

After the enormous amount of work and thought put into the Summer Directive, the Directive for this quarter should be a more leisurely affair but for our historian of the future by no means less important. In part it overlaps with the labour and leisure theme (see Section I), but Sections 2 and 3 were inspired by a visit from a curator in Scunthorpe who regretted that our wartime material is so thin in detailed descriptions of house interiors. If you have seen historical reconstructions of ordinary rooms in museums you will know how much they tell us about life in those times. I would like our written reconstructions to be as faithful an account for the 1980s as we can manage.

In Section 4 the reference to mantel-shelves or mantel-pieces will remind some of you how much the arrangement of our rooms has been affected by the introduction of central heating.

1. Housework and maintenance

Over one week please keep a 'log' of jobs done and time spent on cleaning, tidying, shopping and cooking, noting who does these. If, however, there is no significant variation between one day and another, then please just log one day.

2. Description of home

If the whole house, please give brief description which need be only slightly more detailed than a typical estate agent's account, eg. "detached (or semi-detached or terrace), ground floor: originally sitting room at front, dining room at back, we knocked down intervening wall to make one room in 1973. Large kitchen at back with small scullery down one step which now houses deep-freeze, washing machine and garden tools. First floor: two large bedrooms, one tiny one. Bathroom and toilet separate. Large attic used as junk store mostly." Please say whether you have a separate dining room always and only used for meals.

If you live in a flat say whether this is in a purpose built block or a con-version, specify whether you live on ground, first or tenth floor and give a brief description of it. If you live in a bed-sitter just note approximate age of house, the level at which your room is and move directly to section 3!

If you can be bothered to give approximate size of rooms that would be splendid but otherwise a 'tiny' kitchen is one in which two people couldn't possibly sit to eat and a large one could conveniently take a table for four without anyone sitting on the sink. Similarly a large bed-room could comfortably include two beds, and a tiny one can take a small divan and not much else.

3. Description of main living room (read Section 4 with this!)

What do you call it? Living-room, sitting-room, lounge, drawing room? In the house of my childhood it was the dining room because the 'drawing room' was almost exclusively used for entertaining guests and was forbidden territory to the children.

Now, will you please describe it in as much detail as possible such that a museum curator in years to come could from our description faithfully reconstruct it. Give as much detail of pattern, -colour, style and shame as you can. If you start with the ceiling, the floor and the walls, then wall by wall note

PLEASE TURN OVER

things hanging and things standing up against each wall, and finally, furniture in the rest of the room. Omit no detail and above all try not to tidy up in your mind's eye! If, to take an extreme example, you see that tiny cobweb in the corner of the ceiling that you meant to sweep away yesterday and certainly will sweep away tomorrow, preserve it in your record for posterity! Similarly the bundle of old magazines, similarly X's coat which shouldn't have been there in the first place.

4. Mantel-shelf, mantel-piece, or equivalent

In 1937 Tom Harrisson asked Observers to list in detail what they had on their mantel-shelves and I thought it would be interesting, forty-six years later, to make a comparative study. Nowadays central heating has abolished the fire-place in many homes, but then again many people have restored fire-places that had been bricked up. If you have a -Antel-shelf of any kind would you please make a detailed inventory of its contents. If you have not would you describe its equivalent if you have one; I mean the shelf or surface on which ornaments notes, bills, drycleaner's tickets, clock, reminders, elastic bands, paper clips and birthday cards tend to congregate.

One mantel-shelf with which I am very familiar, held, at last count, some thirty-six separate items.

David Pocock,

Please use enclosed Business Reply sticker for your reply or address your envelopes to:

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MASS-OBSERVATION: SHOPPING PREMISES

NB. This is not part of the Autumn Directive. If you are interested in keeping a record of change you can let us have reports at any time convenient to yourself.

Many people have joined us since the project on changes in shop premises began so I thought it would be useful to put together some notes on this extremely useful work. The systematic accumulation of these details over years is building up a dossier of immense value on the changing face of the urban scene.

What you have to do is select a range of shops that you use or pass by regularly. List them in order, noting vacant premises. This is important because it is surprising how quickly one can forget the business of a particular shop when it changes hands especially if you don't use it a great deal.

All that you have to do after this is note the changes, if possible with dates eg. "Shoe shop in Parade closed October, vacant until November, opened as Oxfam shop for Christmas cards etc until January, now vacant again." Later report: "Former shoe shop opened as greengrocers in April."

Some Observers have sent in a plan of their chosen range of shops to which all later reports can refer; this is very useful indeed and is of course a great help to the researcher of the future.

Finally where the changes affect you or you know the effects on other people, eg. that they will have to spend less or more on fares when they shop, it is always good to have the extra comment.

PLEASE ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:

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