

THE TOM HARRISSON MASS-OBSERVATION ARCHIVE
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

SUMMER DIRECTIVE

We are joined this quarter by new Observers from parts of Britain hitherto under-represented. I would like to assure them, and remind the 'old hands', that although this Directive looks bigger than usual we cannot and do not expect everyone to write about everything. Pick those items which interest you or which are part of your own experience. But don't forget 'negative reporting' is useful, e.g. if there is little or no evidence of cuts in local authority spending then say so. There is a note for new Observers at the end of this Directive.

The emphasis this quarter falls on services both public and private, that is those that you pay for indirectly by rates and taxes etc and those that you pay for directly.

1. PUBLIC SERVICES

We want to hear about changes in the quality and efficiency in the health service, education, public transport etc. What have been the effects of cuts in local government spending on you, and on your neighbourhood?

2. PRIVATE SERVICES

(a) Here we are including repairs, decoration, installations and faulty goods. Apart from what you can do yourself, are there jobs which you have delayed having done for reasons of cost? Have you had work done by so-called "cowboys" and if so, were you satisfied with the work? Have you paid cash for any work in order to get it done more cheaply? If you are not a truly efficient Do-It-Yourselfer, are there jobs around the house that you have done that you wished you could have had done professionally?

(b) Faulty goods of all sorts: have you relatively recent experiences and how quickly was the matter remedied? One can have mixed feelings: one Observer was very impressed by the speed with which the local electricity board sent someone to replace a motor in a new vacuum cleaner that had broken down within hours of purchase, but she reflected that the cost of petrol and labour could have been avoided by better testing in the first place.

(c) Following on the advertising material that comes through your letter box, has anyone noticed a change in the pattern of services offered: roof insulation last year, double-glazing this year? By the way, has anyone had experience of advertising by 'phone (I have: insurance, double-glazing and a furniture 'sale'); if so, how did you react?

3. Has this year's Budget affected you directly? Could you tell us how?

4. Please give details of your gas and electricity bills for the winter quarter. If you happen to have details for the same time


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last year, would you include them please. Do you plan future economies?

5. Something out of the ordinary and nothing to do with our social problems: referring back to the Royal Wedding some people have reported dreams about the Princess of Wales and her baby and about the Royal Family, in some cases they are people who have no interest in royalty at all and have never had similar dreams before. Is this more general? If it is it would be interesting to have details.

GENERAL

1. "Forecast of better times to come" (headline in THE TIMES, April 23rd. The report says that inflation in Britain is expected to go down to 7.9% next year. Light at the end of the tunnel? Your reflections please. Economists say that in a period of rising inflation it is sensible to borrow money. If inflation were to decrease steadily, how would you be affected? If you have 'Granny Bonds' would you hang on to them, for example?

2. Coinage: Please keep your eyes open for the vanishing p. It seems that streets of the town are no longer paved with gold but according to Lord Pavies of Leek (Lab.) 'the gutters of Britain are scattered with horrible tiny coins, the half-pennies, because people cannot be bothered to pick them up, and this must be costing Britain a fortune'.

ALSO: the long-heralded 20p coin is now imminent. Your reactions please, on its use, on prices, and on your spending habits.

NOTE FOR NEW OBSERVERS

Would you please include with your self portrait details of a typical day's meals on a weekday and a typical main meal on a Sunday; please include approximate time of all meals. We have also enclosed a special request for reactions to and reflections on the Falkland Islands although we hope that it will be out of date by the time you receive it.

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