

Mass-Observation in the 1990s

Summer Directive 1993

The summer directive is, as usual, in three parts, all very different, but I hope you will find something in each of them to inspire you to write. Please remember to write from your own experience as much as possible - describing things that have happened to you as well as your opinions on specific questions. Don't be afraid to digress or tell a story if you think it will make a point. If you can't answer a particular question, or respond to a particular theme, please explain why.

To start, just a quick reminder of things you can do to help us at the Archive:

- Write your M-0 number clearly on the top right hand side of the page.
- Please remember NOT to write your name on your replies. It's fine to have your name on accompanying notes or labels which we will detach before filing.
- If you can spare the paper, ***start your reply to each section on a new piece of paper*** (even if you only want to write one line!). We file your reply by theme, and if you've put your replies to more than one section on one side of A4, we have to copy it two or three times before we can file it away.
- Don't staple your pages together. Use a paper clip if you wish.
- Remember to return your sticky label (still on its backing!) with your name and address on the correct side. This saves us lots of time when we acknowledge your directive reply. We haven't enclosed any labels this time but we will in the next mailing. If you have run out of the labels we sent you, you could enclose one of your own, or send an addressed envelope if you have one handy.

Part One: Pleasure

This is designed to please and entertain you. You have worked so hard on directives recently that I want you to relax over this one, let your imagination run free, open your hearts, drop your inhibitions, and think about all the nice things that have ever happened to you.

Write down 10 things that give you pleasure.

They can be events, places, sport, art, sex, music, other people, memories, children, animals, scenery, thoughts, books, food, films.... combinations of things. They can be simple quiet pleasures or huge extravagant treats. Whatever they are, make sure you describe them in detail and ***don't, please, just send us a bald list***. Try to conjure up atmospheres for your reader! Transport us with your imagination. Tell us what makes you content, what makes you happy, what makes you ecstatic. And are these just in your head, or are you able to bring them about for yourself? Are they part of your everyday life?

People talk about the best moments of their lives. If you could re-live some part of your life again, maybe an hour, or a day or two, or longer, a week, or even months and years, when would these be and why? What made them so good?

Maybe you still feel that the best is yet to come. If you could have your wildest fantasies fulfilled, what would that be?

Finally, how honest have you been in answering the above? Is it possible to answer a

directive on this sort of question and be honest?

Please turn over

Part Two: Security and Crime

Last Saturday evening, my bag was stolen from me in a cafe in central Brighton. The same weekend, a friend on my road in Brighton had his house burgled for the second time that week. On one occasion, he and his children were asleep in the house. Another friend phoned to say his car had been stolen also on Saturday, this time in Cornwall. We hear that racist attacks are on the increase and that domestic crime and muggings are widespread. The safety of women, children and even adult men seems not to be something we can take for granted. What is your reaction to this information? Have you, or people close to you had similar experiences?

If you have, please write about them. What happened? How did you handle the experience?

What was the damage and how did it occur? What practical problems resulted? Was there any personal risk, or physical harm to the person involved? How were you helped by other people? Were the police involved? How was that?

What steps do you take to protect yourself? Your family and friends? Your property? Do you carry anything with which to defend yourself? Have you acquired a dog or a burglar alarm? Do you stay in at nights? You may not wish to be too frank in this section for obvious reasons, but it would be helpful if you could describe as much as you think wise. Remember your address will not be attached to your reply.

This section is mainly about actual experiences rather than opinions, but you might like to finish with a comment on the question of personal safety generally and what you feel it means about our society.

Part Three: Current Issues and Britain in the Summer of 1993.

There are so many current issues that I'd like to ask you to write about - so many important political and social questions that I feel Mass-Observation should cover -the tragic events on the world scene in the former Yugoslavia and in Somalia, questions about Europe Maastricht; at home, the wider debates about the country's education system and the current controversy over testing, the crisis in the National Health Service, the continuing lack of resolution to the Irish question, the state of the monarchy, the collapse of the mining industry, the state of the economy, especially in relation to employment, the health (or otherwise) of John Major's government and the shifts in the Cabinet.... you will, I'm sure, have many more topics.

What I suggest is that you choose maybe one or two of the issues you feel are the most important to you personally and about which you feel you have something to write. Don't feel obliged to stick to my list. And if you want to write about all of them and more, please feel free to do so. Try to relate what you say to your own direct experience if you can, although you are welcome to comment on whatever you wish. As a guide, try to imagine what is important to record about life in Britain at this moment. ***Please put a heading above each topic so we can see at a glance what you are writing about.***

There is no deadline on this Directive although it would be helpful if you try to send your reply back to the Archive within three months. Many thanks.

