

## *Mass-Observation in the 1990s*

### **Winter 1992 Directive**

This directive has three parts. The main part is first: "Growing Older"; Part 2 is "Looking back over 1992", and Part 3 is a "quickie" on dreams.

Please remember to start each part on a new page so that they can be separated for filing, and make sure your M-O number is on each part. If you can bear to continue the practice of noting your sex, age, occupation and town on the top of each part, please do. It does help to provide the reader with some context in which to think about what you are saying. If you are concerned about being identified, then only a very vague address/occupation will do (eg. 'Somerset village', 'in alliterative medicine' or whatever suits you).

This is not a commissioned directive and there is no deadline. In fact, it would suit us well at the Archive if you wrote back after Christmas (as long as you don't forget!). Please remember that *none of this directive is obligatory*. You can pick and choose. Use it as a way of stimulating your thoughts. If you have special stories to tell, or feel strongly about some aspects of the subject, then please feel free to write according to your own experiences and preferences.

#### **Part One: Growing Older**

##### **Your own subjective experience**

How old are you? What do the categories 'young', 'middle aged', 'elderly' or "old" mean to you? Where would you position yourself? How do you decide how to place people in other age categories?

Do you think you have any assumptions about people at different ages? Try setting out your thoughts on a man or woman of 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 Have you changed over the years in how you think about age and ageing? Please give details.

Do you think the process of ageing affects men and women differently? If you do, please say how.

What do you think are the gains and losses of getting older? Please speak from your own experience, whatever age you are. Please cover mental and physical aspects.

In your personal experience, what have been the ages of key changes for you in your life so far? Can you say what these have been and why they were important? What has been your favourite age so far?

If you are under 65 and you could choose, what would be your ideal way of spending the years after you reach 65?

If you are 65 or older, how does life shape up to your expectations? Looking back over your life so far, would you have done anything differently?

##### **Care of older people**

many people fortunately remain active and independent until a very late age. In this section, however, I am interested in your opinions and experiences of the kind of care and support people can obtain if they do need some form of care as they get older.

What do you think about the care we provide for elderly people in Britain? What do you think are the good points about it? The bad points?

Do you feel that, as a society, we respect elderly people? Please explain your answer, and give examples if you think they will help.

Can you tell us what care has been taken of members of your own family, for example, your great grandparents, grandparents, parents, you yourself? Have any of them been in a nursing home, sheltered accommodation or other kind of institutions

Have you ever worked in a hospital, home for the elderly or in any other welfare service which supports the elderly? Please give details, including the years of your employment and the nature of your work.

What is your opinion of institutional care? Please include care at home, special homes and hospitals, support services. You don't have to have had direct experience in this area to answer. We would be interested to hear everyone's opinion, although you should of course describe any direct experience.

Have you personally ever taken care of an elderly person, either at home or at their home? Are you currently in the situation of being taken care of by someone? Please tell us about either (or both) experience.

How would you like to be taken care of as an elderly person (this overlaps with the last question in the first section, but please use this section to talk more about support services and actual care if you become infirm). Is there anything you are afraid of? Do you have special wishes? If you feel you have already covered this question, please say so.

Finally, what kind of priority do you think politicians give, or should give, to the care of the elderly in this country?

*Please feel free to comment on the questions (you usually do!) and add any points you think I should have covered.*

## **Part two: Looking back over 1992**

I am not going to prompt you with questions here. Only to say that we did this for the decade of the 1980s with interesting results. Think about the events of the past year, and note down your reactions and feelings. You may want to talk about your reaction to major events in the world, events in Britain, local events in your workplace or community, or things which have happened in your family and in your own life.

This is an opportunity for you to write about the things which are important to you and which we can't cover in the directives. It would help if you gave us headings for any subject you decide to write more than half a page on.

## **Part three: What did you dream last night?**

If you can, answer this on the day you read this directive. Did you dream last night? Please describe your dream if you can, and say whether it was a recurring dream. What did you make of it (if anything) in terms of your current preoccupations? (Please note down the date of your dream).

Many thanks for your help. I hope you enjoy answering this directive. Don't ever feel that you can write too much or too little. We take whatever comes.