.

The distribution of the sexes in these various groups is interesting. Females greatly outnumber males in the lower professional group and in the two sections connected with hotels, boarding houses, etc.; their number is relatively high also in the group of clerks, shop assistants, etc., but in all the other groups, and especially in the higher ones, it is far below that of the males.

There remain the agricultural groups. They are reduced to the very small proportion of 1.8 per cent. of the total occupied population and it is highly significant that the number of farmers who are not employers of labour slightly exceeds that of the employers.

The occupation tables of the 1931 census which have just been published show that there has been little change in the class structure of this country since 1921. Unfortunately one of the very few changes in classification adopted between the two dates makes it impossible to separate employers from managers in the new returns, so that any changes that may have occurred between these two groups cannot be ascertained. The figures show that the relative weight of the industrial working class (mining, manufacturing, and transport) has remained practically the same: it was 53.7 per cent. in 1931, as compared with 54.8 per cent. in the earlier year (the small decline indicated by these figures is not

significant in view of the large numbers involved*). Similarly the proportion of foremen contained in this group has remained constant (1.6 per cent. against 1.7 per cent. in 1921). There has been a further decrease of 1 per cent. in the proportion of agricultural workers, which however, is balanced by a corresponding increase in the proportion of domestic servants, hotel workers, etc. The strength of the manual working class as a whole thus remains unchanged.

If we turn to the semi-proletarian and middle classes we find a growth from 12.1 per cent. to 18.5 per cent. in the proportion of the black-coated section. The proportion of workers on their own account has remained unchanged at 4.4 per cent., but there has been a marked transfer from the productive to the trading section of these workers. The professional groups show a negligible increase of .2 per cent. in the lower section, while the total weight of officials, managers, and employers taken together has remained the same (5.1 per cent.). Finally, the agricultural section of workers on their own account shows an insignificant decrease, that of agricultural employers remaining unaltered. The net result of these changes is an increase in the relative weight of this group from 27.6 per cent. to 29.1 per cent. of the total occupied population.†

* There were of course highly important structural changes within the industrial working class as here defined during the post-war period; these, however, do not affect the present problem of the relative weight of the working class as a whole in the total population. For a detailed analysis of the changes within the working class itself see P. Poliak, *Structural Changes in the Working Class of England, Communist International*, Vol. XI, No. 13, July, 1934.

† The actual figures for the middle class groups in 1931 were as follows :—

	Total number (000's)		Males and Females per cent. of all occupied.
	Males.	Females.	
Clerks, Shop Assistants, Travellers, etc.	1549.0	1003.3	13.5
Workers on own account :—			
Industrial and Transport	227.5	69.1	1.6
Trade	226.3	106.3	1.8
Hotel, Domestic Service, etc.	88.4	78.5	.9
Brokers, Agents, etc.	23.9	1.9	.1
Lower Professions	188.9	357.9	2.9
Higher Professions	226.8	51.4	1.5
Officials	111.4	3.7	.6
Managers and Employers	736.3	104.5	4.6
Total Urban Groups	2,388.5	1,776.6	27.4
Farmers, etc., on own account	142.0	8.2	.8
" " employers	154.2	13.6	.9
Total	2,684.7	1,798.4	29.1

Such then was the relative position of the British middle classes at the beginning and at the end respectively of the post-war stabilization. I shall now attempt to show the changes which occurred both in the strength and in the structure of those classes during the development from the competitive to the fully fledged monopoly stage of capitalism. The census of 1851, approximately representing the conditions in this country at the time when Marx and Engels wrote the *Communist Manifesto*, is the most convenient starting point for this investigation.

The total occupied population at that date was about half the 1921 number, but the number occupied in agriculture was almost twice the post-war figure. In 1851 farmers and agricultural workers, etc., amounted to 23·8 per cent. of the occupied—a figure which almost exactly coincides with the proportion of the middle class and semi-working class groups (leaving small employers out of account) in 1921. This is the first and most striking result of this comparison. The great bulk of these people in 1851 were agricultural labourers, farm servants, etc., they constituted 20·8 per cent. against 5·7 per cent. in 1921; the number of farmers who were employers has remained practically stationary, while that of the small farmers without wage labour has increased by half—a very significant illustration of the declining fortunes of agriculture in the imperialist phase of British capitalism. Both farmers' groups together have declined from 3 per cent. to less than 2 per cent. of the total occupied.

Outside agriculture comparison is exceedingly difficult, not merely on account of different methods of enumeration adopted by the census authorities, but also on account of the structural changes within occupational groups resulting from the development of the capitalist method of production. Thus for instance it is very much less easy to distinguish productive and trading groups when the functions of making and selling are combined, e.g., by the local shoemaker, instead of being divided, as predominantly at the present time between the shoe factory on the one hand and the specialized shop on the other. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that, in the 1851 returns, dealers are frequently not distinguished from makers. However, if we abstract all dealers who are clearly only dealers, e.g., general merchants, grocers, drapers, etc., we can arrive at a group which will include all employers, managers, etc., and workers in mining, manufacturing, workshops, and transport (besides a small number of dealers who have escaped exclusion). The relative strength of this group in 1851 was 51·3 per cent. ;

the ratio of manual workers alone in the corresponding trades (i.e., without employers, managers, clerical staffs, etc.) was 54.8 per cent. in 1921. It is perfectly clear, then, that in the occupied population as a whole the relative strength of the industrial working class proper has *not* declined as some Labour publicists have claimed (e.g., leading article of the *Clarion*, June 9th, 1934), but has on the contrary been substantially increased since the heyday of competitive capitalism. This is the second important result yielded by the present comparison. The proportion of all grades of persons occupied in mining, manufacturing, and transport increased steadily until in 1901 it reached approximately the 1921 level.

An interesting table in the preliminary report of the 1851 census showing the proportions of masters and men in trade and industry enables us to trace the changes that have occurred since in these ratios.*

Taking the total number of persons occupied in mining, manufacturing, transport, and trade *only* as 100, we obtain the following ratios for 1851 and 1921 respectively :

	1851	1921
Employers	10.2	3.4
Employees :		
Managers and Officials		2.7
Foremen	84.9	2.1
Others		87.0
Workers on own account	4.9	5.3
Total	100.0	100.0

The figures for managers and foremen cannot be separated in the 1851 data, but I have given them for 1921, when the ratio for all types of employees was therefore 91.8. The most striking result of this comparison is the decrease in the ratio of employers ; even their absolute number was markedly lower. Contrasted with this decrease is the practically constant figure for workers on own

* Although the figures on which that table is based were not complete, they were nevertheless regarded by the census authorities of the time as sufficiently representative to merit publication. At the same time they throw a revealing light on the extent to which industrialization had proceeded at that relatively early date. Thus more than 91 per cent. of the masters had either no paid employees at all, or less than ten, but the latter section employed less than 30 per cent. of the total number of men ; more than half the men worked in establishments with 30 or more employees, more than a quarter in establishments with 150 workers or more, but these amounted to less than $\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. of the total number of establishments. About 12 per cent. of the workers were employed in factories with 350 men or over.

account (the percentage figures even suggest a small increase) which implies a doubling of their absolute number. The process of centralization and proletarianization could scarcely be more clearly illustrated: the small and medium sized employer is progressively ruined by the competition of the more powerful firms; the "independent" small man clings to his last desperate stronghold as a small artisan or tradesman who applies his own labour and that of his family for a return frequently below the market value of wage labour and during longer working hours than those of the proletariat.

The ratio of employees has greatly increased. It is probable that a certain increase has also taken place in the managerial section, but this was so small even in 1921, that any possible increase in this sphere can only account for an insignificant fraction of the displaced employers, and this remains true even if the foremen are added to the managers and officials. Within the remaining group of subordinate employees (87 per cent.), however, a marked change has taken place owing to the rise of the black-coated section: clerks, shop assistants, canvassers, etc. In 1921 this section accounted for 16.2 per cent.; its ratio for 1851 cannot be stated with certainty, owing to the fact that shop assistants as a class were not separately enumerated; it should also be noted that the heading "commercial clerks" excludes clerks in industrial establishments. The available data suggest a ratio of about 2 per cent.; the actual figure can scarcely have exceeded 5 per cent. It follows that for the limited group we are discussing (i.e., industry, transport, and trade only) the ratio of manual workers has declined, but from the point of view of the English class structure as a whole that decline is more than offset by the increase of the industrial as compared with the agricultural sector of the population. The economic and social significance of the rise of the black-coated group (or at any rate of its most numerous sub-section) forms the subject of the present study and need not detain us here.

To complete our retrospective survey of middle class development there remain the clerks and officials employed in central and local government offices and the professional groups. The former have increased in a ratio similar to that of the black-coated section in commerce and industry. The development of the latter is shown by the following series showing their numbers as a percentage of the total occupied population:

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	1851	1881	1901	1921	1931
Lower Professions ...	1.6	2.6	2.5	2.7	2.9
Higher Professions ...	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.6

The general tendency is a slow increase; the sudden jump in the lower professional group between 1851 and 1881 is accounted for by the increase in the number of teachers which followed the introduction of compulsory education in the eighteen-seventies.

The results of this comparison can be summarized in the following table of ratios :*

	1851	1921
Black-coated Section ...	3.5	12.1
Workers on Own Account ...	3.4	4.4
Managers and Officials ...	1.0	2.5
Professions ...	2.6	4.2
Employers with 1—10 employees ...	6.2	1.9
Farmers, Gardeners, etc., own account ...	1.1	.9
" " " employers ...	1.9	.9
Total ...	19.3	26.9
Absolute Numbers (000's) ...	1,600	4,600

It will be seen from this table that the decline of the small employer group has been greater than the increase in the professional and managers' groups taken together. If black-coated workers and farmers are excluded the ratio of the remaining groups taken as a whole has remained constant (13.2 per cent. in 1851, 13.0 per cent. in 1921), but their economic level must have been

* Percentage of total occupied population. The 1851 figures for black-coated workers and managers are estimates, the basis for the former has already been discussed. The latter is unlikely to be given at too low a rate, since it must cover navigation officers, higher railway, bank, government, etc., officials in addition to managers in industrial establishments proper; of these only the government officials are separately enumerated in the census; inn-keepers, etc., are for 1851 equally divided between the groups of employers and workers on their own account; small employers for 1921 are estimated as far as the productive group is concerned on the basis of the Census of Production figures of 1924, quoted above; in addition the ratio includes all retail trade and catering employers. The ratio of workers on own account in 1921 is understated, that for employers overstated, owing to the fact that all workers on their own account utilizing the labour of more than one member of their families are classified by the census authorities as employers. The investigators of the Social Survey of the Merseyside conducted by Liverpool University found that 20 per cent. of their group of "independent workers" (i.e., all workers on their own account not employing paid labour) utilized the labour of two or more members of their families; the chapter of that survey describing the conditions of these workers affords ample evidence of the proletarian income level of this group. See *Social Survey of the Merseyside*, Vol. II, Ch. 8, Sec. III, 1934.

lower in 1921, owing to the increased weight of the workers on their own account.

The decisive increase of the middle class as a whole has therefore taken place in the black-coated group, i.e., in the group of subordinate clerical and other commercial employees. Does this invalidate the Marxian forecast of a progressive proletarianization accompanying the development of capitalism? Does it mean, as G. D. H. Cole appears to suggest, that Marx did not and could not foresee the tendency for the rise of a new petty bourgeoisie of officials, clerks, etc., which would outweigh the decline of the old petty bourgeoisie of small tradesmen, etc.? (*What Marx Really Meant*, 1934.) Considered merely on the basis of changes in the numbers of different types of workers, tradesmen, etc., without reference to the changes in their economic standards, the concept of proletarianization is entirely meaningless. So far as changes in the proportion of manual and clerical workers are concerned there can be no doubt, both from the discussion of this subject in the third volume of *Capital* and from passages in the *Theorien über den Mehrwert*, that Marx clearly recognized the tendency for an increase in clerical functions that would follow an expansion of capitalist production (see Appendix I). The significance of this increase for the problem of proletarianization, however, can only be judged after a full investigation of the economic standards of this group to-day, their changes in the past, and their probable trend in the immediate future. This is the subject of the following discussion.

APPENDIX I

MARX ON THE MIDDLE CLASSES

(1) *The tendency towards a growth in the numerical importance of the middle classes with the development of capitalism.*

The tendency towards the growth of clerical labour is inherent in the very concept of an expansion in the scale of production ; it is this expansion which in the first place necessitates the employment of wage earners specializing solely in recording, accounting, correspondence, and similar distributive functions, as Marx clearly shows in the following passage. What is true of the origin of the office, is equally true of its later growth following the further expansion of production :

“ To begin with the office [of the industrial capitalist—F.D.K.] is always infinitely smaller than the industrial workshop. But for the rest it is clear that as production expands, the commercial operations multiply that are indispensable for the continuous circulation of the industrial capital. Operations, that is to say, that are required to sell that part of the capital that has emerged from the productive process in the shape of commodities, operations necessary for the acquisition of new means of production with the money thus realized, finally those of keeping proper account of the whole process. Price calculation, accountancy, cash control, correspondence, all belong to these operations. *The more developed the scale of production, the more extensive, though by no means in the same proportion, are the commercial operations of industrial capital, and therefore also the labour and other circulation costs necessary for the realization of value and surplus value. The employment of commercial wage workers, who work in the office proper, thus becomes a necessity.*” (*Kapital*, Vol. III, p. 330, German Marx-Engels Institute Edition, see also Kerr edition, p. 352).

But Marx also predicted that the middle classes would grow *at a greater ratio* than the productive sections of the proletariat with the further development of capitalism.

It was the hope of Malthus “ that the middle class grows while the proletariat (engaged in production) forms an ever smaller proportion of the total population (even though its absolute numbers

grow). *That is in fact the development of bourgeois society.*" (*Theorien über den Mehrwert*, Vol. III, p. 60, Kautsky edition, 1920).

(2) *Concentration of Capital and Amalgamations.*

"If every merchant had only as much money as he is personally able to turn over by his own labour, there would be an infinite dissociation of merchants' capital. This dissociation would increase to the extent that productive capital in the forward march of the capitalist mode of production, would produce and operate on a larger scale. The disproportion between the two classes of capital would increase. In proportion as capital in the sphere of production would be centralized, it would be decentralized in the sphere of circulation. The purely commercial business of the industrial capitalist and thus his purely commercial expenses would be infinitely expanded thereby, for he would have dealings with 1,000 capitalists at a time instead of 100. In this way a large part of the advantage of the independent organization of merchants' capital would be lost. Not only the purely commercial expenses but also the costs of circulation, sorting, expressage, etc., would grow. This applies to industrial capital. Now let us consider the merchant's capital. In the first place, let us look at the purely commercial labour. It does not require more time to figure with large than with small numbers. But it costs ten times as much time to make ten purchases at £100 each as it does to make one purchase at £1,000. It costs ten times as much correspondence, paper, postage, to carry on a correspondence with ten small merchants as it does with one large merchant. A limited division of labour in a commercial office, in which one keeps books, another has charge of the treasury, a third carries on the correspondence, one man buys, another sells, another travels, etc., saves immense quantities of labour time, so that the number of workers employed in wholesale commerce stands in no proportion to the comparative size of the business. This is so, because in commerce, much more than in industry the same function, whether performed on a large or a small scale, costs the same labour time. For this reason, concentration appears historically in the merchant's business before it shows itself in the industrial workshop." (*Capital*, Vol. III, pp. 347-8, Kerr edition.)

(3) *Factors determining the wages of clerks and the causes of their proletarianization:*

"The commercial labourer does not produce any surplus value directly. But the value of his labour is determined by the value of his labour power, that is, of its costs of production, while the

application of this labour power, its exertion, expression and consumption, the same as in the case of any other wage labourer, is by no means limited by the value of his labour power. His wages are therefore not necessarily in proportion to the mass of profits, which he helps the capitalist to realize. What he costs the capitalist and what he makes for him are two different things. He adds to the income of the capitalist, not by creating any direct surplus value, but by helping him to reduce the costs of the realization of surplus value. In so doing, he performs partly unpaid labour. (The commercial labourer, in the strict meaning of the term, *belongs to the better paid classes of wage workers, he belongs to the class of skilled labourers, which is above the average.*) However, *his wages have a tendency to fall, even in proportion to the average labour*, with the advance of the capitalist mode of production. This is due to the fact that in the first place, division of labour in the office is introduced; this means that only a one-sided development of the labouring capacity is required, and that the cost of this development does not fall entirely on the capitalist, since the ability of the labourer is developed through the exercise of his function, the more one-sidedly the division of labour develops. In the second place, the necessary preparation, such as the learning of commercial details, languages, etc., is more and more rapidly, easily, generally, cheaply reproduced with the progress of science and popular education, to the extent that the capitalist mode of production organizes the methods of teaching, etc., in a practical manner. The generalization of public education makes it possible to recruit this line of labourers from classes that had formerly no access to such education and that were accustomed to a lower scale of living. At the same time this generalization of education increases the supply and thus competition. (With a few exceptions, the labour power of this line of labourers is therefore depreciated with the progress of capitalist development. Their wages fall, while their ability increases. The capitalist increases the number of these labourers, whenever he has more value and profits to realize. The increase of this labour is always a result, never a cause of the augmentation of surplus value." Engels has added a footnote to this passage, which reads as follows: "How well this prognosis of the fate of the commercial proletariat, written in 1865, has stood the test, can be corroborated by hundreds of German clerks, who, trained in all commercial operations and acquainted with three or four languages, in vain offer their services in London City at 25s. per week, far below the wages of a good machine maker. A blank of two pages in the manuscript indicates that this point was to be further elaborated." (*Capital*, Vol. III, pp. 853-5, Kerr edition.)

APPENDIX II

THE GROWTH OF CLERICAL LABOUR IN ENGLAND AND WALES 1851-1931

The following table shows (a) the total number of clerks according to sex; (b) those in public service and private employment respectively; (c) the percentage of clerical labour in the total occupied population; (d) the rate of increase for each decade of clerks and the total occupied population respectively, distinguishing the sexes.

Year	Total Number of clerks (000's)			ALL Clerks in	
	Males.	Females.	Total.	Public Service. (000's)	Private Employment.
1851 ...	93	2	95	27	68
1881 ...	294	14	318	45	273
1891 ...	381	33	414	64	350
1901 ...	530	83	613	94	519
1911 ...	677	166	843	157	686
1921 ...	792	502	1,294	268	1,026
1931 ...	882	583	1,465	—	—

Year.	Clerks per cent. all Occupations.			Per cent. rate of increase.			
	Males.	Females.	Total.	Clerks Males. Females.		Total.	All Occupations.
1851 ...	1.6	.7	1.2	—	—	—	—
1881 ...	3.8	.4	2.9	203	600	221	30.0
1891 ...	4.3	.8	3.2	29.6	135.8	30.2	14.6
1901 ...	5.2	2.0	4.3	39.1	151.6	48.1	12.0
1911 ...	5.2	3.1	4.6	27.8	100.0	37.5	12.5
1921 ...	6.7	9.9	7.5	17.0	202.2	53.5	5.4
1931 ...	6.7	10.4	7.8	11.4	16.0	13.3	9.8

All figures are derived from the census volumes of England and Wales for the years indicated. The 1851 figures include government officials (given on the basis of the special analysis of government employees contained in the 1851 census), local authority officials, law clerks, commercial clerks, bankers, accountants, and railway clerks (estimated on the basis of figures quoted in the *Bankers' Magazine*). The heading "commercial clerks" includes clerks in industrial establishments in all the returns quoted, except those of 1851, these clerks are therefore not included in the figures quoted for that year in this table. The data for 1881 to 1911 cover commercial and business clerks, law clerks, railway, insurance, bank, civil service, and local authority officials and clerks (the figures for insurance and railway clerks for the years 1881 and 1891 being estimates). The data for 1921 and 1931 summarize the census headings clerks, draughtsmen and typists, bank, insurance, railway officials, civil service and local authority officials and clerks. The total figures for the public services for the last two census years can only be obtained by a cross-reference to the "industry" tables of the census returns, since 1921 government typists are not included in the heading civil service clerks, but in the general typist group, while in the 1931 tables all government clerks, as distinct from officials are returned in the general clerical group; unfortunately the 1931 "industry" tables have not yet been published. The percentage increase figures given in the last section of the table against the year 1881 indicate the total increase between 1851 and 1881.

APPENDIX III

A LIST OF TRADE UNIONS CATERING FOR CLERKS, THEIR MEMBERSHIP IN 1931, AND THE JOURNALS PUBLISHED BY EACH

<i>Organization.</i>	<i>Membership 1931</i>	<i>Journal</i>
<i>(a) Purely Clerical Unions :</i>		
National Union of Clerks and Administrative Workers	8,146	<i>The Clerk</i> (quarterly)
Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries	3,536	<i>The Woman Clerk</i> (monthly)
Civil Service Clerical Associa- tion	23,294	<i>Red Tape</i> (monthly)
National Association of Local Government Officials	64,672	<i>Local Government Ser- vice</i> (monthly)
Bank Officers' Guild	20,426	<i>The Bank Officer</i> (monthly)
Guild of Insurance Officials	13,183	<i>The Insurance Guild Journal</i> (monthly)
Railway Clerks' Association	59,473	<i>Railway Service Journal</i> (monthly)
<i>(b) General Unions with Clerical Sections :</i>		
Transport and General		
Workers' Union	422,048	<i>The Record</i> (monthly)
National Amalgamation of Shop Assistants, Warehouse- men, and Clerks	412,083	<i>The Shop Assistant</i> (weekly)
National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers	116,208	<i>New Dawn</i> (fort- nightly)
National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants	20,636	<i>Natsopa Journal</i> (monthly)
Union of Post Office Workers	90,039	<i>The Post</i> (weekly)

Only the most important unions at present in existence, catering either wholly or partially for clerks are included in this list. Company unions, such as the various staff "guilds" of the big banks, etc., are excluded. The membership figures are taken partly from the *Report of the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies for 1931, part 4, Trade Unions*, partly from the *Labour Year Book, 1932*.

APPENDIX IV

SOME FIGURES ILLUSTRATING THE CONDITIONS OF CLERICAL WORKERS IN THE U.S.S.R.

THE rapid improvement of clerical salaries after the civil war period in the U.S.S.R. is shown by the following figures, taken, not from Russian sources, but from the League of Nations publication *Wages and Regulation of Conditions of Labour in the U.S.S.R.* which was compiled by S. Zagorsky, a Russian emigré, employed by the International Labour Office. According to this publication the *real* wages of salaried employees in large scale State controlled industries rose from a monthly average wage of 83·57 pre-war roubles in 1924 to an average of 54·42 pre-war roubles in 1929, an increase in real wages of 62·1 per cent. (see table on p. 185).

The average real monthly wages of the higher administrative and technical staff rose from pre-war roubles 91·41 in March 1927 to 103·49 in March 1929; these salaries thus increased by 18·2 per cent. during those two years, as compared with 7·8 per cent. in the case of the previously mentioned categories of workers (p. 185).

Finally, the real wages of Soviet employees (workers in government offices, social and cultural institutions, economic administrations, trading and credit offices, and the postal services) rose from 87·02 pre-war roubles (average for the groups mentioned) in the period 1925-26 to 42·95 pre-war roubles in 1927-28, an increase of 16·1 per cent. in two years (p. 186).

These data can be amplified by the following figures supplied by the State Planning Commission and Central Statistical Institute of Moscow. The figures show the numbers and the average annual incomes of office workers in industrial works, construction enterprises and government offices respectively. The income rates are the actual rates paid in roubles. For comparison the average income rates for manual workers in factories are also quoted.

	1930	1931	1932
<i>Total Number (000's) of office workers employed in</i>			
Industry	422	633	791
Construction Works	143	283	385
Government Offices	—	560	542

*Average Annual Salary (Roubles) of Office
workers in—*

Industry	1817	2101	2699
Construction Works	1794	1965	2858
Government Offices	—	1424	1560
<i>Factory Workers (manual)</i>	1035	1184	1482

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