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## ABSTRACT

Simon D. Mason

Technology and Change  
in the  
Hotel Industry:  
The Case of the  
Hotel Receptionist

The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

1988

The relationship between service, technology and profit is problematic in the Hotel Industry. This is because of the way in which service workers for example, Hotel Receptionists and Clerks are used to maximise profit. Labour has been transformed into a commodity which is exploited sexually by men - staff and customers. This process is facilitated by the use of technology to reduce and cheapen the labour force. In an industry where unions have no power to affect industrial relations policy this process has gone unhindered. It is this three way relationship between service, technology and profit that is the basis of the thesis. The ethnographic fieldwork and information collection was carried out amongst a number of hotels in a consortium, a national hotel group and an international hotel chain.

The consequences of this three way relationship are documented and analysed in a series of chapters focusing on the way in which jobs in hotels and in particular the role of the Receptionist and Clerk are regulated by management policy based on the profit motive and facilitated by new technology. These changes have had repercussions on the relationship between craft and workers especially on the issue of skilled work. A detailed account of the state of the labour market is given looking at recruitment, training, promotion, wages as well as the role the unions have in the Hotel Industry.

It is the intention that this thesis will draw the Hotel Industry into "organisation sociology" rather than perpetuate the study of the factory workplace at the expense of the "service" industries. This thesis represents a contribution to such an academic direction.

Technology and Change  
in the  
Hotel Industry.  
The Case of the  
Hotel Receptionist

Simon Duncan Mason

The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Durham

The Department of Sociology and Social Policy

1988

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## GLOSSARY

**AA** - Automobile Association

**AATC** - Asia and Australia Training Centre

**APEX** - Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff

**BA** - British Airways

**BSO** - Business Statistics Office

**BSSRS** - British Society for Social Responsibility in Science

**BTA** - British Tourist Authority

**CCDI** - Cairo Career Development Institute

**CDI** - Career Development Institute

**CSO** - Central Statistical Office

**CASR** - Centre for Applied Social Research

**CIMTECH** - Centre for Information Media and TECHNOlogy

**CIR** - Commission on Industrial Relations

**CSE** - Conference of Socialist Economists

**CIS** - Counter Information Services

**D of E** - Department of Employment

**DTI** - Department of Trade and Industry

**ETC** - European Training Centre

**FT** - Financial Times (Newspaper)

**GMWU** - General and Municipal Workers Union

**GLC** - Greater London Council

**HCEDC** - Hotel and Catering Economic Development Committee

**HCIMA** - Hotel and Catering Institutional Management Association

**HCITB** - Hotel and Catering Industrial Training Board

**HDIS** - Hotel Development Incentive Scheme

**HMSO** - Her Majesty's Stationery Office

**HOTECH** - HOTECHnology (Bi-Annual Conference)

**HI** - Hilton International

**HILTONET** - HILTON international NETwork

**HILTRON** - HILTon ReservatiON service

**HUSAT** - Human Sciences and Advanced Technology Research Centre

**IBM** - International Business Machines

**IGD** - Institute of Grocery Distribution

**IND** - The Independent (Newspaper)

**IPS** - International Passenger Survey

**LRD** - Labour Research Department

**MSC** - Manpower Services Commission

**NEDO** - National Economic Development Office

**OBS** - The Observer (Newspaper)

**OECD** - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

**OPCS** - Office of Population and Census Surveys

**QAP** - Quality Assurance Program (Hilton International)

**RAC** - Royal Automobile Club

**TUC** - Trades Union Conference

**TGWU** - Transport and General Workers Union

**UK** - United Kingdom

**US/USA** - United States of America

**VDU** - Visual Display Unit

**WTO** - World Tourism Organization

**YTS** - Youth Training Scheme

## DECLARATION

I declare that no part of the material offered has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or in any other University. The entire thesis is my own work.

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## Chapter 1

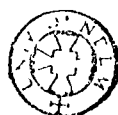
### Introduction

This introduction aims to locate this thesis into “organization sociology” by highlighting the importance of the “service industries” to the study of the labour process through the parallels and differences between “services” and “manufacturing” and the role of the former in the economy. In so doing it will be shown how industrial sociology and studies of the factory workplace have dominated to the expense of the “service industries”. The issues of de-skilling and industrial concentration, associated with introducing (new) technology into “manufacturing industries”, are central to the labour process that characterises “service industries”. Therefore it seems appropriate to explore the differences between “manufacturing” and “services” in order to highlight the extent to which sectoral changes in the patterns of employment have occurred and to place the importance of the “service” sector in a realistic context within the economy.

One of the clearest problems when studying the Hotel trade/industry is the lack of research material on the “service industries” within sociology in comparison to that on “manufacturing industries”. This is most apparent in the studies of industry and the factory workplace which have dominated accounts of sociology to the almost total exclusion of “services”. We can see this for example, in the work of Burawoy (1979), Cooley (1980), Jenkins & Sherman (1979), Roy, and Wilkinson (1983). Although this is an arbitrary collection of studies they are indicative of the research consensus which focuses on the effect of changes, through the introduction of new technology, on the structure of social relationships within the factory workplace.

Of the literature that has been published on the Hotel trade only that written in the USA considers the effects of changes in working practices on social relationships in the workplace. The most notable is that of Whyte’s study of *Human Relations in the Restaurant Industry* (1948). However only passing reference is made to the operations of the Front Office since this study is primarily concerned with the relationship between staff in the Kitchen and the Restaurant.

This is the same area of study as Mars and Nicod’s study of Waiters in a number of hotels in England called *The World of Waiters* (1974). Like Mars’s





earlier book on Barmen, *Cheats at Work* (1982), it is an anthropological account of the factors which structure the context within which staff in the Restaurant and Bars work. There have been similar approaches towards the study of eating habits and their symbolic nature, and here the work of Nicod and especially that of Mary Douglas is of importance. However the above studies signify a lack of recognition of the importance of Hotel Receptionists in the generation of revenue which is central to the hotel's profitability. The status of the craft areas of the Kitchen, and to a lesser extent the Restaurant, have overshadowed those areas of the Hotel which are less than glamorous, such as the Housekeeping and Front Office departments.

All of this poses a challenge for any study of the "service industries", especially in this case the Hotel trade/industry. The dilemma is to what extent is material drawn from research in a different workplace context, namely "manufacturing", relevant and applicable to that of another, in this case "services"? Given that it is usual to set "manufacturing" and "services" as significantly different then there is a more fundamental question, this is to do with the extent of the difference in the conditions under which goods and services are produced within these two economic sectors. Whether or not these two industries are internally, or only in appearance, different it still remains a fact that the "service industries" are predominantly excluded from mainstream research into "organization sociology".

It is clear that what is produced by "services" is not a tangible product (Gershuny, 1978, p.56). In the Hotel trade/industry what is critical to the generation of sales revenue is the knowledge or the anticipation that the "service" the paying customer receives is that which will meet his/her physical and psychological wants. In this situation the availability of accommodation, alcoholic beverages, haute cuisine as already sub-assembled or processed "goods" - sub-contracted laundry, cocktail mixers, frozen foods - play a crucial part in determining the tangible context within which the paying customer is "served". These are the means by which the customer can be physically satisfied. However "service" goes beyond that and encompasses the personality of the staff who are trained to serve the customer as an individual amongst many. They are the human manifestation of the ambience of the social setting and help to create the atmosphere of "personal service". It is the juxtaposition of the setting/ambience with the "personal service" which partially or totally satisfies the customer's ego for status, power or personal meaning.

In "manufacturing industries" the involvement of the individual worker in the process of producing goods is usually only partial. "Service workers" although they serve the customer directly do so with goods produced by others like the

worker in “manufacturing” who receives pieces from other people, passing them on as increasingly completed parts of a whole tangible product. Working in a hotel is similar to that of a production line in that raw materials, at different stages of processing, come in through the supplies entrance and eventually comes to be on the customer’s plate as a meal, or in a glass as a drink, or on the bed as laundered sheets, or as a charge on the bill for all of the above. Only in some hotels would one person do all of these tasks, in most hotels an employee will do only one of these jobs as a part of the whole customer cycle. In the largest hotels those tasks are sub-divided for example, Advance Reservations Clerk, Telephonist, Desk Clerk, Cashier. In the same way as a worker in “manufacturing” adds another piece of material, fills a box with jars, places a bolt into some thing that will become in time a finished product so the “service workers” in a hotel are contributing at different stages of the customer cycle from the moment s/he telephones the hotel to the point of departure at the end of her/his stay.

It would seem then that in essence this particular “service industry”, Hotels, is similar in its process of production to that of “manufacturing industries”: and that only in the appearance of what is “produced” can the difference be identified as the intangible “service” versus the visible “good”. What essentially unites the “service industries” with “manufacturing industries” is the economic drive to increase rates of return on capital. The Hotel trade is a capitalist industry.

It is more than apparent that research into the effects that new technology has had on the way work is carried out has been predominantly focused on the “manufacturing industries”. Arguments about socially useful products and the debate centred around the term skill have quite arbitrarily ignored the “service industries” and my own area of research the Hotel trade.

Such changes in the Hotel industry, as the introduction of computer controlled telephone switchboards, have gone unnoticed in the literature on changes in working practices. (See for example, Wilkinson (1983), the articles in Wood (1982) especially those by Jones and Lee). As have the effects of working with VDU’s, although evidence from clerical work will have parallels with clerks in Advance Reservation offices and on the Front Desk inputting customer details. See for example, APEX (1985), Craig (1981), FT articles (1985), Guy (1984), Rice (1985). All opportunities to compare the social effects of introducing new technology into the Hotel industry with those that have resulted from the advent of computer numerically controlled machines in manufacturing have been lost. Although parallels can be drawn the circumstances differ, largely because of the lack of unionization in the Hotel industry which has impeded any form of employee negotiation for control of operations within the workplace. The literature that has been produced

within the Hotel industry in the UK by NEDO, HCIMA, HCITB and in the USA by the AH&MA is to do with applying computers in the industry or documenting the progress of such introduction and assessing the most current machinery available. There is little critical evaluation of the effects that such technology will have on the structure of the social relationships and the pattern of working practices.

One of the more important contributions to the issue of the nature of the quality of the work experience in the twentieth century is Braverman's book on *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1974). The major issue of this work is the study of the effects that new technology and changes in modes of production have had on the labour process. The debate on "skill", and what is meant by that term, are central to this. Some studies are "hopeful" that the introduction of automation to the shopfloor, and in society generally, holds the potential for an overall improvement in the quality of life and the upgrading of work through increases in skill levels. Exponents of this utopian view of the capitalist world would include Bleakley (1981), Boguslaw (1965), Davis & Taylor (1979), Friedrichs & Schaff (1982), Jenkins & Sherman (1979), Lyon (1980).

There are many other commentators who would hold to the view that the average skill levels amongst the labour force will increase rather than, as Braverman seeks to demonstrate, polarise between a highly specialist minority who would then control the mass of semi-/un-skilled workers (p.425). Braverman goes onto detail the changes in the occupational structure of the labour force (pp.425-426). Although his thesis is based on statistics for the USA labour market the fact that his argument rests on the consequences of Taylorism and Fordism working practices means that there will be parallels for the UK labour market. These methods of work have resulted in the majority of workers being alienated from any degree of significant control over, or understanding of, the machines they are operating. This has meant a downgrading in the skills of the craftsman and an increase in the numbers of machine operators. However, Braverman's over reliance on comparisons between the craftsman and the labourer does not help in the analysis of changing working practices in the Hotel industry especially in relation to administration tasks where there has never been a conception of those duties as a craft. Where Braverman's thesis is of use in the "service" industries, and by implication the Hotel industry, is in relation to his comments on the consequences of applying new technology within the labour process. As he states, and this will be borne out in the chapter on technology in this thesis,

'The more science is incorporated into the labour process, the less the worker understands of the process; the more sophisticated an intellectual product the machine becomes, the less control and comprehension of the machine the worker has'

p.425

As one of the Reception staff at the Swallow hotel in Durham said,

'Once I've inputted the information into the keyboard I don't know what happens to it after that'

Nicholls

This not only undermines the position held by such exponents of the "average skill thesis" but also those that believe that technology will "upgrade" and increase the level of skill a worker possesses or can acquire. In the Hotel industry there are a multitude of specialists for example, in the Front Office there is the Cashier, Telephonist, Room Letting clerk. However, with the introduction of new technology in the form of Customer Reservation, Billing and Financial Management systems the aptitude and initiative that these jobs previously required have been assimilated into the "machine" through the software programme. As the Head Receptionist of the Swallow hotel in Carlisle put it, with reference to learning how to operate the computer system,

'I can get a Receptionist tapping away in a couple of days'

McGahan

So the divisions of labour characteristic of a Taylorist or Fordist approach to working practices have been refined as the consequences of new technology, in terms of the rationalisation of hotel operations, have been realised. On the one hand the Receptionist could be seen to have had her/his job upgraded because s/he is working with a computer. More significantly, with the reduction in the level of mental aptitude necessary to operate such a system and the fact that one person can be taught in a couple of days the codes and procedures required to do several types of jobs there is a downgrading in the skill requirements and status of the job to the employer. Whereas before several people were being paid

to do several different types of jobs at various times of the day the new multi-skilled employees or polyvalent workers (Mandel, 1978, p.268) can be drafted to the busiest customer service area, whether this be check-outs in the morning or arrivals in the afternoon.

If it is true what the Head Receptionist at the Swallow hotel in Carlisle said about training a person to operate the system in a couple of days does this make the skill content of the job so negligible to be almost absent that is, to a position that in practice the job can be called unskilled? This is Braverman's point when he cites the remark,

“Training a worker, means merely enabling him to carry out the directions of his work schedule. Once he can do this, his training is over, whatever his age.”

p.447

As he states the machine operatives, the clerical and the service workers which form the bulk of the labour force, in the USA and in the UK, can be correctly labelled as unskilled (pp.430-433). One Receptionist at the 415 bedroomed Swallow hotel in London had been promoted to the position of Shift Leader without having gained the nationally recognised qualification for Receptionists that of the City & Guilds Certificate No.709 in Hotel Reception. The General Manager said to me in an interview that, 'experience' was more important than paper qualifications. With new technology reducing the time needed to train and be efficient at ones job then this is one of the realisable consequences for management; staff who are not qualified taking on responsibility from those who are more qualified and being paid proportionately less to do the job. New technology equals unskilled labour and this is apparent in the Hotel industry, a core sector of the "service industries".

In contrast management will still seem to retain their positions of control regardless of new technology. That is until it encroaches on the area of strategic decision making within the industry. This has already happened in Hilton International Hotels where the duties of the Operation Analyst have been delegated to the Front Office Manager resulting in redundancies or deployment elsewhere in the corporation whilst dispensing with another level of management and the consequent savings for the salary bill. According to Mr Manley the Assistant Director Information Systems this policy of distributing management control and responsibility down to Heads of Department has meant a labour cost saving of \$34,000 (or the equivalent) in each of the Vista International Hotels. However this

does not mean a commensurate increase in the salary of the Front Office Manager who has to incorporate the duties of the more senior colleague into his/her own job description. This is a degradation of the job through non-payment of remuneration for additional tasks.

According to Handy (1984) "Services" is the new employment sector (pp.7-8). At the same time employment in "manufacturing industries" has been declining. Much has been made of the export earning capacity of the "services sector" with £5 billion being received in 1986 (DofE, 1987b). As well as the volume and type of occupation people will be doing in Britain in the future (Jenkins and Sherman, 1979).

We have noted that there has been a shift in the occupational pattern within the workforce away from skilled workers and towards semi-/un-skilled labour; this process has been hastened through political policy in the UK over the past three decades. The policies of successive government's since the late 1960's have focused on developing new technology and expanding the role of London as the place for trading in "services". An economic sector has been made out of dealing in "services", banking, insurance, stocks & shares, as well as the "personal services" for example, hairdressing, leisure, and the Hotel trade. The latter two being the major parts of what is termed the 'Tourism Industry'.

Employment in the "services" sector in September 1987 was 14.5 million, as opposed to 6.5 million for "manufacturing industries" (DofE, March, 1988). Of the employment in "services", 1.4 million - or 10% - were employed in the 'Tourism Industry' (SIC 1980; Group 66 & Classes 977+979). Employment in the Hotel and Accommodation trade was 299,000, of which according to the English Tourist Board (1986c) 20,000 - or 7% - are Hotel Receptionists; of those 85% are female (p.15).

Labour Market Data for September 1987 reveals that female employment in "services" accounts for 82% of all employment for women, with one quarter of the total workforce being female part-time workers. In the Hotel trade there are 82,500 women employed as part-time workers, representing 31% of that industry's labour force. However there is a different profile for female employment in "manufacturing industries", where women working part-time account for only 5.5% of the labour force (DofE, March, 1988).

Yet research about female work in the labour market has centred on employment in "manufacturing industries", focusing on full-time work in particular. Neither of which are central to the reality of employment for women in "service industries" where they are for the most part employed on a part-time basis. Work

for females is determined as unskilled in a business like the Hotel trade which puts profit before people, export earning potential before employment. For examples of studies which are principally concerned with female labour in “manufacturing industries” see Amsden (1980), Cavendish (1982), Cockburn (1983), Elson (1981), Garson (1982), Mackie & Pattullo (1977), Pollert (1981), Walby (1986). The only study that could be found of female work in the Hotel and Catering industry was by Spradley & Mann (1975) which looked at the role of the Cocktail Waitress within is the manifestation of a consensus which seeks to transform natural resources such as, woodland, mountains, coastland, buildings, art and historical events into a commodity which can be packaged, marketed and sold as the “heritage of Britain”. People come from all over the world, and especially from North America, to see the “treasures” of this country, not to grow angry about the decline in manufacturing industry but to maintain the trail that blazes through areas such as the mining areas of Wales in the form of a museum set in an old coal works. Or rejuvenated pottery works in the Black Country, where people can see how goods were produced “in the good old days”. Such museums as Beamish in County Durham and the Jorvik exhibition in York are heralded as “honey-pot” tourist sites, earning revenue and receiving awards for letting people view the past through nostalgia tinted perceptions.

These do not explore the hard reality of history, but portray it as soft narrative, something to be enjoyed from a distance, never to be experienced. The docklands area of London, Merseyside and Clydeside have been re-developed, not to revitalise the manufacturing base of these city’s, but to build luxury housing, shopping malls, recreation areas and conference centres. All of which provide amenities for visiting tourists and those residents with the money to spend.

The creation of employment is not a high priority. “Services” use technology to make a profit, not to create employment (Handy, 1974, pp.29-30). Through the decline in industry, being in part encouraged through advances in technology and the diversion of national resources towards this “progress”, the emphasis has shifted away from creating jobs towards the making of money for its own sake. This is the potential of such dockland schemes and the selling of our “cultural heritage” to the USA. This is paralleled by the commodification of “personality” in the “service industries”.

This restructuring process, away from serving people’s needs out of personal regard and towards selling “personality” as a packaged commodity, is analysed by Urry (1986). It is a process which dates to the beginning of capitalism when people became to “belong” to other people by virtue of how much more money they had

and the power that could be exercised through this commodity. Now “service” means the buying and selling of an individual’s personality. It is tradeable because it has an trading worth for the capitalist which is surplus to cost - it is profitable. It is these processes of change in the economy and within social relations that forms a central part of the research. The focus being on female employment in the Hotel trade which serves to sell people as a “personal service” to the paying customer.

The restructuring of “services” around profit, the transformation of “personality” into a commodity, and the expansion of new technology in the Hotel trade is not a coincidence. Profit is to be made out of “servicing” people’s needs, it is maximised when the marginal unit of cost is at its lowest compared with the selling price of the unit. Technology has been used to reduce on-going costs through the reduction in the number of staff needed to operate a hotel or group of hotels. More pertinently for a people oriented business like the Hotel trade technology has been used to de-personalise the relationship between the customer and the employee.

With the increased use of self-service means of checking-out of the hotel through the direct debiting of your credit card account, and the introduction of express check-in facilities so that queueing is kept to a minimum, the hotelier believes they are doing the customer a “service”. However this reduces the quantity *and* the quality of the contact between customer and employee. The former is the planned functional consequence of the introduction of computerised Reservation and Billing systems, the latter is the unintended consequence - or is it?

It has been assumed that computers will reduce the amount of labour time per customer. Which means that firstly, less staff have to be employed and secondly, those who are can spend their time selling the hotel’s facilities to the customer are being curtailed. However if the ratio of staff to customer deteriorates the direct consequence is a more superficial relationship between the employee and the customer. If this is not intended then the relationship between profit and service must be redefined so that service comes before profit rather than people being used as the means of making money out of other people’s needs.

The fieldwork for this thesis was conducted in Great Britain and the USA. The companies through which the research was done were Consort Hotels (York, England), Swallow Hotels (Sunderland, England) and Hilton International Hotels (New York, USA). In all more than twelve months was spent observing the operations of these three companies. Interviews were carried out with nearly one hundred Clerks, Front Office staff & management, as well as hotel and corporate



management personnel. In addition a survey was carried out of all the Hotel Receptionists in Swallow Hotels - 172 Receptionists in 32 hotels.

The preliminary results are to be published as a working paper through the Department of Sociology & Social Policy, University of Durham. The focus of the paper will be the effect of computers on the working practices in the three hotel companies. This will look at how the work itself has changed and the ways in which the clerks in Consort Hotels and the Receptionists/Desk Clerks in Swallow Hotels and Hilton/Vista International Hotels have coped with the subsequent alterations in the organization of their work and definition of the nature of their job.

This working paper forms the basis of four chapters in the thesis, that on the attitude of the three hotel companies' executives towards computerisation (Chapter 4: Section 4), The ways in which the jobs of the Clerks and the Hotel Receptionists/Desk Clerks has been restructured to accommodate the computerised systems (Chapter 6), The chapter which includes the polemic debate as to the nature of "skill" as it specifically applies to a "personal service" trade (Chapter 8), and the final chapters on the relationship between hierarchical positions of authority, personal status and the politics of sexual labour.

This thesis will be in stark contrast to the in-house management textbooks on Hotel Reception and Front Office Management which stress the ways in which the job is to be done. For example, Beavis and Medlik, *A Manual of Hotel Reception*, (1978, 2nd Edition); Atkins, *The Receptionist*, (1981); Dix, *Accommodation Operations* (1984, 2nd Edition); Paige and Paige, *The Hotel Receptionist* (1984, 2nd Edition); White and Beckley, *Hotel Reception*, (1982, 4th Edition). Those textbooks that have been edited prior to re-publication have included some reference to the influence of computers in the Reception department. However the basic assumption is that whilst the City & Guilds 709 Course on Hotel Reception continues to train people using manual methods of Reservations and Accounting then it is not incumbent upon them to highlight the trend amongst a growing number of hotel companies towards using new technology to "service" the customer's needs.

Some other textbooks for example, Vallen, *Check in - check out: Principles of Effective Front Office Management*, (1974) and Kasavana, *Effective Front Office Operations*, (1981), both published in the USA, emphasise the use of computers as the most efficient means of carrying out administrative procedures. Whilst only more recently has this begun to be written about in textbooks by British writers for example, Taylor and Thomason, *Profitable Hotel Reception*, (1982) and Braham, *Hotel Front Office*, (1985). It is clear that the adoption of technology

in the Hotel trade follows the lead set by the USA several years ago, and that published in textbooks follows the trend in the industry an additional several years behind. In contrast with the USA, the British hotelier's attitude to using and training for new technology is generally medieval.

One of the major problems in trying to do fieldwork in the Hotel trade in this country is that the management of the company's have little comprehension of what research is about. The advantage that I had when negotiating for access was my academic background in Hotel and Catering Management and the personal experience I gained working in all areas of the Hotel trade within Great Britain and the USA.

Such lack of comprehension serves to highlight the pace at which changes in attitudes within the Hotel trade have developed. Up to the time of writing there have been no sociological studies which go further than ethnographic studies and training/information literature. What is needed is analysis of the quality that is found in Urry's paper (1986) to be directed specifically towards the Hotel industry as well as to the "service industries" generally. Academic research has ignored this sphere of the economy, preferring to direct time and money on studying men and women working in full-time occupations in "manufacturing industries". As has been noted previously this is an inadequate starting point for research in the Hotel trade and the "services" sector which is a growth area for female part-time employment. This thesis hopes to begin to amend this situation.

Academic research is oriented in Great Britain towards the impact of policies of de-industrialization, rather than also looking at the deliterious effects of work in the "services" sector where pay and conditions are less than those in manufacturing industry because of the low incidence of unionization (Handy, 1984, p.8). In these jobs what is manufactured is "personality" and what is produced is "service", which is the sold at a profit by capital. This thesis focuses on that.

## Chapter 2

### Observer-as-Participant: Approaching a structured methodology

#### Introduction

This chapter will describe the process by which the fieldwork was constructed and funded. Following that the types of methodological tools that are available to get at the required data are explored, with the final section detailing the reality of fieldwork from the point of view of researcher and subject.

#### 1 The Research Proposal

##### 1.1 Finance

An important part of any research project is finance. There are many sources of finance and although a Studentship from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) was eventually secured a number of alternative sponsors were approached. Initially these were industrial companies and charitable foundations: however, either my research proposal was outwith their terms of reference or else, they were only prepared to fund post-doctoral research. Consequently more than thirty major hotel companies based in the UK were contacted by letter but they were too busy making a profit to spare any money for a project into the use of computers in the Hotel Industry let alone reply to my letters. Likewise with the Hotel, Catering and Institutional Management Association and the Hotel and Catering Industry Training Board. Even though I was a member of the former they were not prepared to offer any form of support.

My dealings with the Training Manager of the HCITB were less than cordial, ending with him sending me a terse letter after, what I had assumed to be, an agreement in principle to fund the research. Moreover, as I had been forewarned, he stole one of my ideas for a question in the Hotel Receptionist of the Year Competition, 1985. During our discussions I had said that I wanted to look at

the relative importance of the technical and social skills of a Hotel Receptionist and this appeared on the application for the above competition in the form of a question.

Applications were also made to a number of educational patrons whose details were obtained through the *Digest of Charities*. This is an invaluable source of information concerning such organisations and although my research fell outside of even those bodies which seemed most promising it was still a worthwhile exercise.

The line of enquiry that proved successful was the Economic and Social Research Council. My friends would agree no doubt when I say that all my luck and ingenuity were used in securing the Studentship. I played it according to the rules, even submitting as the title of the proposed research, 'The Economic and Social Implications of Micro-technology in the Hotel Industry.' That "flavour-of-the-month" title; my work experience in the industry; the degree in Hotel and Catering Management; and the Second Class, Upper Division honours degree secured the Studentship for 3 years at Durham University.

## 1.2 Fieldwork Access

Access is a critical issue: without it there is no research and when it is granted it has a direct influence on the design of the research timetable and the eventual quality, let alone quantity, of the material from which the thesis issues are drawn. The pragmatism that follows ones ideal comes about because of the availability of access and its extent.

Initially, as we shall see in Section 1.3, the aim of the research was to explore the alienative features of working as an operator of a computer terminal: to study the social effects of what is termed the man-machine interface, the intention being to look at a number of manufacturing industrial workplaces in the north east of England. It could be said that the change to the service industry was therefore less than ideal. However, as will become obvious in Chapter 6, a central part of the research was concerned with the man-machine interface, or more accurately, the woman-machine interface. One can then begin to see that the social impact of technology in the manufacturing industry, manifesting as computer numerically controlled machinery, is paralleled, in social terms at least, in a service industry like the Hotel trade.

Ideally I suppose the researcher is looking for unqualified access to personnel and documents and without people being unavailable because of work schedules or files being classified as corporate secrets. Moreover it is hoped that personnel

will answer for you the question you never even thought of in addition to the ones that you pose. Furthermore, for the convenience of the researcher, that access would be for the length of time and at the period most suited for the researcher for example, with a gap of several weeks in between each period of fieldwork to allow for the collation of data and preliminary analysis. It is meant to be standard procedure to begin fieldwork towards the end of the first year, spending the first 6-9 months constructing a literature review. However the watchword for me was to take every opportunity to do fieldwork as it presented itself, no matter when! With the enthusiasm of the first company to spur me on it made sense to start immediately.

There is sometimes a conflict of priorities as to what the research should be aiming for and consequently the allocation of time that each subject of study should be allotted. Such a dilemma can come about in negotiations with those who will determine whether there will be access and to what extent. Although my dealings with such people revealed their ignorance about the effect that computerisation is having on their organisations it was with the Personnel Manager of Swallow Hotels that I had to exercise the greatest diplomacy. He had set out to use me and my research to find out whether his pet theories were able to be substantiated and this was a perpetual state of affairs throughout our relationship. Thankfully his ignorance as to the nature of research preserved the integrity of the fieldwork and the results. Where our interests did not meet I was happy to appear to do a trade-off.

Letters were written to Personnel Managers of more than 20 hotel companies; these included well-known national groups and regional companies. Like the response to the letters for money this was mixed (when there was a reply), and given that it was not a request for finance this was disappointing. However there were two responses that were positive; one of which developed into four months of research with Consort Hotels during the first year of the research programme and the second was from Trusthouse Forte hotels whose Personnel Director was at first very supportive.

The fieldwork with THF Hotels would have been excellent because the Director of Personnel had agreed to six months of fieldwork. This was scheduled as follows; research at the Head Office (2 months), at one of two Regional Offices (2 months) and at two hotels (for one month each). Access would have been to personnel and company documents associated with the maintenance of the largest hotel group in the United Kingdom and one of the largest in the world. The result would have been an in-depth case study of one of Britains largest industrial groups.

However I committed the cardinal mistake in the eyes of my supervisor by pressing the Director of Personnel for a decision. At that point he backed down and I had to start again. I believe it was to do with the fact that the computer system THF hotels were using was proving unsatisfactory and they were replacing it, with a consequent shift of personnel up and down the organisation. It would not have been prudent for them to have a researcher asking the wrong questions at the wrong time ( or from the point of view of the research the right questions at the right time). Hence the cooling of interest. Whatever the reasons this was a lost opportunity to document the social and organisational upheaval caused by a computer system during this transition period. It illustrates a problem well known to industrial researchers.

The very same morning that I received the letter from the Personnel Director of THF hotels, I wrote to the Personnel Manager of Swallow Hotels. He had been interested in my research but only with respect to the work of Hotel Receptionists. This, when I had first written to him, was not my proposed area of study. However a marked degree of pragmatism set in when faced with the rebuttal of THF. The response from the Personnel Manager resulted in four months fieldwork at the Head Office and five hotels. Also, on that decisive morning, I sent letters to Personnel Managers of some of the London hotels receiving welcome support from the Hilton International Kensington where I conducted two weeks of research during the 2nd year of the programme and which led to four months of fieldwork in the USA at five Hilton International (Vista) Hotels.

### 1.3 Research title and contents - defined, redefined and changed

The title of the overall research programme is a reflection at that moment of the effect of accumulated ideas - old and new - coupled with open and closed opportunities to collect information on them in the workplace. Initially the title - The Economic and Social consequences of Micro-technology in the Hotel Industry - was chosen to accommodate the aims of the ESRC in the hope of securing a Studentship along with a need to develop a pragmatic approach to the entire proposal as a result of the success there had been, and the lack of it, in gaining access to companies to conduct fieldwork.

At first the aim, as has been stated previously, was to investigate the (wo)man-machine interface in manufacturing: yet in spite of different terms of reference that exist in the service industries there are similar, and sometimes parallel, issues to

be faced in the context of changes in working practices as a consequence of new technology.

So it can be seen from this that the overall title, reflecting the substantive issues of the research, has changed as a result of formal negotiations for access and finance and was then further developed during social interaction with personnel in Hotel and Catering establishments and the Hotel trade. The preliminary conclusion in the early stages of the research was that there was a need to document the experiences of Hotel Receptionists/Desk Clerks on a range of issues: something which, unlike industrial research, there was a scarcity of especially for Hotel Reception where no research had been done. The result has been that the subjects of the research have themselves dictated which issues should be given priority.

## **2 Methods employed**

### **2.1 Supporting material**

It is true to say that any one of the above themes could be transformed into a subject for a thesis and a book. This poses the twin problem of reading comprehensively and in sufficient detail to appreciate the substantive issues without being bogged down in the plethora of work written on these subjects. The reading which has been done has guided the subsequent fieldwork and has helped to make sense of the results obtained from interviews, notes and the questionnaire. The length of the bibliography reflects personal interest in the topics and the ease with which some material can be read, and by no means has everything cited been quoted from in the thesis, it is a bibliography and not a list of references.

Documents obtained from companies, especially the ones that I carried out fieldwork with, were obtained within a state of ignorance; I roughly knew what I wanted but was unsure about what they would be prepared to hand over and the Personnel Managers were uncertain about what I would need to do my research (especially background details on finance). In the main however I was given what I needed. This was the case with Swallow Hotels though less so with Hilton International Hotels who were more used to dealing with requests for information and had a better idea of what they felt they could hand over without compromising corporate secrets.

A glance at the bibliography under the letter 'F' will uncover more than 100 references to the Financial Times. As a source of accurate and concisely written details it is without competition but as a means of being aware of published reports it is invaluable. Without it the analysis of Chapter 4 and the detail in Chapter 5 would have been adversely affected.

However one of the major problems that has had to be faced has been to do with the statistics published by organisations in the Hotel Industry and the Government; the former tend to be inaccurate and the latter too general for the small detail required to investigate the Hotel trade within the Tourism industry. Problems have been encountered in trying to compare data from the Censuses of 1971 and 1981, though in general the data published by the Government Statistical Service has been of prime importance, especially in the background Chapters 4 and 5.

## 2.2 Primary information

There are a number of techniques one may use and depending on the researcher's overall proposed methodological approach then this will influence the course of the fieldwork. The kind of data one is proposing to look at will often demand a particular approach, and if a variety of sources of information are being considered then a range of techniques will be employed.

The discipline of Sociology presents the researcher with additional problems, unlike the sciences there is no compulsion to develop a thesis, posit an antithesis and deduce a synthesis. How do you empirically analyse whether Ideology constructs Reality or is determined by experiences in and of the real world? Sociology can be sustained as a discipline on the strength of speculation all the way through to the quasi-scientific empiricism of opinion surveys. As we shall see later, with respect to the arguments within ethnographic research even within the confines of one technique the debate ensues between the usefulness of anecdotal material and the supposedly more orderly approach of those advocating more structure and proven/provable ideas.

When it comes down to employing ones chosen fieldwork technique on-site it has to be universally popular as well as being the best tool to get at the information that you require. One group of subjects may be more able to cope with the presence of a tape recorder for example, management may find it easier to talk into a piece of plastic even if it is only to dodge around the issues. It may also be obvious that individuals themselves may prefer to be confronted in a different



manner to the one you yourself might think is the most effective for example, a tape recorder takes away the problem of note taking though it replaces it with the time consuming activity of transcribing.

So there are a number of approaches, which depending on the circumstances of ones fieldwork will be more appropriate given the constraints of time and access, plus the degree of trust the subject places in you.

If it had been possible to carry out fieldwork with THF Hotels then the fact that there was a period of six months access to the organisation at three levels of management operations would have allowed for an in-depth case study, documenting and assessing the impact of its general industrial relations policy and specific policies such as, its approach to technology on the entire staff and management hierarchy and comparing and contrasting the effects of such policies throughout the organisation. Moreover it could have been possible to compare more than one organisation in such depth in the way that Blau did in, *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy*. Something along those lines was achieved in Chapters 5 and 6 on the corporate structure and policies on a range of subjects including new technology.

However to get at information that will allow the researcher to construct an experiential picture of the working life of an employee then the data needs to be anecdotal such as can be obtained through interviews either informally in conversation or by a more structured setting of a taped answer-and-question type situation. The researcher may also choose to act as an observer whilst participating as an employee which was how Roy conducted his fieldwork or as a watcher and note taker, either covertly or overtly. This method was utilised to great effect in my own research and the results presented in Chapter 8 show the power of this approach.

In order to get at general opinion on a range of issues then the survey is a useful technique. This can take a number of forms all of which can be employed in any particular survey. The types of questions may take the form of written factual requests of age and marital status; agreeing with one statement; listing statements in order of priority. In the survey sent out to the Hotel Receptionists in Swallow Hotels all of these question types were employed (see the Appendix for a copy of the questionnaire used in this research).

One of the problems with such a method is the way in which the questions are interpreted by the respondents and ambiguity may only be seen once the answers have been collated which can negate the value of that particular result. Moreover the survey can only have a finite number of questions before even the most committed will give up. The dilemma is a trade off between getting detailed

views on a few subjects or general opinion on a range of topics. The advantage of having the opportunity to do follow up interviews is that preliminary results can be tested against a detailed investigation of worker's views.

The result is that with a range of techniques the ground is covered and ideas spring up all along the course of the research especially in the final stage of writing up the thesis.

### 2.2.1 Observer-as-Participant

The influence of the work of Roy on my own fieldwork is special. It is obvious to those who read his research that he was at pains to make a note of everything that went on around him: the result is always more than enough material to write several theses or books let alone one that is supposed to be no more than 80,000 words in length! It has been so with this research. Furthermore, it is the intimacy with which he deals with the characters he worked with that marks Roy's work out as illustrating a oneness with his subjects which went beyond other ethnographic or social anthropological research. This is felt through the humour he brings to his writing which is remarkable bearing in mind that there is generally speaking little to find amusing in the context of the labour process. It is this which in part marks the difference between his work and mine which could be accounted for by the fact that he was a participating observer and I spent my time watching and taking notes, probably enough to drive the smile from anyones face? (See the bibliography for a selection of Donald Roy's work).

The title of the chapter highlights two views of this form of qualitative research, those of Donald Roy who saw this method as the means of coming to, 'impressionistic conclusions' (Roy, 1953, p.507) and Howard S. Becker who preferred to see the participant observer aiming towards scientific proof distilled of bias. He does not deny that such a method renders conclusions from inferences, but what he wants is something more formal and systematic rather than merely, ' "having insights" ' (Becker, 1958, pp.653 and 660).

However he admits that the information that is gathered poses problems of quantity and use (how to make overall sense of the mass of observations). For example, this research has resulted in a four drawer filing cabinet of just such material with the resulting problem of what to use and what to leave out. Roy has an answer to this, as he states,

'The researcher's task is to transcend his acquired knowledge to establish the inferential linkages'

Roy in Habenstein, 1970, p.243

The reason why there is so much material is because of the manner in which it is collected; an observer-as-participant,

'gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organization he studies. He watches the people he is studying to see what situations they ordinarily meet and how they behave in them. He enters into conversation with some or all of the participants in these situations and discovers their interpretations of the events he has observed'

Becker, 1958, p.652

So that,

'The alert eye and ear could catch contradictory bits in the flow of events and verbalizations'

Roy, 1953, p.503

The aim being to make note of everything including ones own personal thoughts and feelings (Roy, 1952, p.427). This was something I did from a point part way through the first period of fieldwork and forms part of the analysis of the social implications of this method. This was suggested to me by my supervisor when I remarked that researchers have feelings which can be hurt when faced with subjects who are passing on to you the fear that they have of their boss, in this particular the Chief Executive of Consort Hotels. The kind of things that were noted in this diary were personal attacks against me by the subjects of the fieldwork; the problems I faced being by myself and living amongst strangers in a new setting, albeit temporarily (4 months); working as an 'outsider' in someone else's familiar surroundings; the hassle of living out of a suitcase from between one night and three months; the frustration of trying to make contact with the management of the next hotel I was visiting; working under the pressure of knowing that on the one hand I had necessary information to get out of people whilst bearing in mind at all times that I did not want to put them in to an uncooperative frame of mind

which would have undermined the research. The cardinal rule being to ensure access to information and personnel at all times irrespective of personal feelings and attitudes towards work.

### 2.2.2 Interviews

A variety of approaches were adopted within the course of the interviews carried out with staff from the three hotel organisations. The approach was to ask questions based on a series of topic headings and this was the way in which all the interviews were done: the difference was in the way in which the answers were recorded. At first I was hesitant in using a cassette tape recorder because of its intrusive presence and the effect it can have on an interviewee's self-confidence. One example was when a member of management was quite clearly put off continuing his criticism of the company's Personnel Manager as soon as I switched on the machine; he clearly looked inhibited voicing his opinions.

On several other occasions Hotel Receptionists were afraid that what they said would be used against them and that the result, as they perceived it, would be either, to curtail their career prospects or, worse still, make them unemployed. Such fear is difficult to come to terms with either for the interviewee or the person asking the questions and often it was broached by the Receptionists bravely gritting their teeth and answering the questions trusting in the assurance that was given that nothing of what they said would be disclosed to the management of Swallow Hotels let alone the General Manager of their hotel. The same problem arose with Desk Clerks and Front Office staff in Hilton/Vista International Hotels and that was without the added pressure of the tape recorder.

However I was encouraged to adopt this method with the result that there were more than 35 hours of taped interviews to listen to and edit/transcribe. It became obvious that to write out the interviews verbatim would take up too much time and would produce a mass of material of increasingly marginal use which would add to the problem of seeking to, 'establish the inferential linkages'.

On completion of the editing and transcription the next stage was to assign the answers to the topics around which the interview had been conducted. This meant photocopying the text and putting the appropriate remarks into a separate file, there are a dozen such topic files.

### 2.2.3 The Questionnaire

The idea for a survey of opinions came from the Personnel Manager of Swallow Hotels, he wanted to know the answers to some thoughts he was having concerning the relationship between length of service, job title and salary. What he was finding was that some Junior Receptionists were being paid nearly as much as someone with years of experience and he wanted to know what effect this was having on the staff. The questionnaire covered a range of areas; working conditions, staff attitudes, working practices. (A copy of the survey can be found in the Appendix). The aim of using this technique was to get at general opinions and attitudes of Hotel Receptionists within Swallow Hotels which would allow for more general remarks to be made about what it is like to work for this company and to work in the Front Office of hotels in different sectors of the market, albeit within a range of 2 star to 4 star hotels. Thus it can be seen that these results complement those of the case study type data as well as the observation notes whilst forming a context within which to analyse the answers from the in-depth interviews that were carried out with the staff and management of the hotels I visited.

The following remark made by Roy about his own work applies equally to me,

'During one campaign I employed a fixed-choice questionnaire with results that were not disappointing. However, this undertaking represented but one phase of a larger effort, and it was not carried out in conformity to acceptable standards of survey research'

Roy in Habenstein, 1970, p.221

The questionnaire was sent to every Hotel Receptionist of Swallow Hotels; each Head Receptionist was sent a package with enough for every member of the department. They were asked individually, by way of a covering letter, to complete the survey and return it sealed, to their head of department, in the envelope provided; this was to ensure that they knew that their answers would be confidential. Furthermore, the reply envelope was addressed to me at the university again to emphasise that the research was not carried out as part of a company operation.

The result was a 65% response rate which would have been higher if it had not been for the GPO which managed to "lose" 6 of the packages of questionnaires en

route to the university: with them the response to the survey would have been over 80%, as it was the result was unbelievable given the usual 25% to 30% response to postal questionnaires. What this indicates is a need on the part of the Hotel Receptionists working in Swallow Hotels to make their opinions known: as has been remarked previously there has been no research in to this area of a hotel's operations. It may be assumed, rightly or wrongly, that similar results could be obtained with other groups of Hotel Receptionists especially if their trust is obtained prior to them being given the opportunity to complete such a personal and comprehensive questionnaire.

### **3 The nature of the discourse: Researcher and Subject**

#### **3.1 Overt or Covert?**

'I made my decision. Sweating freely - it was a warm night - I ran back and forth with the strikers, stooping and swaying and swinging my arms in a balletic imitation of a man throwing rocks'

Roy in Habenstein, 1970, p.242

Roy believes the researcher should make his/her work and the reason(s) for being there known to the subjects of study. This then becomes an advantage because it is open and not covert, something which Becker in his definition of the role of the participant observer would allow for (Becker and Geer, 1957, p.28).

The period of time spent at the central office of Consort Hotels was the most fruitful in terms of the quantity of material gathered and its quality; in relation to making sense of the social interaction amongst, and between, the staff and management. The reason being I felt more free and able to sit and make notes as profusely as I felt the need to: I literally could make a note of everything without having to rely on my memory to recall events which has had to be the experience of ethnographic researchers before me, and after me. The effect of such an opportunity can be literally seen in the thickness of the fieldwork note files for Consort Hotels as against Swallow Hotels where, for the most part, I had to rely on my memory or scribbled shorthand notes which were then written up later in

the day when I was usually tired after having to hold facts and incidents in my head all the time that I was observing. With note taking in situ at least they could be committed to paper there and then and written up at a more leisurely time, sometimes several weeks later: my memory is not able to compete with such a facility.

However the way in which the observation notes were made may be controversial; hiding behind the pretence of reading telex messages and letters I recorded conversations verbatim and observed incidents, largely unnoticed by the staff and management, on only one occasion was I challenged to say whether I was recording what was being said and then I lied. The ethical nature of this mercenary approach is filled with doubt,

'... the sheer act of wearing disguises in someone else's world may cause discomfort, no matter what we later write in our reports; and this raises two questions. The first, of course, is whether we have the right to inflict pain at all when we are aware of these risks and the subjects of the study are not. The second, ... so long as we suspect that a method we use has at least *some* potential for harming others, we are in the extremely awkward position of having to weigh the scientific and social benefits of that procedure against its possible cost in human discomfort, and this is a difficult business under the best of circumstances'

Erikson, 1967, p.368; (Authors emphasis)

However in the strict terms in which those comments were made the approach that was adopted in this research does not qualify, though there was deliberate misrepresentation of purpose in the carrying out of the research and this would breach the spirit, if not the letter, of such a research ethic (Erikson, 1967, p.373).

For instance on one memorable occasion I was confronted in the Word Processor Room at Consort Hotels by one of the most open and trusting clerks who asked me straight out was I taking notes of what she said and before I had time to be honest she followed her question with a condition, that if I was then she would not feel able to tell me anything else. With that I lied and said that I was not taking down what they said only what they did. Well in relating that situation I have made the lie obvious and the question of ethical responsibility is mine; suffice to say that I still feel there is a need to tell all of what goes on in such places whether or not the staff would agree. Though that does not mean, as in the above incident, the identity of the person has to be revealed: all that can be claimed is

that the event took place. As for being more specific that would betray the trust that either, all of the subjects of my fieldwork have in me or, that I presume they would hold me to: and I assume there to be no difference.

### 3.2 Sitting on the fence

As Roy so aptly puts it getting, 'chummy with the opposition' can cause endless problems. The most animosity towards the research was encountered when relations between the Head Receptionist and the management were poor. Then I was treated as an 'outsider' and a 'spy' from the head office. One such episode was to do with the paranoia of the Head Receptionist towards the Personnel Manager of the company whom she thought had sent me to collect a dossier of facts against her. This resulted in mistrust amongst the staff towards me and her refusing to be interviewed. Several months later when she had been reassured that I was not a 'spy' she agreed to be interviewed - she took me into the 'inside'. Other examples of dissatisfaction towards the management of hotels were expressed as either antipathy or an uncooperative attitude towards the research and the researcher. However I also had to maintain good relations with the management of the companies within which information was being collected or else the invitation could have been terminated: so this dual threat had to be constantly lived with.

This brings the researcher back to the issue of access, one needs to be aware of the feelings of the subjects of one's fieldwork, whilst at the same time realising that the politics of the situation also place a responsibility on you in relation to the management of the hotels and of the hotel groups. All of this can go against the aims that you have for the research you want to carry out and sometimes ideals are necessarily redefined through the experience of reality; pragmatism can sometimes be the only way to remain within sight of ones personal aims of documenting the situation of for example, Hotel Receptionists and Desk Clerks. This thesis bears witness to that.

### 3.3 Getting on the inside



'... the participant-as-observer role calls for informality of relationship with a few key informants or guides over a long period of time, and perhaps more intensive immersion in the minute details of the processes being studied. The first is primarily an "outsider" role, the second an "insider" role'

Roy in Habenstein, 1970, p.218

Spending four months at Consort Hotels allowed for the development of a trust between the researcher and some of the staff which led to information/gossip being told to me that furthered my understanding of the social interaction amongst the reservation clerks and the executives of the consortium. It is a valid criticism to say that this has coloured my analysis of the context in which certain events took place, such as apparent instances of sexual harassment, and this bias in the research also comes out in the choice of material used in the background on the companies (Chapter 5) and in the thematic Chapters; 3, 6, 7 and 8. However the researcher cannot be divorced from the situation because by being there they make an effect: furthermore their interpretation of the situation will include an appreciation of all the other instances in which such behaviour was expressed (Roy in Habenstein, 1970, pp.240 and 241).

### 3.4 Personal behaviour

'It is my feeling that if major hindrances to a durable and productive field-study relationship with southern union people are to be encountered, they will be found in the behaviour (sic) of the researcher'

Roy in Habenstein, 1970, p.223

It might also be added that problems can occur when the subjects of the research have not been informed of ones arrival and/or are suspicious of the motives for it. The major obstacle to the success of the workplace fieldwork is in the behaviour of the researcher, where for instance a notebook is removed from an accommodation chart to help the staff, it is seen by the staff as a confirmation that the work that is being done is of a secretive nature and so is not in their best interests. This paranoia maybe irrational but it is a part of the reality that the researcher has to work within, maybe helped to maintain, consciously or not, even if she/he has not created it in the first place. It is the responsibility of the

researcher to remove the suspicion, however that may not always be possible for example, in the hotel where the Head of Department felt got at by the company's Personnel Manager, here all the staff thought me a strange enemy and to this day one of the receptionists will not acknowledge me in the street, something which used to hurt more than it does.

However on the whole the relationships with staff and management were good, at least in terms of getting the information that I perceived as needing, some as I say were more trusting and supplied me with the kind of material that 'Doc' in Whyte's study of *Street Corner Society* provided. A maxim which seems an appropriate way to behave, if only with the hindsight that practice and experience provides, is that given by Roy,

'A prevailing inclination to listen, heightened by genuine interest and curiosity, and suspended only long enough to ask for further relevant information or to raise pertinent questions, would carry one best, I am sure, over the long haul'

Roy in Habenstein, 1970, p.223

That has been the intention throughout the fieldwork. It is hoped that the ensuing chapters will bear this out.

## Chapter 3

### The Hotel and Tourism Industry in Great Britain

#### Introduction

This chapter will look at the ways in which the Hotel trade is defined as an economic activity. This will precede a description of the history of these commercial establishments from their beginnings as places of hospitality to the traveller on the road. This will be followed by an analysis of the structure of the Hotel trade using data drawn from various sources. Finally, using information taken from government sources it will be shown how important overseas and domestic tourism is to the economy and as a source of employment.

#### 1 How is the hotel trade identified?

##### 1.1 What is a hotel?

A hotel is identified in the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1976) as a, 'House for accommodation of travellers etc., (usually) large inn.' The word is derived from the French, 'Hotel' being a later form of, 'hostel' which was derived from the Latin for, 'hospital' where travellers were taken care of. During the medieval period the term hostel or inn was used. We still use the terms innkeeper, and more recently hotelier ('hostelier' in the middle ages) to describe the owner and/or manager of such establishments.

The legal definition of a hotel today is,

'an establishment held out by the proprietor as offering food, drink and, if so required, sleeping accommodation, without special contract, to any traveller presenting himself who appears able and willing to pay a reasonable sum for the services provided and who is in a fit state to be received'

## Hotel Proprietors Act, 1956, s.1(3)

If the proprietor of the hotel wishes to call their establishment a hotel then they must welcome all customers and accept responsibility for their property. If the bill is not paid then the proprietor has the right under law to hold and sell the customers property until it is paid, this is referred to as *lien* in law and is unique to England (Innkeepers' Act, 1878).

Tourist accommodation is defined by the Development of Tourism Act 1969 as,

'hotels or other establishments at which sleeping accommodation is provided by way of trade or business.'

## Development of Tourism Act, 1969

Whilst the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC 1968) places Hotels and Other Residential Establishments under the Minimum List Heading 884 and within the Miscellaneous Services group as follows,

'Hotels, motels, holiday camps, guest houses, boarding houses, hostels and similar establishments providing furnished accommodation with food and service for reward but excluding licensed or residential clubs, which are included in Heading 887.'

## SIC 1968

in the SIC 1980, Hotels and Catering are placed in Division 6 (Distribution, Hotels and Catering; Repairs) which comes under those industries known collectively as Services, as opposed to Manufacturing.

Division 6 is sub-divided into seven classes, with two of them (Hotels and Catering; Repairs of Consumer Goods and Vehicles) divided into several groups. The result is as follows,

61: Wholesale Distribution (Motor Vehicles and Repairs; Remainder of Wholesale Distribution)

62: Dealing in Scrap and Waste Materials

63: Commission Agents

64 and 65: Retail Distribution, (Motor Vehicles and Parts), Filling Stations, Remainder of Retail Distribution

66: Hotels and Catering; 6611, Eating Places for supplying food for consumption on the premises; 6612, Take-away food shops; 6620, Public Houses and Bars; 6630, Night Clubs and Licensed Clubs; 6640, Canteens and Messes; **6650, Hotel trade**; 6670, Other Tourist or Short stay accommodation

67: Repair of Consumer Goods and Vehicles; 6710, Repair and Servicing of Motor Vehicles; 6720, Repair of Footwear and Leather Goods; 6730, Repair of other consumer goods

As a category it holds very little analytical or economic significance. It serves as a further pointer to the empirical variety concealed within the idea of a “service sector” (Department of Employment, August 1987, p.336). This will be obvious when the issue of employment generating potential is considered in the final section of this chapter.

The aim of the SIC 1968, and presumably SIC 1980, was,

‘to promote uniformity and comparability in official statistics of the United Kingdom’

Burkart and Medlik, 1974, p.151

Medlik describes any attempts to divide the hotel and catering industry into component sectors as a choice between a handful of relatively homogeneous groups, as in SIC 1980 (Class 66), or a multiplicity of groupings. The compromise, he claims, will be ‘rough’ (Medlik and Airey, 1978, pp.1-7 and 69).

Furthermore the classification uses a firm’s commercial element as the criteria for adjudication. As hotels are run to make a profit this poses less of a problem than with the more vague term catering. For example, in the SIC 1968 all forms of catering that are operated as a service and not at a profit are excluded from the Minimum List Heading 884 for example, school and industrial canteens. Consequently Medlik is content with the looseness of the SIC 1968 division of the industry into, ‘five reasonably homogeneous component sectors’; ‘Hotels and other residential establishments; Restaurants, Cafes and Snack Bars; Public Houses; Clubs; Catering Contractors.’ The result is that to use the term ‘hotel and catering industry’ becomes an obstacle when trying to make sense of the industry’s component parts.

## 1.2 The history of the Tourism industry

In 1539 the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII provided a stimulus to the growth of inns which offered lodging, for payment, to travellers. Though not necessarily supplying alcoholic liquor for consumption on the premises. These travellers were pilgrims, persons conducting business or on some official purpose.

There was little foreign travel in the medieval period. This continued until the 19th century, with private journeys being made first for educational purposes and then for the satisfying of one's curiosity. This developed into the 'Grand Tour' of Europe by the young and wealthy who went around acquiring pieces of art to adorn their English homes (Burkart and Medlik, 1974, pp.3-4).

The word 'hotel' became used in England after 1760 with the introduction into London of a type of establishment common in Paris called 'hotel garni'; a large house with apartments let daily, weekly or by the month. Although not as luxurious or as ostentatious as that found throughout Europe and especially in France. Those kind of hotels with page boys, liveried porters, receptionists and managers only appeared in England during the 19th century. However, it was only in the latter years of that century did they develop as rapidly as they had done on the continent, especially Switzerland, where the resort hotel had originated (Medlik and Airey, 1978, p.33).

The word 'Tourism' is a modern conception appearing only in the English language in the early 19th century. It had more to do with a voyage than being away from home temporarily for business and/or pleasure which is how tourism is generally conceived of today. The idea of leisure, as the precursor of a domestic tourism industry, only comes into British society in the late 19th century and is associated with health spas and seaside resorts. As travel was still relatively expensive prior to the age of the railway and leisure was considered a luxury then these activities were confined to the wealthy (Burkart and Medlik, 1974, pp.3-4).

Prior to the construction of the railways, which began early in the 19th century, the most usual form of travel was the horse which like the use of the car is an individualised form of transport. Whereas the advent of the stage and mail coaches represented a move towards more social modes of transportation of people and goods. This is paralleled in the 20th century with trains, buses and aircraft - for those who can afford them!

As the growth in commercial trade developed in the 18th and 19th centuries there was a greater demand for well maintained roads because those that were available were constructed and maintained by the local population. Which as

long distance trade began developing were no longer the only users, let alone the predominant ones. So this prompted the building of the turnpike road as a commercial venture by local landowners, whereby the users of the road would be charged a toll for travelling along it. By 1838 there were 22,000 miles of turnpike roads open representing a fifth of the public roads of the country; a nationwide network based on a local road system, and as such largely inadequate for the volume of traffic that used them (Burkart and Medlik, 1974, pp.6-7).

As the roads improved so did the provision of coaching services. Prior to the mid-17th century the service was centred along individual towns and radial villages and hamlets. By 1791 there were more than 17,000 miles of mail coach route. In the early 19th century this constituted something like a national network of public passenger transport. In addition to mail passengers were carried. As there had to be frequent stops to change horses there was a need to provide transit stops which took the form of inns. These were run by people contracted to the Post Office and provided food and accommodation to Post Office employees and the travelling passengers in addition to the primary service of stabling facilities (Burkart and Medlik, 1974, pp.7-8). One example of such a transit inn is The White Swan, Alnwick which has the original archway which would have led to the stable area and now leads to the staff living quarters. It is now a Swallow hotel.

Accommodation for travellers may be considered in two ways. The traveller requires accommodation at his destination and for journeys which cannot be concluded in a single day which means an overnight stay in transit. The distinction between transit and terminal accommodation is not absolute but it serves the purpose of establishing the link between advances in modes of transportation and the development of domestic and international tourism.

With the growth in travel in the 18th century there appeared in London a hotel which catered primarily for families rather than single travellers. This can be seen to be a prototype for the contemporary hotel. The development of accommodation at destinations, so to speak, continued in seaside resorts and inland health towns. However the substantial developments of the terminal hotel came about through the volume and type of traffic that was associated with the railway. The small movements of people, albeit on an increasingly large scale, along the roads only required more inns rather than necessarily larger ones. With the mass movement of people between towns and cities due to the train there needed to be larger places of accommodation at the destination rather than in transit. The development of the railway reduced the need for transit accommodation from its peak at the beginning of the 19th century (Burkart and Medlik, 1974, pp.8-9).

The process was a gradual one. According to Ruffs Hotel guide in 1902 there were 70 hotels owned or controlled by the railway companies for example, The Central Hotel, Glasgow; The Station Hotel, Newcastle. (In 1986 British Transport Hotels sold the last of their hotels which included The Gleneagles in Scotland). As the demand for railway travel grew and the stagecoach were used less frequently so the demand for transit inns collapsed (Burkart and Medlik, 1974, pp.11-13 and 17-18).

As was noted earlier by 1838 there were 22,000 miles of turnpike road similarly by 1845 the railway system covered 22,000 miles of line linking all of the major cities to London. We can still see the effect of this today with the various stations serving different parts of the country, though now trains coming out of St. Pancras and Kings Cross do not vie with each other in the race to carry profit making passengers. By 1881 the railways were carrying 623 million passengers over lines operated by over 100 companies (Burkart and Medlik, 1974, p.12).

The railway companies thought that a shortage in accommodation would reduce the amount of rail travel so the addition of large units of accommodation in London and particularly in the provinces was achieved by and for the use of the railway. The interdependence of the railways and the hotels is emphasised by the fact that the revenue from the hotel bed was backed by the purchase of a ticket on the railway.

London was, and still is, a special case though. Hotel development in the provinces was influenced by the large volume of internal travel in Britain. However the development of London as a world centre of power and trade through the Empire contributed as much as the railways to the evolution of hotel accommodation. This attraction brought more visitors than could be accommodated privately especially amongst the railway hotels. By the end of the 19th century the pressure of demand for hotel accommodation prompted a considerable development in the West End of London.

In London as well as in other large cities in America and Europe the ownership and management of the large hotels began to come under the organisation of a company. This in part reflected the opportunities made under the early company legislation but more importantly the capital needed to build the type of large scale hotels needed in London was outside the scope of the personal entrepreneur. The hotel company appeared on the scene (Burkart and Medlik, 1974, p.19). The last years of Victoria's reign not only marked the end of the expansion of the empire and of great national wealth but also the beginning of the Ritz era of hotel keeping; the man who became known as, 'The Hotelier of Kings and the King of Hoteliers.' The Edwardian period was the zenith of the luxury hotel development,



serving a minority of wealthy families expecting immense comfort and style in an overly lavish manner.

The Swiss Cesar Ritz opened The Hotel Victoria, accommodating 500 customers, off Trafalgar Square, London in 1887. D'Oyly Carte, the Irish businessman, opened the Savoy in 1889 and Ritz took over the management of it shortly after. Under the Ritz Development Company, the Hotel Cecil, 1896; the new Claridges in 1898 and the Carlton in 1899 developed into a network of luxury Ritz hotels (Medlik and Airey, 1978, p.37). This began to establish London as the most important source of top class hotel accommodation in Britain. The main area of luxury hotels in London is between the Strand and Hyde Park Corner and dates from building carried out earlier this century. Between 1927 and 1932 some of London's most famous hotels were built; The Park Lane, The Mayfair Hotel, The Dorchester and The Strand Palace. However hotels such as The Savoy become more than just places to sleep and to have a meal, their international reputations make them into sightseeing commodities (Burkart and Medlik, 1974, p.19).

Attempts were also being made in the provinces to improve facilities for travellers offered by the transit inn and hotel and the establishment of Trust Houses were set up in 1903, originally in Hertfordshire, was a recognition of the business potential of serving the traveller who was more mobile. Popular travel would only come with the the development of the motor car but this was a beginning of the move away from leisure and travel being only for the wealthy elite (Burkart and Medlik, 1974, p.19).

Trust Houses merged with Forte Hotels some 67 years later to form Trusthouse Forte hotels in 1970. In 1957 Grand Hotels (Mayfair), now Grand Metropolitan, became a quoted company. Since the late 1950's these companies have been consolidating their positions in the industry becoming the two largest hotel groups in Britain. With Trusthouse Forte now the largest hotel company in Britain, by number of bedrooms, and one of the largest in the world (see Table 6a).

It was not until motor transport became a popular mode of transport in the 20th century that transit accommodation was once again in demand (Burkart and Medlik, 1974, pp.9 and 17). Michelin published its first hotel guide - in France - in 1900: and in 1911 the Automobile Association produced its first guide to hotels for its motoring membership. It was the use of the car for short and medium-length journeys that was the major cause in the decline of the railways after the 1st World War (Burkart and Medlik, 1974, pp.19 and 26).

One of the effects of the 1st World War was the experience for a large part of the population of using motorised vehicles as well as travelling abroad. A part of

the personal prize of victory was the expectation of a material life made better through consumer goods and services of which motor cars and travel were but two. For example, the annual holiday was established during the inter-war years - if only for the employed! Though the economic circumstances to make these a reality did not come until after World War 2 (Burkart and Medlik, 1974, pp.24 and 29).

The use of the motor car has extended the opportunity to take day trips and weekend breaks in the way that using public transport could not make practicable. This had rejuvenated the need for transit hotels and elsewhere the motel and the post house. During the years of the Hotel Development Scheme (which is discussed later in this chapter) Trust Houses Forte created a new division to cater for the businessman with the company car, they called it Post House Hotels. In taking advantage of a business opportunity the industry has turned full circle. In fact all hotel companies in Britain had the opportunity to expand during the 1970's as a result of the stimulus to hotel building and expansion given by the Government through the Development of Tourism Act 1969 (Dronfield and Soto, 1980, pp.10-11).

## **2 Ownership of hotels; size and location**

### **2.1 Size of the industry**

The overall trend in Table 1 shows a decrease in the number of units providing accommodation, food and beverage services for domestic and overseas tourists on holiday and business. The Censuses for 1971 and 1981 indicate a reduction of 12,203 units. What is disconcerting is the extent of the disagreement as to the actual number of units either now or at the beginning of the 1970's.

Medlik and Airey conclude that of the available sources of estimates on the total number of units in the industry the, 'best estimate' is made by the Hotel and Catering Economic Development Committee's (HCEDC), *'Hotel Prospects to 1985'* report. They also cite the Licensed Residential Establishment and Licensed Restaurant Wages Council which indicated that there were 23,913 units and the Fire Precautions (Hotels and Boarding Houses) Order 1972 which listed 40,144

**Table 1 Total number of Hotels and Other Residential Tourist Establishments (boarding houses, motels) in Great Britain and the UK, 1970-1984**

Year	Census	CSO	HCIMA	HCEDC	IGD
1970				35,500	
1971	31,985				
1974				33,659	
1980		14,281			
1981	19,782	13,929			
1982		13,385			
1983		12,902			10,140 (53,130)
1984		12,934	22,000		11,635 (53,390)

Sources: Census of 1971 and 1981; Central Statistics Office, Annual Abstract of Statistics 1987; Hotel, Catering and Institutional Management Association broadsheet; Hotel and Catering Economic Development Committee, 1980 and 1985; Marketpower 1983 and 1984

premises. Whilst the HCEDC report states that there are 33,659 hotel and boarding house establishments in Britain on 1st January 1974 (Medlik and Airey, 1978, p.73). They applaud it as,

‘The most up-to-date analysis of the size structure of British hotels in terms of bedrooms’

Medlik and Airey, 1978, p.138

Four years earlier Burkart and Medlik wrote of the, ‘Hotel Prospects to 1980’ that it was,

‘The most comprehensive assessment ever made of accommodation capacity... in Britain’

Burkart and Medlik, 1974, p.153

It is not possible to say whether these reports are accurate. They follow the trend clearly shown by the Censuses of 1971 and 1981 but from different starting points. What is puzzling is why the 1971 Census shows a marked decline in the number of units from that indicated in the HCEDC report of 1970 which is then

reversed 3 years later by the next HCEDC report published in 1974. It maybe true that in one year over 3500 owners of hotels and boarding houses quit the trade whilst over the next three years an additional 2000 units were established. Or it could be that the HCEDC estimates are just that and often inaccurate ones.

The HCEDC report of 1970 includes figures for Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. However the same committee's report in 1974 only has figures for Great Britain which excludes Northern Ireland, though there is no reason given as to why the parameters for data collection were changed. The Censuses are also restricted to Great Britain.

Further discrepancies are to be found in the 'official' figures published by the Business Statistics Office (BSO) and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS). The BSO claim that in 1981 there were 13,929 units, 5853 less than the OPCS figure of 19,782. The BSO's figures range from 14,281 for 1980 to 12,934 for 1984. Here also there is disagreement as to the accuracy of this claim. The Hotel and Catering Institutional Management Association (HCIMA) state that there are 22,000 hotels and guest houses in the United Kingdom in 1984. That would mean there were nearly 10,000 units in Northern Ireland. Whilst further confusion is caused by the reports by Marketpower on behalf of the Institute of Grocery Distribution which claims that in 1983 there were 10,140 hotels and in 1984 11,635 units. Their classification for a hotel starts at a minimum of 11 letting rooms. If one includes hotels, boarding houses and farmhouses which provide overnight accommodation then the figures for 1983 and 1984 are 53,130 and 53,390 units respectively.

It is difficult to criticise these figures when they are derived from an organisation which is directly involved in the hotel and catering industry and which were obtained for marketing purposes so are likely to be accurate. However it does mean that none of the published figures have been verified by any other set of figures. Which could well be because, as these last set of results points to, the basis upon which they have been calculated, especially the criteria for defining a hotel that is, the number of letting bedrooms, is not uniform. Until this has been established then it is difficult to conclude as to the size of the hotel trade.

## 2.2 Bedroom stock by category of unit size

With reference to Table 2 the total number of units has decreased by 12,203 between 1971 and 1981. This represents 38% of the 1971 total of 31,985. The availability of hotels and boarding houses in the size categories up to 99 rooms

**Table 2a Total number of Hotels and Boarding Houses in Great Britain, 1971 and 1981**

Year	Hotels and Boarding house unit size;							Total
	1-10	10-14	15-24	25-49	50-99	100-199	200+	
1971	10,625	10,075	6,435	3,190	1,215	335	115	31,985
1981	3,203	6,294	5,463	2,968	1,205	459	190	19,782
Unit change +/-	-7422	-3781	-972	-222	-10	124	75	-12203
Percentage +/-	-70	-37.5	-15	-7	-0.8	37	65	-38

Source: Census of 1971 and 1981

**Table 2b Change in the number of Hotels and Boarding Houses, 1971 to 1981**

Year	Hotels and Boarding House unit size;			
	1-99	% share	100+	% share
1971	31,540	98.6	450	1.4
1981	19,133	96.7	649	3.7
Unit change +/-	-12,407		199	

Source: Census of 1971 and 1981

have declined by 12,407 representing the vast majority of the total. However the availability of hotels with 100 rooms or more has gone up by 199, increasing their total unit market share from 1.4% in 1971 to 3.3% in 1981. This does not mean there are more than double the number of hotels in this category as the figures are calculated as a % of the total units for that year and do not show absolute increases in numbers of units in those categories.

The stock of bedrooms has fallen by 70,877 between 1971 and 1981, representing a decline of 12% on the 1971 figure of 578,885 rooms in hotels and boarding houses. The figure for rooms does not automatically indicate the total number of bedspaces available since the rooms could be of single or multi-occupancy. It is hotel trade practice to multiply the rooms available figure by 150% to take this into account. In the 1970's the figure for bedspaces could be quite easily doubled as people were more likely to be prepared to share in order to save money on the hotel bill. This is no longer necessarily the case and twin-bedded and double bedded rooms are being occupied by single occupants. This then disguises the true availability of bedspaces. Not only has the number of rooms fallen but the

availability of bedspaces has fallen at an even faster rate as customer preferences have moved away from sharing to being by oneself in a hotel bedroom.

Within this total of lost bedrooms in the size categories up to 99 rooms, 119,231 rooms have been taken out of the market. Whilst in the categories of units above 100 rooms, 48,354 rooms have been added to the available stock. The share of rooms in these categories out of the total available has risen from 14.3% in 1971 to 25.8% in 1981.

The difference between the structure of the hotel and boarding house market in 1971 and 1981 is seen more clearly in Table 3 showing the average size of units in each of the categories. Only in the categories of hotels with 100 or more rooms has there been a significant increase; by 40 rooms for the 100-199 size and by 32 rooms for the 200+ category.

These figures show that the average size of accommodation units has decreased. The availability of units in the categories of less than 10 rooms, 10-14 and 15-24 rooms has greatly increased. This may be accounted for by bankruptcy amongst the smaller units or else rooms have been added to upgrade them into a higher category. The figures indicate that this may be the case. Furthermore there has been a greater decrease in the market share in the 10-14 room category (20% to 14.5%) than in the 15-24 category (20.4% to 19.9%) which remains the mode category in 1981. However market share % can not disguise the fact that nearly 17,000 bedrooms have been lost from this category in the same period. So it is likely that if any units have been upgraded from the lower size categories the figures are relatively small.

In 1971 the two mode categories were 15-24 rooms (20.4%) and 10-14 rooms (20.2%). In 1981 this is changed and the two mode categories are 15-24 rooms (19.9%) and 25-49 rooms (19.5%) with the category 50-99 rooms taking 15.9% of the share to the 10-14 category's 14.5%. It is not that these categories have greatly increased their share. In all but the largest of these categories they have shed rooms at a greater rate than has happened in the accommodation market as a whole. It is that more than 95,000 rooms have been lost out of the guest house, small hotels and other tourist accommodation market since 1971. It is this which has contributed to the significant changes in structure of the hotel industry. Where the gains have been are in the units of 100-199 and 200+ rooms. During the 1970's 199 additional hotels were built in these two categories adding 48,354 rooms to the bedroom stock which had shrunk in the lower categories by 119,231 rooms. which meant that despite the increases there was an overall decrease of 12% in available accommodation.

**Table 3a Total Bedroom stock available in Great Britain, 1971 and 1981**

Year	Hotels and Boarding Houses with rooms;														
	1-9	%	10-14	%	15-24	%	25-49	%	50-99	%	100-199	%	200+	%	Total
1971	74,625	12.9	117,190	20.2	118,020	20.4	105,570	18.2	80,870	14.0	43,350	7.5	39,260	6.8	578,885
1981	22,420	4.4	73,696	19.9	101,060	19.9	98,928	19.5	80,940	15.9	59,997	11.8	70,967	14.0	508,008
Rooms	-52,205		-43,494		-16,960		-6642		70		16,647		31,707		-70,877
%	-70		-37		-14		-6		0.8		38		81		-12

Note: % = Share of total accommodation for that year

Source: Census of 1971 and 1981

**Table 3b Detail of Accommodation Gains and Losses in Great Britain, 1971-1981**

Year	Hotels and Boarding Houses with rooms;			
	1-99	%	100+	%
1971	496,275	85.7	82,610	14.3
1981	377,044	74.2	130,964	25.8
Room change +/-	-119,231		48,354	

Note: % = Share of total accommodation in that year.

Source: Census of 1971 and 1981

**Table 3c Average number of Rooms per unit by unit size in Great Britain, 1971 and 1981**

Year	Hotels and Boarding with rooms;						
	1-9	10-14	15-24	25-49	50-99	100-199	200+
1971	7.0	11.6	18.3	33.0	66.5	129.4	341.4
1981	6.9	11.7	18.5	33.3	67.2	179.1	373.5

Source: Census of 1971 and 1981

It is unfortunate that the classification stops where it does and does not unpack the 200+ category in more detail. The majority of hotels with 200+ rooms are to be found in London where units of more than 1000 rooms are available and

**Table 4a The Top 50 Hotel Companies in the UK in 1985**

Hotel chain	UK Rank	Rooms	Hotels	Ownership
Trusthouse Forte	1	20,798	191	19 hotels are also members of consortia
Ladbroke	2	6105	48	Bought Comfort Hotels at the end of 1984
Crest	3	6023	52	Bass
Mount Charlotte	4	6200	51	Bought the Skean Dhu hotels, adding 1000 rooms
Queens Moat Ho.	5	4612	58	
Thistle	6	4511	35	Scottish & Newcastle
Swallow	7	3190	31	Vaux Breweries
GW hotels	8	2947	35	Greenall Whitley. It bought De Vere Hotels adding 1590 rooms
Imperial London	9	2778	7	Based almost entirely in London
Embassy	10	2558	39	Allied Lyons
Stakis	11	2408	27	
Rank	12	2247	6	Rank Organisation
Cmnwlth Hol. Inns	13	2034	9	The major franchisee of Holiday Inns and is a subsidiary of Scotts Hospitality, Canada
Metropole	14	1965	6	Lonrho
Holiday Inns	15	1891	8	Controls all Holiday Inns in GB except CHI's
Butlins	16	1463	7	Rank Organisation
Intercontinental	17	1461	4	Grand Metropolitan
Sheraton	18	1443	5	ITT Corporation
Hilton Int'l	19	1440	3	United Airlines-Allegis
Anchor	20	1333	29	Imperial Group Allied Lyons
Forum	21	1303	3	Grand Metropolitan
Sarova	22	1205	7	
Norfolk Capital	23	1199	11	
Edwardian	24	1092	7	Based solely in London
Novotel	25	1087	5	Accor Group

given the complexity of the hotel trade and the particular significance of London it would be important to chart the growth over a variety of large hotels over this decade. It was in London rather than in the provinces that the main effect of the Government's capital incentive scheme for accommodation building was felt during this decade and it was during this period that the distinction between the hotel trade in London and the provinces was formalised (Dronfield and Soto, 1980, pp.10-11).



**Table 4a The Top 50 Hotel Companies in the UK in 1985 - Part 2**

Hotel chain	UK Rank	Rooms	Hotels	Ownership
Berni Inns	26	1000	27	Grand Metropolitan
Gleneagles	27	999	4	Bell & Sons, whisky distillers
C G Hotels	28	999	8	Solely based in London
Barclays Assoc.	29	997	5	The group includes Camerons Brewery
London Park	30	990	5	
Virani	31	990	11	The group bought 8 of the British Tspt. hotels
Seymours	32	973	5	Tourist market hotels
Penta	33	930	2	The majority shareholder is Lufthansa
North British	34	910	15	All its hotels are unclassified and old stock
Britannia	35	853	3	Based in Manchester
Aer Lingus	36	850	1	The only UK hotel is the London Tara
Whitbread	37	942	35	Whitbread & Co.
Prince of Wales	38	835	9	Subject to several takeover bids
Normandie Ho.	39	747	2	Based in London within the conference market
Scottish Highl'd	40	765	12	Almost exclusively in Scotland
Allied of Sctl'd	41	696	7	All its hotels are in Scotland
Savoy	42	662	4	Continued takeover pressure from THF hotels
Churchill	43	605	2	Both are in London
Bhattessa	44	601	4	All hotels are in London through acquisition
Modern Group	45	578	4	All four unclassified hotels are in Jersey
Barbican City	46	575	2	Both are in the Consort Hotels consortium
TAJ Int'l	47	566	2	TAJ Indian hotel Company
Norscott	48	565	8	All the hotels are in Scotland
Welcome Inns	49	528	32	Scottish & Newcastle
FJB Hotels	50	494	5	Based in Bournemouth for the conference market

Note: The original research excluded hotel consortiums. The following table indicates their place in the market as if they had been included.

Source: Caterer & Hotelkeeper, 11.4.85, pages 55-62; based entirely on research carried out by the Hotel and Catering Research Centre, Huddersfield Polytechnic

With reference to Table 4 the "Top 20" hotel companies in 1984 had a combined total of 77,407 letting bedrooms. Based on the 1981 Census this would mean that they shared 15% of the total. This situation is unchanged from 1974 (HCEDC, 1976, p.1). In that year the two largest groups accounted for 5% of the

**Table 4b The Major UK Hotel Consortiums in 1985**

Consortium	Rooms	Hotels	UK Ranking
Consort		185	3
Best Western	8000	170	2
Inter		103	4
Prestige	1800	22	

Source: Financial Times Survey; UK Hotels and Catering, 18.1.84

letting bedrooms, in 1984 Trusthouse Forte with 20,798 rooms had a market share of 4%. As has been noted before this company has expanded through the fortunes of such things as the HDI Scheme as well as the takeover of smaller hotel companies who find themselves unable to compete with the marketing and purchasing power of the national companies. As an alternative the individual entrepreneur can join a hotel consortium such as those listed in Table 4b.

However it needs to be remembered that the figures quoted in these tables are only as accurate as the published data and with for example, Consort Hotels expanding each year the figures are of historical rather than contemporary relevance. Until there is a replacement for the HCEDC and the government improves the accuracy of the statistical information on the hotel trade this will continue to be so.

### 2.3 The Hotel Development Incentive Scheme, 1968-1971

In May 1968 the Hotel Development Incentive Scheme (HDIS) was put into effect in advance of the Development of Tourism Act 1969. This Bill was proposed by Mr Crosland, the President of the Board of Trade, the aim being ostensibly to increase the availability of hotel accommodation (Hansard, Vol. 778, c.1942). The government saw tourism as a means of providing revenue and employment for this country through the spending by overseas visitors to Great Britain (Hansard, Vol.778, c.1941). Crosland in his speech for the 2nd Reading of his Bill quoted figures for the export earning potential of Tourism comparing it, 'favourably' to that of other industries (Hansard, Vol.778, c.1941; ETB, 1976, p.5). This was directly coupled with the government's Regional Policy programme to aid Development Areas (HDI Command paper 3633, 1968, pp.3,4 and 6; ETB, 1976, p.6).

However what was not of immediate concern, at least in Crosland's speech, was the import-saving potential of domestic tourism. The more people holidaying in Britain and the fewer the number of UK residents going abroad for a holiday would increase the volume of domestic tourism expenditure and its impact on the invisible account of the Balance of Payments (Hansard, Vol.778, c.2012).

Development Areas were categorised as those parts of the country where unemployment is at a socially unacceptable level for a variety of reasons. One of these is the structural change from manufacturing to "services" with the advent of developments in technology. Accompanied by the substitution of consumer services for tangible goods. Another is the decline in export markets for our manufactured goods and the reduced levels of extractable minerals. In a report by the HCEDC (1968 a) it was stated that the hotel and catering trade has a role to play in the economic development of the regions. Because of the potential for tourism development in these areas which will in turn provide the necessary infrastructure to encourage economic development (p.4)

This remains the central thrust for the present Conservative government's initiatives since 1980. For example Garden Festivals located in the most economically depressed areas such as Liverpool, Glasgow, Newcastle and now Ebbw Vale in the South Welsh valleys: and the developments in the dockland areas on the Thames, Clyde and Mersey. All of these have the intention of improving the area aesthetically as well as providing inexpensive locations for new industry to locate there. With that will come employment. For Gateshead having the Garden Festival has allowed for 25 years of redevelopment money being made available to the Planning department over a period of 3 years ( Director of the Gateshead Garden Festival at a Conference on Regional Tourism).

However there was some disagreement concerning whether the government should be subsidising the expansion of the Hotel trade in such industrial depressed areas where tourists do not go (Hansard, Vol.778,c.2024, 2025 and 2036). Though some of the 'grey areas' were considered tourist sites (HCEDC, 1968 a, p.4). Crosland was not clear as to whether the aim of the Bill was to help the rural or the industrial development areas (Hansard, Vol.778,c.1945; HCEDC, 1975, p.2). This confusion was clearly unsatisfactory with the scheme having a budget of \$11 million per year (Hansard, Vol.778,c.1953).

The aim of the scheme was quite simply,

'...to stimulate investment in medium and lower-priced accommodation for which the need is likely to be greatest'

HDIS, 1968, p.5

One estimate that the government had been given was that letting bedrooms were being added at the rate of 3000 per year (Hansard, Vol.778, c.1953). However the report, *'Investments in Hotel and Catering', (1968)* questions whether this figure is no more than replacing accommodation going out of use (p.iii). Their calculations were showing a short-fall in accommodation provision especially in London of 65,000 letting bedrooms (ETB, 1976, p.2) One MP echoed this when he claimed that in order to take advantage of the new age in passenger transport heralded by the 'Jumbo' jet then 40,000-50,000 bedrooms would have to be added over a two year period (Hansard, Vol.785, c.1403; ETB, 1976, p.9).

It was decided that the minimum number of letting bedrooms an establishment had to have before it could qualify for the grants and loans was ten. In London the figure was twenty five, (Hansard, Vol.778, c.1966). These minimums were set to encourage units with less than 10 rooms to increase their number because the level of new hotel accommodation being added to the stock was showing a future shortfall position in supply. And given the long lead time before capital nets a return in the hotel industry, especially construction, the government was advised to stimulate building above the 'estimated' rate of 3000 rooms or about 5000 bedspaces per year.

A lower limit of ten letting bedrooms was set below which it was thought that subsidy would not succeed in developing such units. Finally, the scheme set the lower limit to directly assist those areas of the country where the tourist market is seasonal, usually the Summer months, and where the average size of units will be smaller (perhaps a home or farmhouse) than in urban areas where advantage can be taken of the business and conference market which is on a yearly basis (HDI, p.5; Hansard, Vol.778, c.1943 and 1966). As well as giving the maximum incentive to small units to expand in the hope that this would create employment within the regions. That is why the MP's were so insistent on emphasising the import-saving potential of domestic tourism and so derisory of the economic advantages of, 'a few hundred thousand more Americans to visit Stratford-upon-Avon, Edinburgh or Wales'(Hansard, Vol.778, c.2012).

The incentives to build were of two kinds,

'(1) Hotel Development grants will be available for new hotels; for extensions to existing hotels which provide more bedrooms for letting; and for some items of fixed plant and equipment in connection with improvement schemes.

(2) Loan assistance will be available in appropriate cases towards financing new hotels and extensions and improvements to existing hotels'

HDIS, 1968, p.5

The rates of grants were 20% for new hotels, extensions and certain items of fixed plant and equipment, with a limit of £1000 per bedroom or whichever was the smaller. This was increased to 25% or £1250 for Development Areas. The ceiling figures were designed to encourage the building of additional rooms onto hotels which were in the medium and lower priced market catering in future years to the inclusive tour holiday market.

Loans of up to 30% and, in exceptional cases, 40% were given to assist in new hotel building or extensions up to £500,000 for any one project. This kind of financial help was to be given to new hotel companies which would not be able to raise enough capital to cover their building plans. The repayment period of twenty years and the capitalisation of interest for new hotels could be deferred for 3 years. Giving in total 23 years in which to repay the loans. This means that there could still be repayments being made on loans taken out as far back as 1968, and this could still continue till 1991 (HDIS, 1968, pp.6-8).

The scheme ran for 3 years, from 1 April 1968 to 31 March 1971, with all building work started within these limits, and completed by 31 March 1973, qualifying for the grants and loan assistance available (HDIS, 1968, p.10).

Crosland anticipated spending about £3 million per year on grants against capital raised by the hotel companies of £15 million. With the additional assumption that only 75% of all building work would be eligible for grants. So the government would put in £3 million for every £20 million invested privately. This would give a gearing of 15% as opposed to 20% as laid down in the Command paper (see above). In addition an anticipated £5 million gross would be given as loans, repayable with interest at government lending rates (HDI, p.0).

However these calculations were wrong. According to Medlik and Airey £50 million was paid in grants to the industry during the 3 year period of the scheme.

A rate of nearly £17 million per year rather than the estimated £3 million made by the government in 1968 (Medlik and Airey, 1978, p.29).

Table 5 shows how the HDI scheme increased the rate of additional bedroom stock from 2000 per year to more than six times that figure on average over the three years of the scheme (Medkik and Airey, 1978, p.129). The government's original estimated figure was 3000 additional bedrooms per year which would make the rate of increase only four times (HDIS, 1968, p.4). As with the figures for the actual number of rooms there is no precise bench mark which can be used to judge the effectiveness of the scheme. This is lamentable given the sums of money involved and the industry's response to the financial incentives.

From the outset the scheme was prone to abuse. The Command paper had stipulated the moral framework the industry should operate within,

'But the industry must play its part in providing the right kinds of accommodation in the right places to cater for growth and to make it easier for tourists to enjoy visiting all parts of the country, not just London or the best known tourist centres'

HDIS, 1968, p.12

Responsibility for discriminating between rural and urban areas was left in the hands of the hotel companies and owners rather than under the supervision of the national and regional tourist boards which could have had a clearer idea of what was required for that particular area for example seaside resort, countryside, urban location, bed & breakfast (ETB, 1976, pp.27-28). In fact it was Crosland who made it clear that he was not concerned with the, 'parochial' viewpoint but with the national picture (Hansard, Vol,778, c.1949).

The result was an increase in accommodation in London by 20,852 bedrooms representing 38.1% of all constructions, with the rest of England accounting for 46.3% and with Scotland and Wales on 7.8% each (see Table 6a). Giving a total of 54,722 rooms for Great Britain (HCEDC, 1974). The large urban areas of the West Midlands also benefitted. There was a massive upgrading in the size of units in the cities of Birmingham and Manchester from a mode size category of units with less than 10 rooms to 100-199 rooms (1971 and 1981 Censuses). Although the largest single concentration of beds can be found in the 200+ letting bedrooms category we can see that it was in the medium to large units that overall more bedrooms were added (see Tables 6b and 6c). And that either the smaller unit went out of business or was upgraded in size.

**Table 5 New Hotel Construction in Great Britain, 1970-1973**

Year	New hotels		Extensions		All constructions		All constructions %	
	Units	Rooms	Units	Rooms	Units	Rooms	Units	Rooms
<b>London(a)</b>								
1970								
1971		1698	21	684	32	2382		
1972	21	3786	23	968	44	4754		
1973	34	10,448	18	1128	52	11,576		
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>17,621</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>3231</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>20,852</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>38.1</b>
<b>England(a)</b>								
1970	40	1670	54	1123	94	2793		
1971	44	1872	118	2397	162	4269		
1972	90	5164	121	2797	211	7961		
1973	96	7822	86	2528	182	10,350		
<b>Total</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>16,528</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>8845</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>25,373</b>	<b>56.2</b>	<b>46.3</b>
<b>Scotland(b)</b>								
1970	5	346	13	223	18	569		
1971	7	433	14	433	21	866		
1972	7	576	22	694	29	1270		
1973	15	1304	15	264	30	1568		
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>2659</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>1614</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>4273</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>7.8</b>
<b>Wales(b)</b>								
1970-71	10	111	17	150	27	261		
1971-72	11	135	33	314	44	449		
1972-73	67	2521	113	1043	180	3564		
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>2767</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>1507</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>4274</b>	<b>21.8</b>	<b>7.8</b>
<b>Great Britain</b>								
1970-73	470	39,575	684	15,197	1154	54,772	100.0	100.0

(a) New hotels or extensions of 10 or more bedrooms

(b) New hotels of 25 or more bedrooms- the figures include hotels built under grants from the HDI Scheme and the Highlands and Islands Development Board Scheme. They also include some establishments which did not receive and financial assistance.

Source: HCEDC, Hotels Prospects to 1985 quoted in Medlik and Airey, 1978, Appendix U, Table 90

**Table 6a Location of Bedroom Stock in Great Britain by Region, 1971 and 1981**

Region	1971				1981			
	Units	Rooms	Mode	%	Units	Rooms	Mode	%
North	1900	33,370	c	5.7	888	22,216	d	4.3
Yorkshire and Humberside	1450	22,360	a	3.8	1113	25,638	c	5.0
North West	4170	67,200	c	11.6	2325	52,905	c	10.4
East Midlands	900	13,635	a	2.3	612	13,832	d	2.7
West Midlands	1430	22,685	a	3.9	698	20,941	f	4.1
East Anglia	1070	17,625	c	3.0	682	15,876	c	3.1
Greater London	2495	72,845	g	12.5	2174	88,084	g	17.3
South East (excl. GLC)	6740	121,885	c	21.0	3195	78,467	d	15.4
South West	5625	97,915	b	16.9	4084	89,792	d	17.6
Wales	1870	32,605	c	5.6	1284	32,344	c	6.3
Scotland	4335	76,760	b	13.2	2727	67,913	d	13.3
Totals	31,985	578,885			19,782	508,008		

% = Share of the total accommodation market for that year

Mode unit size: a=1-9 rooms; b=10-14; c=15-24; d=25-49; e=50-99; f=100-199; g=200+

Source: Census of 1971 and 1981

One of the criticisms of the scheme was that it produced too many additional bedrooms in areas where there were too few tourists. Furthermore, the world economic crisis resulting from the increase in oil prices in 1973 as well as the static growth rate for domestic tourism as the economy went into recession ensured that the optimistic forecasts were wrong. It had been on these that the government based its policy and the entrepreneurs built their hotels (ETB, 1976, p.2).

The logic of the 'market' was to be left to determine which entrepreneurs would succeed and which would go bankrupt (Hansard, Vol.778, c.2036). In the frenzy to take advantage of this government 'bonanza' hoteliers built any size of hotel anywhere (ETB, 1976, p.13). The larger hotel groups could afford to work through the initial years of loss-making that is associated with capital expenditure. The smaller companies and individual entrepreneurs were forced to sell to the larger groups as the world recession drove down letting bedroom occupancy figures which are the staple for bottom line profit in the trade (ETB, 1976, pp.21-26).

The hotel trade has its own capitalist logic and it was not in tune with that of the Labour government. Hotels were built in London and urban centres not



**Table 6b Detail of Unit Gains and Losses in Greater London, 1971-1981**

Region Greater London	Hotels and boarding house unit size;							Total
	1-9	10-14	15-24	25-49	50-99	100-199	200+	
1971	825	630	485	285	140	75	60	2495
1981	665	406	466	295	160	96	86	2174
+/-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	-321

Source: Census of 1971 and 1981

**Table 6c Detail of Bedroom Stock Gains and Losses in Greater London, 1971-1981**

Region Greater London	Hotels and Boarding Houses with rooms;							Totals
	1-9	10-14	15-24	25-49	50-99	100-199	200+	
1971	5435	7365	8840	9740	9315	9900	22,245	72,845
1981	4361	4764	8705	10,161	11,046	12,942	36,105	88,084
+/-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	15,239

Source: Census of 1971 and 1981

in rural and industrially depressed areas. Large units were constructed not the smaller and medium priced hotels which would be more popular for the anticipated mass tourism boom of the 1970's.

Furthermore there was both a decline in the total number of hotels and boarding houses in this decade. It seems perverse for Medlik and Airey to claim a 10% increase in the the number of bedrooms during the period 1970-1973 if this is turned into a net loss of 12% as the Census figures indicate. It is also a gross understatement to then go on to qualify the effect of the scheme by saying that investment went into a decline. It would be more true to conclude from the available figures that the scheme only interrupted this disinvestment trend, that it did not fulfill the aim of adding to the overall bedroom stock, and on its own terms must be seen as a failure.

What probably did happen was that old bedroom stock was replaced with either more modern styles, or an improvement of the interiors of establishments. This would account for the total reduction of rooms available. It would not

however allow the claim that the scheme was a resounding success. The aim had been to increase the total stock and to increase the availability of rooms in the lower priced range of the market. This did not happen. Hotels became larger on average and more clearly located in urban centres appealing to the business and conference trade rather than tourism in rural areas, and as a source of employment, being the reason for locating new units and the expansion of present ones.

'It was this phase that really established a division between the large luxury group hotels in London and the smaller, lower priced establishments in the resorts and the provinces'

Dronfield and Soto, 1980, p.11

This has had repercussions for the way policy has developed in respect of tourism since 1980. A report by the GLC (1971) claimed that with the additional letting bedrooms land and buildings were being used up which could provide space to accommodate the capital's homeless population. Such was the scale of the problem that the report stated that by 1980 there could be 200,000 more hotel bedrooms and 100,000 fewer domestic dwellings (p.6). Since then hoteliers have been able to take advantage of this situation and ensure a year round occupancy figure of 100% through the provision of accommodation to those homeless people made destitute by their decision to convert buildings into hotels (FT, 30.6.87, p.9).

Lord Scarman was reported to have claimed at a conference on housing provision that the number and the rate of increase of homeless families in London living in hotel rooms could trigger off an epidemic or some other disaster. On the BBC's Radio 4 news it was stated that the number of such families living in hotel rooms was being added to at a rate of 300 per month. Hoteliers were finding it more attractive to let rooms to families living off grants given by the DHSS than to sell the rooms to tourists. Thus there was an increasing shortfall in the supply of accommodation for tourists in the capital. The remedy is to build more housing concluded Lord Scarman, this being cheaper than accommodating families in hotel rooms (Radio 4, 7.9.87).

This situation where hoteliers are prepared to sell rooms to anyone is creating a false shortfall in the supply of letting hotel bedrooms; a reason different to that of the late 1960's when it was due to the fact that hoteliers were not investing sufficient resources in the building and expansion of hotels. The same situation

but a different cause. One that requires a radically different government policy than that which resulted in the Hotel Development Incentive Scheme.

#### 2.4 Registration, Grading and Classification of Hotels

One of the major problems with any kind of scheme is the relationship between 'objective' and 'subjective' criteria. The automobile guides published annually base the award of one to five stars according to the contents of the room and the facilities provided by the hotel. So a lift qualifies a hotel to be awarded 3 stars, a hall porter 4 stars and garage guarantees a 5 star accolade. This takes no account of the personal element of "service" (Forte, 1985, p.9).

Of the hotels listed in the 1983 AA Guide nearly 80% were of the 2 star or 3 star standard and only 250 establishments warranted either 4 stars or 5 stars (Jordan, 1984, p.3). When the Automobile Association intended to remove one of the 4 star's that had been awarded to the Swallow Hotel in Edinburgh the Managing Director of the group threatened to take off the AA stars from all of the 32 Swallow Hotels. He said that this would be in protest at the manner in which the Automobile Association is conducting its affairs. He claimed that it was no longer unbiased since its promotion of Crest Hotels. He felt that in any case the "star" system was a crude way of assessing the quality of the hotel since it did not take into account "service". This was one of the points that the Marketing Director of Consort Hotels made to the members at their Annual General Meeting in 1985. He preferred to adopt the same system as the national tourist boards where a hotel is judged on the quality of its facilities, bedrooms and "service" (FT, 14.10.85, p.7). However the members decided against accepting such a scheme on the grounds that they thought having three elements for the customer to judge on was confusing. The tourist board system would judge each of the three criteria on a scale of 1-6 points and present the findings separately. The members of Consort Hotels and several other major hotel chains, including the largest Trusthouse Forte, decided they would continue using the star system as it was less confusing and more well known (FT, 25.8.87, p.6).

So the trade is not prepared to be assessed on its own central tenet that of "personal service" preferring the customer to decide using meaningless assessments based on how long the rug in a hotel bedroom is and whether they have to walk down one flight of stairs or take the lift! It is little wonder there was so much opposition to the proposal for compulsory registration of hotel and tourist accommodation which was set out in the Development of Tourism Bill (Hansard,

Vol.778, c.1946). The aim being to better promote the industry and give the customer more information to base choices upon. The whole idea was rejected. What was retained was a voluntary system of registration (Beavis, 1979, p.18). This as we have seen has been boycotted, so effectively diminishing its role and causing additional confusion as some hotels adopt the three-fold method and others, the majority, retain the "star" system. Rather than helping the customer it has further hindered him/her. Such is the internal logic of the hotel trade.

### 3 Tourism

#### 3.1 Overseas visitors to the UK and UK resident visits abroad

##### Overview - Table 7

In 1985 the number of overseas visitors to the UK was 14.5 million \*. This was a record number being more than 6% above the 1984 total which was itself 8% more than the previous record year of 1978. There had been an increase in the number of tourists for the past four years. However in 1986 with the effects of the international terrorism of 1985 still in the minds of people, especially North Americans, the number of overseas visitors fell by more than 700,000. This was the first time since 1981 that there had been a drop in this figure. It has been predicted by the British Tourist Authority (BTA) in their report, 'Strategy for Growth 1986-1990' that there will be a, 'sharp increase' in the number of visitors to this country by 30%, to 20 million, by 1992. Leading to a revenue increase of 79% to reach £12 billion (FT, 10.9.86, p.12).

Visits abroad by UK residents in 1985 totalled 21.7 million, 1.4% less than in 1984 and the first year since 1977 that the figure has not been a record. The

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\* The tables in this section are drawn from the International Passenger Survey which is carried out by the OPCS and analysed by the Department of Employment for the Central Statistical Office and the Home Office. The estimates are based on interviews with a stratified random sample of passengers entering and leaving the UK on the principal air and sea routes. In all some 169,000 interviews were conducted in 1985, with about 43,000 end-of-stay interviews providing the information to calculate expenditure and length of stay of foreign visitors and about 29,000 interviews for the estimates of UK residents travelling abroad (Business Monitor MA6, 1985, p.1).

**Table 7 Overseas Visitors to the UK, and UK Residents abroad: Number of Visits, Earnings, and Expenditure, 1968-1987**

Year	Number of visits					Expenditure						
	Domestic		Overseas visitors UK Overseas			Domestic	Overseas visitors		UK Overseas	Balance		
	000's	000's	%	000's	%	£million	£million incl. tspt	%	£million	%	£million	
1968		4828	12.6	7269	0.9	282		19.9	271	-1.2	11	
1969		5821	20.6	8083	11.2	359		27.2	324	19.8	35	
1970		6692	15.0	8482	4.9	432		20.3	382	17.8	50	
1971		7131	6.6	9497	12.0	500		15.7	442	15.7	58	
1972	132,000	7549	4.6	10,695	12.6	1375	576	15.2	535	21.0	41	
1973	132,000	8167	9.5	11,470	9.8	1450	726	26.0	695	29.9	31	
1974	114,000	8543	4.6	10,783	-8.2	1800	898	23.7	703	1.2	195	
1975	117,000	9490	11.1	11,992	11.2	2150	1218	35.6	917	30.4	301	
1976	121,000	10,808	13.9	11,560	-3.6	2400	1768	2302	45.2	1068	16.5	700
1977	121,000	12,281	13.6	11,525	-0.3	2625	2352	2976	33.0	1186	11.0	1166
1978	119,000	12,646	3.0	13,443	16.6	3100	2507	3160	6.6	1549	30.6	958
1979	118,000	12,486	-1.3	15,466	15.0	3800	2797	3542	11.6	2109	36.2	688
1980	130,000	12,421	-0.5	17,507	13.2	4550	2961	3753	5.9	2738	29.8	223
1981	126,000	11,452	-7.8	19,046	8.8	4600	2970	3758	0.3	3272	19.5	-302
1982	123,000	11,636	1.6	20,611	8.2	4500	3188	4037	7.3	3640	11.2	-452
1983		12,464	7.1	20,994	1.9		4003	5023	25.6	4090	12.4	-87
1984		13,644	9.5	22,072	5.1		4614	5739	15.3	4663	14.0	-49
1985	126,000	14,483	6.1	21,771	-1.4	6325	5451	6676	18.1	4877	4.6	574
1986p	127,890	13,772	-4.9	24,528	12.6	7100	5405		-0.9	5927	21.5	-522
1987e		15,000	8.9				6300		16.6			

Note: p=Provisional e=estimate

Source: Business Monitor: MA6, 1985; BTA Annual Report 1985, page 36; British Home Tourism Survey; Employment Gazette, August 1987; BTA Estimate

number of UK residents going abroad on holiday increased by 12.6% in 1986 to more than 24.5 million visits.

According to the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) international arrivals grew by 4% in 1985. They estimated that 325 million tourists went abroad that year with expenditure growing at the same rate largely due to the value of the US\$ in relation to other currencies (FT, 20.5.86, p.5). The WTO predicts that by

1990 international tourist arrivals will be 460 million, an eight fold increase since 1958 (Forte, 1985, p.6).

Overseas visitors spent £5451 million in the UK, at current prices, an increase of 18.1% (or 10% when allowance is made for inflation). UK residents spent £4877 million abroad a rise of 4.1% on the 1984 figure. This gave a credit of £574 million on the tourism account of the Balance of Payments. This compares with a deficit of £49 million in 1984 and is the first year that a credit has been recorded since 1980. Larger credits were recorded in the years 1976 to 1979, ranging from £688 million to £1166 million. This latter figure was recorded in 1977 the year of the Queen's Silver Jubilee, a boom year for London's hotels and tourist market.

However this situation was reversed in 1986 to the extent that the credit accrued in the previous year was nearly wiped out. The combination of fewer overseas visitors spending slightly less money (down 0.9%) and more UK residents spending disproportionately more money (up by 21.5% on a 12.6% increase in visits) resulted in a deficit of \$522 millions. This made the figure for 1985 stand out as the only credit since the beginning of the decade.

The BTA have estimated that in 1987 overseas tourists have spent \$6300 million in the UK, an increase of 16.6% over 1986. Whilst the number of visitors has gone up by more than 1.2 million so continuing the upward trend in these figures. Offset against that Thompson Holidays, the largest travel firm in the UK, have reported sales of more than \$1 billion for 1987. Which on 1986 figures would represent 1/6th of the total UK expenditure.

As a leading export Tourism was ranked fifth behind non-electrical machinery and petroleum products in 1985 - see Table 8. Tourism contributes more to the economy in terms of foreign earnings than iron, steel and coal combined, and earning more money than the services offered by the UK's financial institutions. Of the total earnings generated by services in the UK, tourism contributed 22% or £5.5 billion in 1985. In the opinion of Lord Forte the hotel industry can no longer be considered a, 'candy floss trade' no matter how sceptical the critics are (Forte, 1985, p.4).

**Volume of visits - Table 9** As in 1983 and 1984 the most important country to contribute to the overall increase in visits from overseas in 1985 was the United States with a record 3.2 million visits, 15% above the record of the year before. Their importance is emphasised by the fact that since 1980 their numbers have risen by 87%. It is no coincidence that this has been paralleled by an exchange rate in favour of the US\$ against sterling.

**Table 8 Value of Tourism compared with Other Leading Exports 1976-1985 (provisional)**

Leading Exports	£ million			
	1976	1980	1984	1985
Non-electrical machinery	5364	8953	11,514	13,360
Transport equipment	3186	4803	6085	6674
Chemicals	3007	5286	8217	9411
Petroleum products	1172	6133	14,852	16,050
Non-metallic mineral manufrs.	1019	2110	2299	2163
Electrical machinery	1630	2511	3922	4677
Textiles	972	1363	1485	1701
Iron and Steel	824	983	1529	1857
<b>All manufactured goods</b>	<b>20,701</b>	<b>34,811</b>	<b>46,703</b>	<b>52,514</b>
UK financial institutions	1259	1675	3384	4472
UK consultancy firms	492	923	1244	1238
Sea transport	3233	3816	3254	3572
Civil Aviation	1049	2210	2931	3188
<b>TOURISM</b>	<b>1768</b>	<b>2961</b>	<b>4614</b>	<b>5451</b>
<b>All Services</b>	<b>10,019</b>	<b>15,693</b>	<b>21,999</b>	<b>24,845</b>

Source: BTA Annual Report, 1985, page 37

The number of visits from Western Europe rose by around 4.5%; 6.2 million from the Common Market countries (an increase of 4%) and 1.7 million from the other countries (a 1.7% increase). The number of visits from the rest of the world went up by 1% to 2.8 million. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) report on World Tourism for 1985 West Germany, France and the US (along with the UK) were the countries supplying the most tourists.

### **Expenditure by visitors - Table 9**

The amount of money spent by visitors from North America rose by 34%: with increases of 25% from other Western European countries, the Common Market by 14% and from the rest of the world there was an increase in expenditure of 7%. The average was 18% which when allowing for inflation was an increase on

**Table 9 Overseas Visitors to the UK: Number of Visits and Expenditure by Country of Permanent Residence, 1983-1986**

Visitor source	Number of visits (000's)				Expenditure (£ millions)			
	1983	1984	1985p	1986p	1983	1984	1985p	1986p
USA	2317	2764	3166	2285	831.1	1096.8	1477.8	1248.6
Canada	519	567	631	546	160.5	174.2	231.0	208.0
European Community	5725	5940	6185	6846	991.8	1095.5	1246.9	1548.5
Other W. Europe	1439	1611	1719	1401	407.9	467.6	584.1	489.3
Other countries	2464	2763	2782	2695	1611.6	1780.0	1910.8	1874.1
Total	12,464	13,644	14,483	13,722	4002.9	4614.2	5450.6	5404.5

p=Provisional

Source: Business Monitor MA6; Employment Gazette, August 1987

1984 of 10% in real terms. A similar increase to that of 1984 on 1983. However with the allowance for inflation is made the expenditure by overseas visitors is less than the peak year of 1977.

Breaking these figures down into countries of source then one finds that 31% of visitors come from North America, 23% from the Common Market and 11% from the rest of Western Europe. Taking 1984, the share from North American countries increased by three percentage points but this was counteracted by a fall in the share from other non-European countries.

Although the number of visits by North Americans has risen by 15%, the rate of expenditure has risen even more - 34%. This 'seems to confirm' for Arthur Sandles, 'the view that American visitors are using the UK as a cheap department store' (FT, 31.5.85, p.48). Arthur Sandles was the late Travel Correspondent for the Financial Times (FT).

Lord Forte in the March of that year was saying something quite different in a speech to the Back Bench Tourism Sub-Committee at the House of Commons.

'Some might say that we are only doing well because of the strong dollar, but that is not the whole picture. . . I firmly believe people come to Britain because they genuinely like us and because we give them good value and service - despite what is said by critics some of whom should know better.'

Forte, 1985, p.5



Maybe Arthur Sandles did know better than Lord Forte how the cake was being cut and who was getting the bigger slice in terms of monetary advantage across the Atlantic.

### **Purpose of visit and expenditure - Tables 10a and 10b**

The number of overseas residents coming to the UK for a holiday increased by 9.7% in 1984 and by 4% in 1985 (see Table 10a). However visits by North Americans on holiday rose by 22% in 1984 and in 1985 by 18%: but only by 1% for those from the Common Market countries, even though the increase had been 9% the previous year. The number of overseas visitors from elsewhere in Western Europe and the rest of the world increased marginally. Holidays accounted for 46% of all visits, down from 47% the previous year. Business visits rose by 5% in 1985, whereas they had risen by 12% in 1984. However their share remained unchanged at 21% since 1983. The largest rise of 10% was in the number of overseas visitors coming to the UK to see friends & relatives. A position revised from 1984 when they had only risen by 2.5% on the 1983 figures and had been the smallest growth area. Their market share of 20% was up from 19% in 1984.

The percentage of overseas residents coming to the UK on an inclusive tour as a holiday remained at about 29% for 1984 and 1985. Whilst the number of inclusive tour visits rose by 6.5% in 1985 largely due to increases in visits from North America and the Common Market. Although the number of day trips fell in 1984 they rose above the 1983 level by 4% in 1985.

Of the total spent by overseas visitors in 1984 and 1985, holidays accounted for 44% of the total in both years, increasing by 16% in 1985 (see Table 10b). Business visits contributed about 1/4 of the revenue, gaining 18% on the previous year. Whilst the share of earnings from visitors seeing friends & relatives increased by 1% to 16%. With the total increasing by 21%, the highest gain of the three categories.

**Length of stay and average expenditure - Table 11** Although the average length of stay increased in total (except business visits) the figures were still less than those recorded in the early years of the decade. This was especially the case with visitors from North America and for those who came to the UK on holiday; they were down on average nearly 2 days and 1/2 day respectively.

However the average daily expenditure showed a 9% rise in total, with Americans recording the highest increase at 17%. They spent an average of £42.30 per day and £449 per visit in 1985. Business travel is the most lucrative source of

**Table 10a Overseas Visitors to the UK: Number of Visits by Area of Permanent Residence and Main Purpose of Visit, 1984-1986**

Number (000's)							
Area of permanent residence	Total	Of which: day trips <sup>2</sup>	Holiday	Of which: inclusive tours	Business	Visits to friends and relatives	Miscellaneous
1984							
All Areas	13,644	519	6385	1831	2863	2626	1770
North America	3330		1825	555	490	592	423
European Community	5940		2463	673 <sup>2</sup>	1469	1249	758
Other Western Europe	1611		656	287	456	264	236
Other Areas	2763		1440	316	448	522	353
1985p							
All Areas	14,483	556	6663	1950	3009	2898	1912
North America	3797		2149	677	315	660	473
European Community	6185		2498	755 <sup>2</sup>	1546	1369	771
Other Western Europe	1719		660	261	485	281	293
Other Areas	2782		1356	238	463	588	375
1986p							
All Areas	13,772	673	5873	1592	3222	2926	1751
North America	2831		1407	342	523	565	337
European Community	6846		2664	781 <sup>2</sup>	1755	1536	891
Other Western Europe	1401		577	244	430	224	169
Other Areas	2695		1225	224	514	602	353

1. Trippers who cross the Channel or the North Sea but do not alight from the boat are excluded from the number of visits

2. Excludes the Republic of Ireland for which figures are unavailable

p=Provisional

Source: Business Monitor-MA6 (International Passenger Survey), Employment Gazette; July, 1985 and August, 1987

revenue on a daily basis bringing in on average £72.30 per day. In terms of expenditure per visit those people who travel from countries outside of Western Europe

**Table 10b Overseas Visitors to the UK: Expenditure of Visitors by Area of Permanent Residence and Main Purpose of Visit, 1984-1986**

Expenditure (£million)						
Area of permanent residence	Total	Holiday	Of which: inclusive tours	Business	Visits to friends and relatives	Miscellaneous
1984						
All Areas	4614.2	2051.6	375.3	1090.6	705.9	766.0
North America	1271.1	682.4	145.9	276.2	177.6	134.9
European Community	1095.5	375.1	104.6 <sup>1</sup>	276.3	149.2	294.9
Other Western Europe	467.6	166.9	66.8	146.7	53.0	101.0
Other Areas	1780.0	827.2	58.0	391.5	326.1	235.2
1985p						
All Areas	5450.6	2378.8	460.9	1288.3	851.7	931.8
North America	1708.7	932.9	218.5	361.4	240.7	173.7
European Community	1246.9	419.4	121.5 <sup>1</sup>	330.1	171.5	325.9
Other Western Europe	584.1	193.4	68.6	178.0	66.9	145.8
Other Areas	1910.8	833.0	52.2	418.8	372.6	286.4
1986p						
All Areas	5404.5	2191.0	502.0	1516.7	814.6	882.3
North America	1456.6	747.0	168.5	373.4	196.4	137.7
European Community	1584.5	542.5	171.1 <sup>1</sup>	437.3	213.1	389.8
Other Western Europe	489.3	163.7	70.5	183.5	58.5	83.6
Other Areas	1874.1	737.7	91.8	522.5	346.7	267.2

1. Excludes the Republic of Ireland and Channel Islands for which figures are unavailable

p=Provisional

Sources: Employment Gazette; July, 1986 and August, 1987

and North America dwarf the contribution made by them and also by those visitors who come to the UK on business trips. They spend on average £685.80 per visit: although they spend less per day than visitors from those former categories they tend to stay longer; on average 19 days, nearly twice as long as visitors from North America and more than three times the figure for business visits.

**Table 11 Overseas Visitors to the UK: Average Length of Stay, Average Expenditure per Day and per Visit, by Area of Permanent Residence and by Purpose of Visit, 1981-1986**

Year	All	North American	European Community	Other Western Europe	Other Areas	Holiday	Business	Visits to friends and relatives	Miscellaneous
Average length of stay									
1981	11.8	11.7	8.6	11.9	20.0	11.1	6.3	15.4	17.2
1982	11.7	12.3	8.5	11.9	18.7	10.9	6.4	15.4	17.8
1983	11.6	11.0	8.6	12.5	18.9	10.6	6.0	15.8	18.2
1984	11.3	10.5	8.5	11.3	18.4	10.5	6.0	15.7	16.3
1985p	11.6	10.6	8.7	12.2	18.9	10.5	5.9	15.9	17.6
1986p	11.3	11.6	8.7	10.1	18.3	10.5	5.9	15.0	17.6
Average expenditure per day (£)									
1981	21.7	24.0	15.3	20.8	27.6	22.3	49.5	12.6	16.8
1982	23.1	26.0	15.8	22.4	29.6	24.3	52.2	13.3	18.1
1983	27.4	31.1	19.6	22.7	34.5	27.4	63.1	15.8	24.6
1984	29.6	36.1	21.2	25.5	34.9	30.2	63.5	17.1	26.1
1985p	32.2	42.3	22.5	27.7	36.3	33.5	72.0	18.5	27.4
1986p	34.4	44.4	26.7	34.4	37.8	34.9	79.7	18.5	28.3
Average expenditure per visit (£)									
1981	256.6	280.3	131.6	247.2	551.0	248.0	311.2	193.4	288.7
1982	271.0	320.7	133.9	266.6	553.2	263.3	332.0	201.0	317.4
1983	318.5	348.9	168.3	283.0	653.3	294.0	375.9	249.6	449.0
1984	335.4	380.8	179.1	289.7	643.3	316.4	381.0	268.8	428.7
1985p	373.3	449.0	195.9	338.9	685.8	351.9	428.2	293.9	482.0
1986p	389.2	513.8	226.1	348.8	690.6	367.2	470.7	278.4	498.3

Note: p=Provisonal

Sources: Employment Gazette; July, 1986 and August, 1987

### Visits to the regions of the UK - Table 12

Of the 14.5 million visitors to the UK in 1985, 93% stayed at least one night or more; the same percentage as in 1984. Of those 60%, 8.5 million, spent at least one night in London, about the same percentage as in 1984. Of the total number

**Table 12 Number of Overnight Visits<sup>1</sup> to Regions of the UK by Overseas Visitors (other than from the Irish Republic) by Main Area of Residence, 1984-1986**

Main area of residence	London	Other England	Total England	Scotland	Wales	Total <sup>2</sup>
1984						
North America	2586	1342	3197	460	182	3331
European Community	2139	2639	4337	307	177	5031
Rest of Western Europe	1066	681	1521	114	43	1611
Rest of World	2054	1091	2661	260	135	2763
Total World	7845	5735	11,717	1142	537	12,736
1985						
North America	2988	1508	3675	505	186	3797
European Community	2333	2529	4470	296	178	5183
Rest of Western Europe	1102	719	1611	121	38	1719
Rest of World	2053	1110	2671	274	143	2782
Total World	8476	5865	12,427	1196	544	13,482
1986p						
North America	2083	1276	2704	435	147	2831
European Community	2574	2935	4995	355	183	5862
Rest of Western Europe	916	565	1317	95	32	1401
Rest of World	1998	1067	2602	254	121	2695
Total World	7570	5844	11,617	1139	483	12,789

1. Visits which did not involve an overnight stay in the UK are excluded from this table

2. Includes visits to Northern Ireland except those made direct from the Republic of Ireland

p = provisional

Sources: Employment Gazette; July, 1986 and August 1987

of visitors to the UK in 1984 and 1985, 92% stayed at least one night in England, 9% in Scotland and 4% in Wales.

The most frequent visitors to the UK, who stayed at least one night in England, were from the European Community. In Scotland visitors from North America accounted for 42% of overnight stays. However London remained the most popular destination for North Americans; with 79% who came to the UK in 1985 staying

at least one night in the capital city representing more than 1/3 of all visitor nights in London in 1984 and 1985. In 1986 with the tourism industry still feeling the after effects of the disturbing events of 1985 there was an indication that those North American travellers who did come to Britain were not first time travellers because a higher than normal proportion visited Scotland and Wales. It is this interpretation that is placed on the statistics by the compilers of the report in the *Employment Gazette* (September, 1987) rather than the effectiveness of the marketing strategy of the Welsh and Scottish tourist boards and emphasises the ease with which Americans will spend time in London and England rather than be persuaded to travel to other parts of the country.

In the BTA's report, '*Strategy for Growth, 1986-1992*' it is stated that it is their intention to encourage visitors to travel to all regions of the country (FT, 10.9.86, p.12). In 1985 only 13% of overseas visitors spent one night or more in Scotland and Wales combined, compared with 92% for England. This policy may be aided by the fact that nearly 50% of Britains who travel abroad could be encouraged to use the tourist facilities in this country since they do not travel abroad for the hot weather and sunny beaches according to the BTA Annual Report for 1985 indicates (p.5). The 1985 report goes on to state that 60% of all overseas visitor nights are spent out of London which means that 40% of all visitor nights are spent in the capital city. The difference between having 8.5 million people staying in London and 7.6 million visitor nights spread over England (excluding London), Scotland and Wales (an area of 89,000 square miles) dilutes the effect of this remark.

London has many attractions for the overseas visitor including shopping, the Tower of London, Changing the Guards and Westminster Abbey. The city is also used as a base for trips to Stratford-upon-Avon or travelling by train to Edinburgh by way of York and Durham. This can hardly be thought of as visiting Britain. London is indeed the, 'foundation of the tourist industry' (Young, 1972, p.109). The BTA is trying to build on that, has been trying for decades, and still claims that it can and does.

### 3.2 Domestic tourism - Table 7

The number of visits within the UK by British residents on holiday, business, or visiting friends & relatives came to 126 million; more than 2 visits per person in 1985 and more than 8 times as many visits than the figure for overseas visitors for the same year. In 1986 the number of residents taking holidays in this country

increased by 1.5% to nearly 128 million visits. This meant the ratio of domestic to overseas visits was to 9:1. In 1980 the ratio was 10:1 and in 1976 as high as 11:1.

Whilst the British in 1985 spent 16% more on tourism in this country than overseas visitors in 1986 this gap soared to 31% with a total expenditure on domestic tourism of \$7100 millions. Moreover in 1980 the difference was more than 53% and 36% more in 1976. This statistic is given less importance in the tourism statistics than the figures for overseas visitors. It is perhaps because people generally think of going abroad as synonymous with being a tourist or else at least being on "holiday". Whereas tourism is to do with being away from home for whatever purpose, including business travel which is an integral part of the Hotel and Catering industry's sales revenue.

### 3.3.1 'An American in'... Cardiff?

Wales receives about 4% of the overseas visitors to the UK each year (see Table 12). A figure which has doubled in the last ten years but which is still less than half of the total for Scotland. Those visitors who do come tend to be North Americans demanding high quality accommodation whilst looking for their 'roots'. This tends to be in the urban areas of Cardiff and Swansea; at least that is where the accommodation is that they demand!

The Welsh economy benefits to the sum of £600 million from tourism with about 25% coming from overseas visitors. However the biggest spenders are the Americans. They not only stay longer on average than other visitors but they are also the largest group at 22%. So the Welsh tourist industry suffered when the North Americans curtailed their travelling abroad in 1986 as a result of the fear of terrorist attacks and reprisals for the bombing of Libya.

Although earnings from overseas visitors may represent 1/5 of the money generated by tourism that still leaves 80% coming from UK residents taking holidays in Wales; especially in North Wales where the North Americans will tend not to go to find their 'roots'! It is here that the market in short break holidays and second holidays has grown considerably. With the economic expansion allowing some people to take holidays during the spring and autumn months, traditionally the "shoulder" months for the tourism industry when money making tends to slow down. All this is in spite of the growth in the package holidays to the Mediterranean in the past two decades.

According to Mr Lovelock, Chairman of the Welsh Tourist Board, overseas and domestic tourism in Wales,

'makes a massive net contribution to the economy and is a vibrant sector'

Lovelock, FT, 18.5.87, p.37.

### 3.3.2 'An American in'... Edinburgh?

In an article entitled, 'US campaign under way' the policy of the Scottish Tourist Board was broadly laid out. One of the facts stated was Scotland gets more than 300,000 North American visitors each year. The aim is to double the number of visitors and bring the average number of nights spent north of the border up from 2 to 6 by 1990 according to Mr Devereux, Chairman of the Scottish Tourist Board (FT, Survey on Scotland, 12.12.85). The target market for their overseas promotion is the USA. To do this the board intends to use travel agents in major cities on the Western and Eastern Seaboards, the Mid-West and Deep South of the country to improve the numbers coming to Scotland.

Again as with Wales there is an overemphasis on the importance of the North American market (see Table 12). Only 15% of the visitors to Scotland are from overseas (though the 85% from England are still considered 'foreign' to Scotch people). However this relatively small figure does translate in to 30% of the total earnings from tourism. It is a lucrative business helping Americans find their 'roots' north of the border. That still leaves 6 million Sassanachs creating 70% of the tourism revenue. That is with Scottish hotels running at only 50% occupancy over the season. Canny!

### 3.3.3 'An American in'... London?

The overemphasis on the contribution made by North Americans, especially those from the USA, is not without its logic. With only a fraction of the total population travelling abroad each year the potential for growth is great. This is stimulated during those years when the exchange rate favours the US\$, as in 1985 and 1986. With the exchange rate in the summer of 1987 at about US\$1.60/£1



this will adversely effect the number of US visitors coming to the UK and the amount of money they spend.

The events of 1986 indicated how fickle the market in tourism is. Mr Bluck, Chairman of the BTA was quoted as saying,

'the recent attacks in the eastern Mediterranean and the recent American action in Libya will undoubtedly have an adverse effect on tourism flows'

FT, 23.4.86, p.9

Pessimism continued for Mediterranean destinations. However Mr Marshall, Chief Executive of British Airways (BA) forecasted, at a conference on tourism, that as long as there were no more, 'major incidents' then the reduction in demand of between 10-15% by Americans for European holidays would translate into a late summer revival which would match but not necessarily exceed the 1985 figures (FT, 24.4.86, p.12).

The BTA launched a £1 million promotion campaign in May 1986 to lure US tourists back to Britain emphasising that, 'Britain speaks your language'. This was true given Britain's support for the US bombing of Libya in the April of that year.

As a part of that promotion a number of American travel writers were brought over to impress upon them the safety of living in England so that they would write encouraging articles for their US audiences (FT, 16.5.86, p.10). BA gave away 5600 return tickets to Britain from the US to demonstrate that Britain enjoys a, 'relatively safe and peaceful life' (FT, 21.5.85, p.1).

BA had already ceased recruitment for the summer, cancelled some of its trans-atlantic services or combined cargo loads to reduce costs as the soon to be privatised state airline saw its revenue from that route being cut by about 11%. Such results demanded action and they were praised by the BTA for their, 'brilliantly executed campaign' entitled, "*Go for it America*" (BTA Annual Report 1985, p.5). The total cost, including 'tactical advertising' was estimated at £4 million. It would seem that they were making a virtue out of a financial necessity and got rewarded publicly as well as on their balance sheets for it.

Other countries in Europe adopted a vigorous campaign to offset the sensationalist reports of death by terrorism in Europe. Stating that it was more dangerous to stay in New York, for instance, than it was to come to Europe. European tourist authorities spent large sums of money, Greece being the largest at US\$3

million. Airline companies and hotel chains offered free tickets and accommodation to entice cautious Americans to travel to Europe (FT, 22.5.86, p.10). With bookings down 50% in Europe, Britain came off less badly in the early months of the Summer tourist season.

The advertising campaign continued in Britain with Mrs Thatcher, the Prime Minister, telling American breakfast time audiences, with a background accompaniment of a band rehearsing for Trooping the Colour, 'Please come! Please change your mind! We miss you!' (FT, 24.5.86, p.1). Whilst in the same breath she condemned terrorist acts of aggression such as the Libyan's activities. However in International Law the US' bombing of Tripoli and the killing of civilians was also a direct breach of that law. Mrs Thatcher knew that as well as the American people who were boycotting yet another area of the world where they were unwelcome and in danger. The Americans loved the jingoism and the affirmation of that "*special relationship*" with Mrs Thatcher making it all so respectable.

A month later an article appeared proclaiming, "*The trickle back begins*", subtitled, "*US tourists in Britain*". Americans were returning, BA North American passenger totals were up from 4400 in May to 6000 in late June. However the recovery was being felt mainly in Britain, the rest of Europe was still feeling the marked effects of the boycott. Naturally credit went to the Prime Minister as well as the BTA and BA promotional campaigns. They had worked. The razzamatuzz had paid off for the London hotel and tourism market but hoteliers outside of London were still facing the prospects of empty beds for the remainder of the summer months (FT, 21.6.86, p.9).

An article later in the year claimed that the, "*Decline in US tourism was 'disastrous' for the hotel trade*". Indicating that there had been a 40% fall in Americans visiting Britain to date. There was not a consensus within the tourist industry on the degree of success, if any, of the various promotional campaigns (FT, 20.10.86, p.10). In spite of that Mr Bluck, Chairman of the BTA said in March 1987 that the figures for 1986 showed that overseas visitors spending was up on 1985 despite a fall in visitor numbers of 4%.

'They are a resounding triumph for British tourism, showing that the industry has successfully overcome the well-publicised but temporary problems experienced in the Summer of 1986'

FT, 5.3.87, p.4

However in a report published on 19.5.87 by Horwarth and Horwarth, the international hotel consultants, the detail of the effects of 1986 were clearer. Their *UK Hotels* report for 1986 showed that the overall hotel occupancy had been down 3% on 1985; with London suffering a decline of 7%, whilst in the Provinces the falls were less marked (FT, 20.5.87, p.7). This indicates that the motivation behind the promotional campaigns was to bring Americans to London and not to "Britain", knowing that any downturn in the North American market would be felt most keenly in the capital city.

In spite of all the emphasis placed on the disaster that would result from a fall in the number of Americans coming to Britain there were still more than 10 million other overseas visitors spending more than £3.5 billion in the UK in 1986 (see Table 7). As well as the £6.7 billion that UK residents spent on tourism in this country in 1986.

It is forgotten underneath the publicity given to overseas tourism that more is earned from domestic tourism, and that without such a market Scotland and Wales would not have the benefit of £100's millions coming in to their economies. British residents may not be found in London to the same extent that they are in Cardiff and Edinburgh but that may have more to do with the above average tariff charges in London hotels. As was highlighted in a Gallup research, only 4 out of every 10 Britains ever stay in hotels in this country, with 3 out of every 10 giving the high tariff charges as their reasons why (FT, 20.5.87, p.7).

It is undoubtedly easier to target publicity at such an important market as North America, both in terms of volume and expenditure, especially during a crisis of confidence as happened in 1986. There not coming to London did have a serious effect on the earnings generated by tourism. It is more costly and time consuming to pin point the source of UK tourists in other countries especially as there are so many of them than to direct a campaign towards the USA. There is still an overemphasis placed on the US market and this is probably because they are obvious spenders and make their presence felt. So it goes that the more there are of them in this country the more money the UK tourism industry will earn. If they keep away then the earnings from tourism will fall. It is a remarkably simple relationship.

However it is magnanimous, if not supercilious, for prominent people in the tourism industry to go on at length about the "British" tourism industry as if it existed outside of London. The fact that it does owes more to British residents going on holiday than visitors from overseas. Tourists from overseas come to visit London. For the majority that is the, "British" tourist industry, the attractions they want to see are there, and nowhere else, and the accommodation they want

to stay in is there, and nowhere else. Why should it be otherwise if they do not want to go anywhere but London. The Hotel and Tourism Industry has become heavily biased towards London because it is difficult to get many people to visit Britain outside of the historical (honey pot type) attractions that are located in London. (Figures reported in the *Employment Gazette* (July, 1987, p.315) showed that 10 out of the 20 most popular tourist sights in Great Britain were in London). It makes sense to have a London tourist board. At least it is an honest reflection of the way the industry operates.

The charade of talking about the tourist industry in Britain was revealed in the debacle over the boycott of Britain and Europe in 1986 by the people of the US and the attempts to lure them back to this country (London). It was seen in the marked effects of the Hotel Development Incentive Scheme of the 1970's, when the hotel accommodation market was split into two unequal parts, London and the rest (Provinces). And is obvious in the chaos that is caused when trying to use so called "official" statistics to describe and analyse the operations of this service industry.

## Chapter 4

### Three Hotel “Companies”

#### Introduction

In this chapter the three hotel companies which form the basis of the field-work will be considered. The companies are Consort Hotels, Swallow Hotels and Hilton International Hotels. Consort Hotels is a consortium of hoteliers who are spread throughout Britain and based in York. Swallow Hotels is a national hotel division within the Vaux group which has its head office in Sunderland. HIH is an international hotel chain of managed and leased properties throughout the world. Formerly owned by Transworld Airlines (TWA) it is now under the control of Ladbroke Hotels which is a British company. Four themes applicable to the Hotel trade will be presented. These are; (1) Customer Markets; (2) Forms of Ownership; (3) Organisational Structure; (4) Computerisation and Communication. These four themes will be used to describe the operations of each of the three hotel companies and the manner in which corporate policy affects the management of the individual hotel establishments. Given that this will be done for each of the companies this will allow comparisons to be made between them as operators in the UK Hotel trade as well as highlighting the differences and similarities between Britain and the USA in terms of the management of hotel operations.

#### 1 The Customer Market

**Consort Hotels** serves two markets. The first is that it is in the business of attracting hoteliers to become members of a consortium. And secondly, through this increasing the profit of member hotels through the advantages of bulk buying and a national advertising campaign. It is a national hotel organisation made up of individual hoteliers and small hotel groups which market their product both at the local market and nationally. There is a variety of type of establishment within the consortium serving different sectors of the market; seaside resort, country house, urban hotel, motel, inn. Of the three hotel companies this is the most diverse in

the target customer market and is reflected in the variety of advertising campaigns which member hoteliers can buy in to.

This is how a hotel consortium has been described,

'An organisation of hotels, usually, but not necessarily owned autonomously, which combine resources in order to establish joint purchasing/trading arrangements and operate marketing services. These aims will often be achieved through the setting up of a centralised office, whose activities will be financed through a levy/subscription on the member hotel units'

Litteljohn, 1982, p.79

Mr Pope, Chief Executive, estimates that Consort Hotels will grow to about 200 full members within 3-4 years. This he considers to be the ceiling limit in order to ensure a cohesive market image. With each hotel having a minimum of 25 bedrooms and with an AA/RAC 3 star grading and 85%-100% of the rooms with bathrooms. This is similar to the Egon Ronay 65% grading (equivalent to AA/RAC 3 star and above) which at present is used within Consort hotels to classify members as Crown hotels. This is a means of distinguishing between the quality of the hotels. Consort has also produced a Silver and Bronze category to further differentiate amongst the rest of the members. This serves to rank members establishments with the aim of motivating them to improve the standard of their accommodation with reference to investment in rooms with bathrooms.

**Swallow Hotels** on the other hand illustrates the stereotype policy of the national hotel company. They have a specific market to which they direct their marketing strategy. They are in the business of providing accommodation to the business person from Monday to Thursday and the tourist during the weekend. This is an accommodation on the part of hotel companies like Swallow because if they could they would prefer to be occupied with business people throughout the year because they accrue the most profit. However in order to remain in business they offer incentives to people to stay in their hotels over the weekend.

The Company motto is, '*Swallow Hotels for Friendly Service and Value for Money*'. However in 1983 a new corporate identity was introduced for Swallow Hotels, '**Follow a Swallow - Feel at home**' retaining the familiar and popular Swallow but reflecting the improved standards and facilities in all hotels' (1983 Annual Report). This was paralleled by the introduction of a children's fun club called Sammy Swallow which provided, 'children of all ages with a lasting momento of happy

Swallow visits' (1983 Annual Report). All designed to make people aware of the presence of Swallow as a hotel company and to especially exploit children's love of animals as a means of making profit.

Swallow Hotels offers discounts for regular users. This is under the *Formula One* scheme. Whether these be individual executives or members of the entire corporation. The image that is conveyed here is the daring and excitement of elitism and jet-setting. In addition *Swallowcard* allows the holder to charge their hotel bill to their company's account. Again this card is used as a means of attracting corporate business.

At the weekend Swallow Hotels operates their, 'Breakaway' scheme which is a food and accommodation package at a heavily discounted rate. It is used to fill the hotels when business people are not using them, and also helps to fill the hotels during the winter and the 'shoulder' months of the year. Here the large gross profit margins, that can be made on the sale of accommodation, are sacrificed to the smaller profit levels that are made from selling food, with additional gains, hopefully, being made in the selling of alcohol during meal times and afterwards.

In the Annual Report for 1984, the principal activities of the Vaux Group were stated as follows,

'The Group's principal activities are the brewing, bottling and canning of ales and lager, the manufacture and bottling of soft drinks, wholesaling and retailing of beers, wines and spirits and soft drinks, and the ownership and operation of hotels, public houses and wine shops'

Annual Report, 1984, p.20

It is important to realise that the decision to change the name of the parent company from Vaux Breweries Plc to Vaux Group Plc in 1984 was not merely for cosmetic reasons. With reference to Table 13 it is apparent that the contribution that the Swallow hotel division is making to Group sales and profit figures is in sharp contrast to that of the brewing side of the business. Since 1981 the brewing part of the company's activities has made both a declining contribution to the amount and share of profits.

This is in contrast to Swallow Hotels where the share of profits has risen from 17% to 40% since 1981. This is not just due to the fact that the brewing side had seen its revenue falling but because Swallow Hotels turnover and profit have both risen over the same period. This reflects the stagnant situation with regard to

**Table 13 Turnover and Profit of the Brewing and Hotel Divisions in the Vaux Group, 1980-1986**

Year	Division	Turnover	% share	Profit before tax	% share
1980	Brewing	54,800	67	6731	73
	Hotels	18,000	22	1912	22
	Lorimers	8850		363	
	Total <sup>1</sup>	81,700		8709	
1981	Brewing	66,800	78	7925	84
	Hotels	19,200	22	1579	17
	Total	86,000		9485	
1982	Brewing	75,800	76	7889	75
	Hotels	23,400	24	2617	25
	Total	99,200		10,530	
1983	Brewing	80,700	74	8377	69
	Hotels	28,100	26	3777	31
	Total	108,800		12,072	
1984	Brewing	71,900	57	7580	58
	Hotels	32,200	25	5164	40
	Total	126,800		13,029	
1985	Total			16,500	
1986	Total			21,000	

1. The totals do not add up because other divisions have been excluded

Source: Vaux Breweries Plc. Annual Reports 1980-1986

sales of beer in public houses and the increase in demand for hotel accommodation. Hence the rise in room occupancy by 4% in 1984.

In 1986 the Vaux Group made a profit before tax of £21 million, an increase of 25% on the previous year's figure. And as will be shown with reference to Table 14 this is largely due to the profit created by Swallow Hotels.

With reference to Table 14 we can see that Swallow Hotels is expected to continue to increase its operating profit margin against its increasing sales (operating revenue) figure. This % margin has nearly doubled since 1981 and now on the budgeted figures represents a return of 20% on sales of £46 million. The return on capital employed at 16.6% is more healthy than the corresponding figure for



**Table 14 Swallow Hotels Ltd. Financial Statement, 1973-1987**

Year ending	Sales £million	Profit £thousand	% of Sales	% Return	No. of Rooms	Profit per room £
1973	4.1	145.0	3.5		859	169
1974	5.8	(45.0)			1145	
1975	7.0	270.0	3.9		1199	225
1976	9.0	401.0	4.5	9.0	1369	293
1977	10.6	921.0	8.7	12.6	1563	589
1978	13.8	1970.0	14.3	21.4	2059	957
1979	16.7	2664.0	16.0	20.0	2227	1196
1980	18.1	2255.0	12.5	12.0	2217	1017
1981	19.2	2035.0	10.6	9.2	2479	821
1982	23.4	2728.0	11.7	9.5	2862	953
1983	27.9	3933.0	14.0	11.6	2968	1325
1984	32.1	5308.0	16.5	14.1	3144	1688
1985	37.5	6828.0	18.2	16.0	3189	2141
1986b	41.8	8050.0	19.3	15.5	3189	2524
1987b	45.9	9150.0	19.9	16.6	3312	2763

b= Budget figures

Source: Swallow hotels

1981. However with occupancy rates averaging 55% for the Group in 1983 and 59% in 1984 there is still the opportunity to increase hotel occupancy during the Winter seasons.

All the hotels I visited had brought in net operating profit figures which reflected the Group's overall financial performance. Though with an average N.O.P. for the Group at 33% for 1985 (4.8% up on 1984) only the Royal County and the Hilltop hotels bettered that with rates of 37.1% and 34.5% respectively. This had also been the case in 1984 when the average for the Group had been only 28.2%.

However the figures for occupancy rates highlighted the advantage that a hotel located in an urban area has over those in rural or market towns. Taking the months of August and January 1984, the London hotel had occupancy rates of 99% and 66% respectively. In the same months the hotels in Durham had 99% and 16%; Carlisle, 85% and 25%; Chollerford, 88% and 21%; and Alnwick, 90.6% and

8%. As is obvious the hotels in the provinces could compete relatively favourably with the London hotel's rates during the Summer period: it was during the Winter season that the figures fell dramatically pulling down the average occupancy rates. It is this that created the Group occupancy rate of 59%.

**Table 15a Total number of Swallow Hotels in 1985 and 1987**

Year	Hotels unit size;											Total
	1-10	10-14	15-24	25-49	% share	50-99	% share	100-199	% share	200+	% share	
1985	0	0	0	4	13	15	48	9	29	3	10	31
1987	0	0	0	4	11	16	46	12	34	3	9	35

Source: Swallow Hotels' Tariff, 1985 and 1987

**Table 15b Total Bedroom stock of Swallow Hotels in 1985 and 1987**

Year	Hotels with rooms;											Total
	1-10	10-14	15-24	25-49	% share	50-99	% share	100-199	% share	200+	% share	
1985	0	0	0	154	5	1036	33	1063	34	882	28	3135
1987	0	0	0	160	4	1179	32	1474	40	882	24	3695

Source: Swallow Hotels' Tariff, 1985 and 1987

In 1981 Swallow Hotels had 31 units and 2500 bedrooms and was the 7th largest hotel company in the UK (Annual Report, 1981). In 1985 the company had increased the number of rooms to 3135. On the Census figures their share of the accommodation market was 0.5% of 508,008 bedrooms and 0.2% of 19,782 units. As of 1987 the company has 35 hotels in England and Scotland.

With reference to Table 15a, it can be seen that the policy of Swallow Hotels to upgrade the size of units has resulted in a mode unit size of 50-99 rooms. This category represents 48% of the total number of hotels in the group. The second most popular size category is a unit size of 100-199 rooms. Swallow no longer has any hotels with less than 25 letting bedrooms (see Table 15b).

Although the 50-99 unit size category is the mode unit size it is not the category where the most rooms under management are. In the 100-199 letting bedroom category there are a total of 1063 rooms or 34% of Swallow Hotel's rooms. With

the addition of three hotels in this size category a further 411 rooms have been added. Swallow Hotels now has 40% of its letting bedrooms in this category. Furthermore, although hotel units of 200+ rooms only represent 10% of Swallow's hotels they account for 28% of the total number of rooms under management. The company has added 560 letting bedrooms to its complement giving a growth of 18%.

My research took me into 5 of the hotels as a visiting researcher and into a further 2 units to conduct interviews. I spent from 2 days to 6 weeks in each of the hotels. The hotels I visited were; The Royal County, Durham City; The Swallow Hilltop, Carlisle; The London International, London; The George in Chollerford, Northumberland; and The White Swan in Alnwick, Northumberland.

The **Royal County** hotel in Durham City is a 119 bedroomed unit which has been awarded 4 stars by the AA/RAC motoring organisations. It is the 6th largest hotel in the Swallow division. This was one of the hotels originally operated by The North Eastern Breweries Ltd. It then only had 50 rooms, but under the Hotel Development Incentive Scheme an additional 72 rooms were added in 1972.

Its history has Royal connections which are *overemphasised* in the name of the hotel. Originally there were two hotels on this site and this is apparent by the external construction, only one of the hotels was called The County Hotel. When they were both under the management of The North Eastern Breweries Ltd. they were renamed The Royal County Hotel. This is because of the association with the town of Bowes from which the Queen Mother as a Bowes-Lyon can trace her ancestors. But County Durham has never had Royal Patronage. And in any case to make a hotel synonymous with an administrative boundary, even if it is located in the county town, is fanciful. However it is able to be marketed as the principal hotel of the city and by inference the county.

The main entrance to the hotel is from the car park at the rear. The main foyer is tiled except for the customer seating area which is carpeted and has brown leather sofas and chairs to sit in. Prints of local town and county scenes can be seen on the walls and the aviary adds life to the entire scene. A single room with bath costs £52.00 per night and a twin/double bedded room £65.00.

The **Swallow Hilltop** hotel, situated on the outskirts of Carlisle, has 110 bedrooms catering for business people and for motorists passing Carlisle on the M6 motorway between Scotland and England. The leisure centre, of which there are several in the group, was a new addition for the fitness conscious 1980's. Hilltop was purchased in 1979 as a motel and it still largely serves that function. The entrance and hallway facilitates the customers speedy access to their room.

As with The County, the floor in the hallway is tile for maximum wear and tear by the transient customers who on average stay only one or, at the most, two nights. To stay in the hotel costs £43.00 in a single room and £56.00 in a twin/double bedded room per night.

The **London International** is a 415 bedroom hotel, bought from Grand Metropolitan in 1982 when they were in the process of selling their lower and middle tariff priced hotels. Formerly a 4 star establishment it is now one of Swallow's 3 star hotels. The hotel had originally been built by Cunard as one of the hotels to complement their cruise liner shipping division. Today it is Swallow Hotels' southernmost hotel and the *flagship* of the group. It represents their claim to be a national hotel chain. To stay in this hotel costs £55.00 for a single room and £65.00 for a twin/double bedded room. However it does not include the, 'hearty traditional breakfast' but a continental breakfast. (It is not, however, the most expensive hotel in the group. That accolade goes to the group's hotel in Edinburgh which charges between £63.00 and £80.00 per night).

The London hotel is more "glittery" than any of the other hotels that were visited within the Swallow division. There is a large electric light structure in the middle of the foyer which looks like it is meant to be a *modern* chandelier. There is a large foyer/entrance with seating for customers waiting to be allocated a bedroom. There is a troop of baggage and hall porters to assist the customers.

**The George** is a 3 star, 54 bedroomed converted stone built country house on the Military Road between Carlisle and Newcastle adjacent to Hadrian's Wall. This hotel caters for tourists on holiday, both during the week and at weekends. As well as business people during the week. To stay here costs £41.00 and £59.50 per night, single and twin rates respectively. The **White Swan** in Alnwick, the last hotel I visited, is another 3 star establishment with 41 bedrooms. It was originally a coaching inn and the archway, which now separates two parts of the hotel, was built so that rooms for travellers could be built using all the available space. There are still letting bedrooms above the archway. A single room costs £36.50 per night and a twin room £55.00.

**Hilton International** is a corporation with hotels all around the world. It is a transnational hotel company formerly owned by the international air carriers TWA. Therefore Hilton International paralleled the operations of TWA across the world, so that more or less where TWA flew jets HIH supplied bedrooms. This complementing across industrial sectors within the Tourism industries provided for operating profit stability for TWA since HIH has consistently brought in good results ever since its formation out of Hilton Hotels. Also being a part of an international company allows for the spread of capital costs and this applies especially

to an airline company which tends to make its profit during the tourist season across the Atlantic. This is similar to the situation with Swallow Hotels since it is this division which has been the predominant contributor to the continued growth in profit levels for the Vaux group. Consort Hotels is not in such a situation since the management at the central office are not responsible for the profitability of the hotels within the consortium. Save that the policy of pooling resources to generate a superordinate marketing budget must also have a tangible effect on the revenue of each of the participating for those members to believe their investment has accrued an adequate return on capital.

Hilton International caters primarily for the company executive. Like Swallow Hotels, the policy is to attract as big a share of the corporate business accommodation market as possible. To this end it has devised a series of marketing packages for this purpose. Because the hotels are located with a specific target market in mind, business people at work or on holiday at expensive world resorts, then they do not discount their product in order to attract weekend business. Their aim is to be attractive to the business person and to no one else.

HI offers regular customers the opportunity to be members of its *Vista Club* which is promoted using such words of exclusivity as, Select services for our very special guests. Furthermore, if a company agrees to use HI hotels for a minimum of 1200 room nights per year worldwide, or less if on a regional basis, then it can take advantage of the *Executive Business Service*. Membership of these provides for preferential handling of reservations especially if the hotel is fully booked and remedial action needs to be taken. But there is no guarantee of accommodation. There are additional benefits such as the customer's room type will be automatically up-graded, assuming that there is a room in the hotel to begin with? There will also be a welcome gift in the customer's room and a copy of *The Vista Club Newsletter* will be mailed to them, which informs the customer of special offers and additional club services as well as informing the reader of any new Hilton International hotels which have been opened.

Information can be deduced from the marketing reports to facilitate the decision making process when it comes to allocating money between market segments. And how the money should be spent that is, in what format/media it should be presented. The basic premise being to advertise what HI has to offer to those who are and are not using HI hotels and who can afford to do so. Anyone else and it is not worth HI's time and money. As Mr Manley (Assistant Director of Information Systems, HI hotels) put it,

'We do not preach to those in the slums, as they can't afford to come'

Manley

This echoes the phrase to advertise the Vista Club, Select services for our very special guests. Exclusivity and uniformity are at the heart of the success of Hilton International hotels. Only those who can afford to come are made welcome and when they do come they are safe in the knowledge that their treatment will be the same the world over (OBS, 14.2.88, p.45).

The first Hilton International hotel I visited was the **Kensington** hotel, London which has 606 rooms and 35 suites. You enter the hotel through smoked glass doors which open automatically. In the foyer there are wool Thai carpets laid on a brick floor set in a criss-cross pattern. The reception desk is made of alabaster to represent the effect of marble. In the background a pianist plays some light music whilst the customer standing at the reception counter admires the floral decoration of fresh flowers which stands two feet high on the counter. Waiting for someone is made comfortable by the presence of dralon and leather covered sofas. Parlour palms and subdued lighting add to the peaceful atmosphere of the hotel only moments away from the traffic of the West End. The degree of luxury found in this hotel was standard to all the Vista International Hotels that were visited in the USA. The cost for one person spending a night in a room at the Kensington Hilton ranged from £62.00 to £85.00 depending on the standard of the room (decor and interior facilities). Rooms are then classed as low, medium or high standard. The twin/double rates varied from £81.00 to £105.00 per night. The price of a suite in the hotel was higher still.

In 13 Hilton and Vista International hotels there are floors set aside, 'for the discriminating business traveller' these are called Vista Executive Floors (this figure is valid only for 1983). In each hotel in the United States there is a member of staff allocated to take care of these customers and staff the lounge that is provided for them on the exclusive floor. For these customers the term a, "hotel within a hotel" means there are complimentary hors d'oeuvres and cocktails from 5 p.m. onwards in the lounge where the decor reflects the luxury of the hotel and is laid out to imitate a household lounge out of some designer home magazine.

During the period of time that I spent conducting fieldwork with HI in the United States of America I visited all five of their hotels. The hotel in New York has 829 rooms and suites and is located at the World Trade Center. To stay in this hotel on the Executive Business Rate the company would be charged \$148 for a single or a twin bedded room. The cost of staying on the regular rate is higher

it ranges from \$180 to \$205 for a single person (double type room) or a twin type room.

The **Vista International** in Washington DC. has 413 rooms and suites and is located in the centre of the financial and administrative areas of the city. The lobby area is an open plan space with seating of a modern style but reflecting the traditional club chair type. The ceiling is a skylight which lets in lots of light and the rooms look out into this central space. To stay in this hotel would cost between \$150 and \$170 per night depending on whether you were staying in a single or a twin bedded room. The business rate was lower at \$130 per night.

The **Vista International** in Pittsburgh is a skyscraper type where the customer facilities are located on the ground and first (mezzanine) floors and the 610 rooms and suites are in storeys above. Built as a conference center hotel it has a direct access to the adjacent convention hall.

The **HI Vista International** hotel in Chicago trades under its own name, that of **The Drake**. It was built at the beginning of the century out of limestone and marble and is considered to be a hotel of fine cuisine and service. The foyer is accessed through double wooden doors and a small flight of heavily carpeted stairs. To stay in this hotel will cost from \$130 to \$165 per single or twin bedded room. The price of the suites ranges from \$300 to \$1200 per night. This is the standard tariff. The rates for the Executive Business traveller was again lower at \$115 to \$135 per night depending on the time of year.

The **Vista International** in Kansas City is a rectangle accommodation block located in the centre of this mid-west city. It has 574 rooms and suites and all the usual Hilton hotel restaurants and various 'centers'. To stay in this hotel a customer pays from \$88 to \$102 per single room per night and between \$104 and \$118 for a double room per night depending on the standard of the room; low, middle or high. To stay on the Executive floor costs \$117 for a single room and \$133 for a double room. Suites are available from \$208 to \$707 per night.

There is a high canopy roof over the entrance doors which gives the impression of vastness, limitless possibility and the ability never to say, 'No'. It also has the feel, as did all the other hotels, that the customer would not have enough money to exhaust the hotel's ability to provide the customer with what they wanted as long as they had the money to pay for it. It also dwarfs anyone who feels they do not have the right to be there because they do not have the money to give them the confidence to enter the hotel. Hence when I presented myself to the concierge (hall porter) she gave me the once over look of disapproval at my black brogues and trousers, button down shirt, and sweater. She obviously did

not think I warranted a smile, certainly I did not get one and she was only just polite enough to point me in the direction of the staff offices where I could find the Personnel Manager.

Unfortunately, as with all of the HI hotels visited, I was not given the opportunity to appreciate the quality of the rooms and service at first hand. Neither my research budget nor the generosity of HI allowed me the pleasure. My remarks are therefore based on observation only.

## **2 The Forms of Ownership**

Within the hotel trade there are many patterns of ownership. The following are the most common forms of which the three hotel companies illustrate nine. (1) Individual owner/manager with one hotel; (2) Hotel managed on behalf of the owner by a hotel company; (3) Hotel leased from the owner and managed by a hotel company; (4) Hotel franchised to a local owner/manager; (5) Entrepreneur owning and managing a group of hotels; (6) Regional hotel company; (7) Brewery owned hotel group; (8) National hotel company; (9) Consortium of hotels; (10) International hotel corporation owning and managing hotels.

Consort Hotels is a consortium (9) of individual owner/managed hotels (1) and small hotel groups (5). Whilst Swallow Hotels is a brewery owned hotel group (7). But it was a regional hotel company (6) and is aiming to be a national hotel group (8). Hilton International Hotels (10) is also a manager on behalf of local entrepreneurs (2) as well as a leaser of hotels (3).

With 185 member hotels in 1986, Consort was the fifth largest hotel group in the UK. This consortium of independent hotels and hotel groups began in 1981 with twelve members following the demise of Centre hotels. Within Centre there had been a division called Centre Link, which developed a marketing strategy for independent hotels using the marketing expertise of Centre hotels. When Crest Hotels took them over in 1980 they closed down the division. The Executives of Croft Hotels, the founders of Consort Hotels, had used Centre Link to cooperate with other hotels for marketing purposes. This need still existed and finding the other consortiums uncooperative it was decided by such people as Miller, the Chairman of Consort Hotels until 1986, to set up their own consortium. In January 1981 Consort Hotels was established.

For the first three years of the life of Consort hotels, Croft hotels owned the consortium through an interest free loan which in 1984 started to be paid off.



Consort is a trust in as much as the shares of the company are held by the company's solicitors and accountants on behalf of the membership. Mr Miller thinks that this is a distinct advantage financially because if there were shareholders then they would be looking for a return on their investment in the form of a profit and a dividend out of it rather than ploughing the money back into marketing the consortium which is what happens to any surplus cash. This putting back in to the organisation is a great theme with Mr Miller. He sees the greatest strength of the consortium being the members themselves. They are the most valuable resource.

In the beginning the influence of Croft hotels on the way in which Consort hotels operated was perceived by the other members to materially disadvantage them in relation to the marketing of their hotels. Part of Mr Pope's brief when he took over as Chief Executive in 1983 was to break up this relationship. It was based on the close proximity of the two sets of offices, (they are at two ends of the same corridor in a building in York). As Mr Pope explained it was easy to fill Croft hotel rooms and to use material which Croft produced because the staff were down the corridor. Now Consort hotels is financially independent through selling advertising space to suppliers and accruing retrospective money for having purchased a given quantity of goods from them.

The history of Swallow Hotels is different from that of Consort hotels. Being developed out of properties already owned by a regional brewery it has grown from a specific geographic base, that of the north east of England. This was so until its development as a separate division and then company within Vaux in the mid-1970's. Only then did it begin to develop into a more national oriented company.

In 1960 the division of hotels, 'bearing the sign of the Swallow and controlled by Vaux' was established out of the inns and hotels which had been operated by The North Eastern Breweries Ltd. Swallow Hotels was established in 1972 as the hotel division of Vaux Breweries Plc. and resulted from a corporate policy to diversify into areas other than the brewing of beer which is what Cuthbert Vaux and Sons (Brewers) had done since 1806. The division, Swallow Hotels was formed into a limited company in 1975. The symbol of the Swallow is meant to associate the customer with a feeling of home, of a sort of homecoming, "Follow a Swallow - Feel at home".

Still based in Sunderland and at the heart of the Vaux Group, the brewery division is one of several areas of commercial activity which includes: Swallow Hotels, a wine shipper, a group of wine and spirit stores, a number of independent breweries, interests in public houses in Australia, a brewing company in Belgium,

and shares in an independent television company. All the core group activities are controlled from the head office in Sunderland with separate divisional head offices around the country.

The shift in operations is reflected in the operating profit figures. Now with the hotels division contributing 42% of the trading profit in 1986 and the breweries 51% the trend away from the mature brewing market as the main source of profit is continuing, whilst the hotel and leisure division is booming (FT, 9.5.86, p.23). This accounts for the stock market speculation about possible takeover bids for the Vaux Group principally, but not solely, because of the expanding Swallow Hotels division.

Swallow Hotels took advantage of the Government's Hotel Development Incentive Scheme in the late 1960's and early 1970's. In 1968 when the scheme had only just started Swallow announced that they were going to build a 50 bedroomed hotel in Bellahouston, Glasgow which along with the Swallow Newcastle, a 100 bedroomed unit started in 1969, were opened in 1972. In 1971 there was a spurt of activity as the scheme was drawing to a close. Swallow announced in the Annual Report for that year that new hotels were going to be built in Teeside (120 rooms) and in Edinburgh (150 rooms). The latter being opened in March 1973 only just falling inside the deadline for building work which would qualify for grants and loans within the terms of the HDI Scheme. Extensions were built on to hotels in Durham, Kendal, Acklam and Middlesbrough all with the assistance of grants and loans from the HDI Scheme.

Like Swallow, Hilton International Hotels was created out of another company, that of Hilton Hotels. But with Swallow Hotels there were already hotels within the company and all that was done was a change of label to that of *Swallow Hotels*. With HIH a demand had to be created for its product amongst entrepreneurs in the major cities of the world.

In 1949 Hilton International was created within the Hilton Hotels Corporation as the international subsidiary. The first Hilton International was the Caribe in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Now there are 91 hotels in 43 countries across the continents of the world with a total number of rooms at 41,500. Of these 44 hotels are owned outright by HI, 14 are leased from the owners and 33 are managed under contract (IND, 5.9.87, p.1).

In 1964 Hilton International became an independent publicly-owned company, starting its operations with 24 hotels. Under the agreement made with Hilton Hotels, Hilton International was able to use the name 'Hilton' on hotels outside of the United States and in Hawaii and Hilton Hotels continued to use the name

within the United States. Hilton International has used the trade name, 'Vista International' for its hotels within the United States since 1979 when it first started operations within the continent. The name was used to draw a distinction with Hilton Hotels. The hotels which carry the 'Vista International' name are in New York in the World Trade Center; Washington D.C.; Kansas City; and Pittsburgh. Hilton International hotels also manages the Drake hotel in Chicago which operates under its own name. This was the first hotel in continental United States that was managed under the Vista International trade name.

In 1967 Trans World Airlines took over Hilton International which became a wholly-owned subsidiary. The airline reorganised its corporate structure in 1979 and created a holding company known as Transworld Corporation. As well as the airline company it included, Hilton International Corporation, Canteen Corporation, Century 21 (Television), and Spartan Food Systems. In 1984 the airline was sold and in 1985 so was Spartan Food Systems though it retained its 100% interest in Hilton International and the other subsidiaries.

TWA, like Vaux with its diversification in to hotels with Swallow, aimed to use the consistent operating profits generated by HIH since its inception to balance the losses created in the more volatile air transportation business. Vaux being in the brewing trade was experiencing a flattening off in sales in a maturing market. Exacerbated by the increase in sales of canned alcohol in supermarkets in the 1970's and the decline in volume sales of draught and keg beer in public houses. TWA intended their policy of diversification to halt the cyclical pattern of profit and loss. This was achieved through Hilton International Hotels which, unlike national hotel companies such as Swallow Hotels, does not suffer from seasonal fluctuations in letting bedroom occupancy.

Hilton International started with capital of under \$500,000. Today it has book assets of \$450 million and a net worth of \$188 million. One of the assets is the wholly owned subsidiary, Inhilco, which operates the food and beverage facilities outwith the hotels. The largest of these are in the World Trade Center in New York which started operations in 1976. Over half of the \$36 million gross revenue (approximate) of this company is derived from the Windows on the World restaurant on the 107th floor of the Trade Center. As a percentage of sales, revenue from food & beverage operations accounts for 42.9% of the total (Background to Hilton International).

In its first year of operation, 1950, it had a revenue of \$2.2 million which had grown to \$1.2 billion in 1985. The company does not have many physical assets or cash investments because in the majority of cases the hotels are built

and owned by a local investor(s). Hilton International gives planning and building assistance and then manages and operates the hotel on behalf of the local entrepreneur (Background to Hilton International). Its revenue is derived from taking a 'percentage participation in the operational results of the hotel' (Excellence in International Hotel Management p.4). This means that HI takes a cut of the operational profit of the hotel's operations and then pays for its own overheads out of this revenue the remainder of which is HI's profit.

According to the Annual Report for the Transworld Corporation in 1985, Hilton International accounted for 32% of Transworld's revenues of \$2.1 billion, 41% of its operating income of \$168 million and 32% of its assets of \$1.3 billion. Hilton International had increased its revenue by 2.8% due to its increases in average room rates. This was a reversal of its 1984 result compared with 1983 when revenues had decreased by 4.9% due to a decline in Food & Beverage revenue and the strength of the US\$ which affected sales of hotel rooms (pp.7, 29-31).

As a percentage of revenue HI's operating income of \$69 million had increased from a margin of 9.3% in 1984 to 10.6% in 1985: and this had contributed to the increase in the consolidated operating income of \$24.6 million. However HI's average sleeper occupancy declined from 67% in 1984 to 66% in 1985. (Annual Report, pp.31 and 43). Hilton International derives 39% of its \$694 million revenue from its hotels in Europe, Africa & Gulf; 26% from Asia & Australia; 20% from the Western Hemisphere; and 15% from its hotels and Inhilco in the United States. Its major sources of customers are from the United States, Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany and France. These account for 67.2% of all customers. These countries are also amongst the wealthiest countries in the world (Annual Report, pp.7 and 43).

In 1986 it became apparent that there was an anonymous buyer on the Wall Street Market who was steadily accumulating a holding in the stock of Hilton International Corporation. As a result of this Transworld Corporation put Hilton International up for sale. Initially the Dutch Airline company KLM were the main contenders in December (FT, 19.12.86, p.28). However the offer was conditional on the airline's supervisory board accepting the proposed \$975 million acquisition which they did not. In their place United Airlines stepped into the breach and bought Hilton International Corporation for \$980 million. UAL is the holding company for United Airlines, Hertz Rent-a-car and Westin Hotels. With three corporate headquarters amongst the conglomerate (UAL, Westin and Hilton) there are bound to be job losses. If KLM had bought Hilton then it would have been likely that this would not have been the case according to the Director of Personnel for Hilton International.

United Airlines was forecast, in 1986, to still be the largest contributor towards UAL's operating revenue at 71%, compared with 17% for Hertz and 12% for the two hotel chains with Hilton International contributing 7%. The acquisition of Hilton International reduces the holding company's reliance on the turbulent airline market as well as increasing its global presence in the luxury hotel market. For instance Hilton International has been profitable at the operational income level since its creation in 1949 which contrasts with United Airlines profit and loss oscillations in the mid-1980's.

The news broke on Saturday 4 September 1987 that Ladbroke hotels had bought the Hilton International Corporation from UAL-ALLEGIS for £645 million. This catapults Ladbroke's into the top echelons of worldwide hotel chains with 50,000 rooms under its management.

### 3 Organisational Structures

The nature of the decision making in **Consort Hotels** is apparently participative democracy. The individual hoteliers as members put their views forward through their representatives and this becomes the basis of policy within the consortium. However the aim of such decision making is not to determine how an individual hotelier will run their business but to set and maintain guidelines by which the interests of the entire membership will be best served. This will conflict with a member's own plans but that is a part of the consequences of being in a consortium. All members must meet the terms of their contracts concerning investment in their hotels, as well as those for the categories of Crown, Silver or Bronze.

Mr Pope, the Chief Executive of Consort hotels insists that it is not a hotel group or a chain or a company. What it is, is quite simple; it is a consortium of independent hotels and small hotel groups. The Central Office in York is not the *'headquarters'* because that gives the wrong impression to the members. The balance of power is in their hands as the hotel owners with the role of the Central Office being to serve the member's best interests, even if they do not know what they are - yet! The strength of the consortium is the membership agreeing that it is better to be together than to be separate entities in the market place. To be a part of something big, rather than to be small hotels fighting for a share of the accommodation market within their locality.

The Board of Directors are made up of 6 Regional Chairmen drawn from the membership and two Consort hotel executives and a National Chairman. The

regions are; Scotland, Wales, Northern Region, Heart of England, Southern Region and South-West Region. The Regional Chairmen are on the board for a minimum of two years and a maximum of three years. The national chairman is elected on to the board by the whole membership again for a two year minimum and a three year maximum.

The role of the Chief Executive, according to Mr Pope the present incumbent, is one where he,

'... ought to be autonomous so that he can make decisions without referring to the members. If not then you can forget about a consortium'

Pope

As he put it to someone who was enquiring about the operations of a consortium, committee decisions requiring unanimous support are impossible for the day to day running of the Central Office and the execution of the consortium's corporate policy,

'The administration becomes such a headache that it will be a disaster ... he needs to feel that he can make decisions. . . he needs to feel that the members have confidence in him'

Pope

So he is saying that the members must also agree by their very membership to have decisions on how their money is to be spent and how the policy of the consortium is to be developed partly taken out of their hands. There is democracy but there is also central decision making as a day to day necessity. Mr Pope goes on further to elaborate on his role by saying,

'The executives make the decisions and the members get told what to do. They are allowed to think they make the decisions but even the board don't. Success depends on them thinking that. I don't want you to say we manipulate the board. The role of the good Chief Executive is to manipulate the board and let them think they are making decisions. What you can say is that Consort hotels' success is based on quick decisions. But I would get fired by the board if you wrote that they didn't make the decisions.'

The decision making process in **Swallow Hotels** is at two levels. The first, that of corporate policy is determined at the Head Office. Whilst the General Managers of the hotels put those policies into effect and interpret them within pre-determined budget limits. Although there are annual meetings for General Managers and more frequent regional meetings the structure of Swallow Hotels is hierarchical with policy decisions going from the Head Office to the hotels.

Swallow Hotels is one of 5 divisions in the Vaux Group (Vaux Breweries Plc.). Three of the Managing Directors of divisions are also Executive Directors on the main board of Vaux. One of these is the Managing Director of Swallow Hotels, Mr Catesby who joined Swallow Hotels in 1973 and was appointed an Executive Director in 1977.

Within Swallow Hotels there are two main regions, Northern and Southern, which are managed by Regional Directors. There is also an Area Directorship covering the hotels in Rushyford and Durham City, County Durham. The demarcation line between the two regions is as follows. All hotels in the border counties of England (except the hotel in Kendal) and all the hotels in Scotland are in the Northern Region (16 units in 1985). All the hotels south of these are in the Southern Region of which there were 16 units in 1985. The latter includes the Area Directorship of Durham and the London hotel. The General Manager of the latter reports direct to the Managing Director of Swallow Hotels this is by contractual agreement between him and the Managing Director. The Regional Directors, the Durham Area Director and the Marketing Director join the Managing Director to form the Board of Directors for the Swallow Hotels division of the Vaux Group.

At the head office of Swallow Hotels all the executive and administrative functions are based. These are Accounting, Marketing, Purchasing, Personnel, Training, Auditing, Surveying and Stocktaking along with Central Reservations, Conference Enquiries and *Formula One* Club membership. In 1985 43 staff were employed at the head office.

Within each of the main regions the movement of information is between unit General Managers and the Regional Manager who meet formally together. Items and issues are passed down from the main board and the divisional board meetings to these regional meetings. Ideas and problems are discussed and, if necessary, passed onto the divisional and then the main board of directors. This hierarchical structure is continued down at unit level with the General Manager's conveying the results of their meetings to heads of department.

Within the Accommodation department of the London hotel there are also several layers of authority. The department head is called the Reception Manager and the Chef de Brigades (Shift Leaders) report to her. They in turn are responsible for the cashiers and the front desk clerks who like them are all female. The only male members of staff in the Front Office department are the Hall and Baggage Porters and the Front Office Manager.

So the chain of command from front desk clerk to the General Manager is like this; Clerk - Chef de Brigade - Reception Manager - Front Office Manager - Deputy Manager - General Manager. This is bottom loaded with 6 levels of hierarchy. Whereas from the General Manager of this hotel to the Managing Director of the Swallow hotel group it is a direct line of reporting. For other hotels it is by way of a Regional Director.

The pattern of line and staff managerial functions indicated in Swallow Hotels are taken a stage further with the overtly hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of Hilton International Hotels. The chain of command from the junior to the most senior executive has been growing through each of the three hotel companies. Consort Hotels is not aiming to dictate policy to its members. There is a relative geographical closeness of managers in Swallow Hotels. Whilst the distance and division within HIH is used as the expedient to have such a structure.

In the management structure of HI there are three senior Vice Presidents for: Asia & Australia; Western Europe, Gulf & Africa; and Central Europe & Eastern Mediterranean. Furthermore there are Vice Presidents for areas of Asia and the Americas. Continuing down the line of command there are Area Directors and then Directors for particular countries. These positions are staffed by men as at February 1st 1986.

The line management positions report directly to the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. Also reporting to him are the Senior Vice Presidents for Human Resources Development and for Marketing. These are staff management positions and corporate functions. Reporting to the former are the Directors of Training and Personnel; and to the Marketing Vice President, the Directors for Sales; Public Relations; Advertising & Sales; and Information Systems & Research. All of these positions are filled by men with the single exception of the Director for Marketing Information Systems and Research.

The Executive Vice President reports to the President and Chief Executive Officer. Various Vice President and Corporate Directors report directly to him. These include managers for technical services; corporate development; and financial control. There is a clearly defined hierarchy for the Control department; as



there are Area, Regional and Hotel comptrollers. All of the corporate positions at the Headquarters in New York are filled by men without exception. The President reports directly to the Vice Chairman and then to the Chairman who in turn reports to the Board of Directors of the parent company which is now the British hotel group Ladbroke hotels.

To put it simply the line of command is as follows: Executive Assistant Manager (Hotel) - General Manager (Hotel) - Division Manager - Area Vice President - Executive Vice President - President. The only Vista International hotel that supplied me with an organisation chart was the one in Kansas city, the Personnel Manager had one to hand. At the top of the chart is the General Manager, reporting directly to him are the Executive Assistant manager who has overall responsibility for the Food & Beverage operations. These include Banqueting, Kitchen, Restaurants and Room Service. The Rooms Division Manager also reports directly to the General Manager. His responsibilities include the Front Office, Telephone Room, Laundry, Housekeeping and Security. There are other heads of department who report directly to the General Manager; these are Engineering, Sales, Public Relations, Personnel & Training, Data Processing and Financial Control (Comptroller). The latter also reports directly to the Corporate Office in New York emphasising the first principle of HI that any operation that it is involved in must make a profit. The way that HI goes about this is through control of costs.

One example of the line of command in a department will be chosen and that is for the Front Office for the HI hotel in Kensington, London. The head of the department is the Front Office Manager: reporting to him are the Assistant Front Office Managers (Female); the Reservations Supervisor (Female); the Night Manager (Male); and the Head Hallporter (Male). The assistants to the Front Office Manager supervise the Chef de Brigades (Shift Supervisors/Leaders) who oversee the duties of the Front Desk Clerks. There is also an Assistant Night Manager and Night Duty Clerks as well as Assistant Hall Porters and Hall & Baggage Porters.

#### **4 Computerisation and Communication**

The Hotel trade in Britain, unlike the equivalent in the USA, is only in the early stages of utilising computers for the management of the business of making profit out of "service". The American Hotel & Motel Association (1983) in their study of new technology found that in all areas of computerisation there had

been an increase in usage (pp.11-18). This was especially so with systems which encompassed point-of-sale terminals within a total framework of control. Control which focuses on managing labour costs with the aim of reducing them. As well as curtailing the initiative of employees in an industry which has transformed initiative into a standard commodity called "personal service". The study also found a commensurate reduction in the use of older forms of technology such as electronic machines. Little reference was made to manual systems of record keeping or tabular ledgers to account for revenue and costs (pp.19-21).

In the area of communication the AH&MA found that hoteliers were using direct telephone systems for the benefit of their customers. As well as for themselves as this would do away with the need for a telephonist to be employed to make the call for the customer. Furthermore, companies were using telex and facsimile (fax) to transmit information between hotels in the same group and between hotels and head office.

These facilities are available in Britain. However the uptake is slower. **Consort Hotels** at the time of my fieldwork in 1985 were only at the stage of thinking about developing a reservation system which would be suited to their needs. **Swallow Hotels** had been developing their computer facility for Accountancy and Reservations for over five years and were still finding problems in the scope and quality of their software programmes which they had been developing through the computer company Honeywell.

The aim had been to market the software programme as an industry wide system but this never became a possibility. According to the Northern Regional Manager the length of time it took the company to develop their product meant that in retrospect they would have been better to buy a software programme which had already been tried and tested. Other hotel companies in Britain have done this as software programmes have been developed specifically for the Hotel trade. This was one of the problems that Swallow faced when they were first looking for an appropriate system. Their lack of success prompted them to devise one for themselves.

**Hilton International Hotels** have had early experiences of failure with computerised systems especially in the early 1960's. Like Swallow Hotels there have been problems over the application of software programmes to the information that they collect and the data that management want to collate. This process is a continual one to which they put more resources than the two employees Swallow Hotels assigned to the task. Which in turn is two more than Consort Hotels were employing on their plans.

The problem with new technology for hoteliers is firstly, knowing what it is, and secondly, what to do with it. Gamble (1984 a) states that computers are not used by managers in a positive way. What this means is that they are used to assess what has happened in the past rather than using them to plan for the future (pp.24-25). This is at the heart of the reactive style of management in the Hotel trade in Britain. Computers are under utilised within capital. And at the same time used to measure the effectiveness of capital in determining the nature of the relationship between customer and employee/servant. Gamble believes that computers have a positive role to play in strategic management. But this will only be at the expense of employment both volume and quality. Computerisation will allow policy makers within hotel companies to reduce the number of employees and the overall price of labour.

Whilst I was at the central office of **Consort Hotels** it was said in my hearing that the Central Reservations Office was computerised. At best this is only partially true, at worst it is a deceitful presentation of the facts ( the Chief Executive's career has included Marketing). The organisation had a computer which was primarily used by the Accounts Manager as well as the storage and retrieval, as printed reports, of all Group Reservations for member hotels. The Central Reservations Office clerk did not use the machine in all the time I was there. It was through this person that individual enquiries were processed as well as the reservations for the special accommodation packages. At the height of the booking season more than 200 enquiries a week were being made through this clerk.

Such was the use to which the Central Reservations Office put computers that reservation enquiries would be written on scraps of paper and then transferred in triplicate (and sometimes six times) on to a Reservation pad by hand which was then filed and distributed to the customer, hotel, accounts, and the Marketing Executive (in some cases). If mistakes were made then the procedure had to be started from the beginning. Trying to erase a mistake using liquid paper on six copies thinking that it would take less time than starting all over again was usually fallacious, though the clerk tried on several occasions in exasperation at making a mistake at the bottom of the page.

I had told the Chief Executive of my interest in information technology and when he first introduced me to the Central Office of Consort Hotels he showed me the equipment they had which was a Wordprocessor and small computer for storing Accounts and Reservation information. His uncertainty about what constituted "new technology" was highlighted by his reference to the Photocopier, Franking machine for mail, and the Telex machine. At one time the first three items would have been widely regarded as being in the vanguard of the "Office

Automation" age. But now they are so commonplace in offices that they have the "taken for granted-ness" that is assigned to so many items of equipment. They no longer cause a sensation in the way that computers and word processors still do because of the mystery that surrounds how they work.

So those computers and machinery which had been installed were not being used to their full potential. The staff had not been trained how to operate them. The image being projected was of an organisation which had a computerised Central Reservations system. This was untrue. Not only did the Chief Executive have little idea what constituted "new technology" he was prepared to deceive prospective members of the consortium in to believing that he knew what he was talking about from first hand experience. All of this was marketing hype because he was afraid that if they did not present this image then hoteliers would not consider joining Consort Hotels. Which would affect his position as Chief Executive.

Pope went on to discuss the plans for the *proposed* computerisation of the Reservation system. For him the computers are a means of maintaining staff levels at present wage rates. This comes about as a result of a zero labour growth rate and increased productivity per person at a reduced rate of pay because the employee is paid as a typist rather than as a clerk. The "typist" will still be expected to do the same work as the clerk that is, they will be paid to answer telephone calls and input figures. The difference being they will be using a system that is in a standardised procedures manual rather than in their heads. The aim is to reduce the amount of time that is spent retrieving reservation enquiries from files on shelves and use it to answer more telephone enquiries per employee. Using a computer based storage and retrieval system for the Reservations section would mean that the information could be accessed using a short code of alphanumeric characters which would could then be viewed on the operator's screen and the information they would need to operate the system would be at their fingertips rather than in a file, the organisation of which they are only fully aware of. It is this that such standard procedures would eliminate.

Unlike Hilton International and Swallow Hotels, Consort Hotels did not have the facility of a link-up in the form of a message system between each of the member hotels and between them and the central office. Information was relayed en masse to members by post once a week on a Friday afternoon. This caused the management of the consortium exasperation because they could not afford to update information more frequently. This was partly to do with the cost of such a system. But more immediate than that the executives had not decided upon a framework for a software programme. Until that had been concluded there was no

possibility of a more immediate communication facility, except for the telephone and the telex both of which are more expensive ways of transmitting information to over 185 member hotels simultaneously.

In fact the extent of Consort Hotels' horizon is to have the following message appear on each hotel's VDU screen every morning, 'Good morning from all at Consort Hotels'.

During 1979/1980 senior members of the management of Swallow Hotels began to consider more seriously the need for a computerised system for financial control. One of the first people who began to draw up details of what it should do was the Accountant for the hotel company. From its inception the system was designed to be a tool for control and hence this department's on-going enthusiasm to train those responsible for accounts and control in the hotels. Mr Smith praised the way in which this department had approached training - little wonder when the core of the system is a financial software program. He also acknowledged in a later interview that the system had a financial bias and that it was a tool for control rather than one that could be said to be customer/sales oriented.

Swallow Hotels in conjunction with Honeywell, the computer firm, developed the basic system and the first hotel went on-line with it in 1981. This was the Seaburn Hotel which is adjacent to the head office. Since then, other hotels in the group have had the system installed the latest being The London International Hotel in 1985.

The company employs two people to train the Reception and Control Staff in each hotel as the system is being installed: this is conducted at the head office and at the hotel itself. For example, the Head Receptionist, Controller and General Manager of the Hilltop Hotel, Carlisle went to head office to be inducted into the operations of the system before it was installed in their hotel. These trainers also supervise the procedure by which additional software programs and modifications are added to the general system and they monitor the way in which the staff respond to them, as well as considering any new areas for automation, such as collating statistics on the nationality of customers. For example, the Royal County Hotel could spend a Sunday afternoon doing this by hand but a hotel the size of the London International with a potential daily turn around of 800+ customers, the majority of whom are foreign, makes such a task impractical without the use of a computing facility unless staff levels are maintained.

What is perverse is that the software programme for the Reservations index can not collate statistics on nationality. Which meant that these stopped being collected at the Swallow Hotel in London because of the volume of registration

forms which would have to be sorted by a reduced complement of Receptionists. The previous computer system at the London hotel had been able to collect the information on nationality at the press of a button. This turned out to be a saving of several hours per day as revealed when an attempt was made to collate the information manually. For a period of several months no such data had been collected which meant the General Manager was breaking the law.

Initially it was a system primarily for Accountants, even though it also included the Front Office and Reservation programs now it is also embracing the administration of wages, salaries and personnel & training records. As Mr Reed (Southern Regional Director) stated, the system is a faster way of doing the things they were already doing manually but now with expensive capital machinery. The information that can tell them, . . . who is coming next weekend . . . before the people have even thought about coming is not being used. They have the system for reactionary reasons rather than strategic ones. As it was put to me they would be considered as, . . . one of those quill pen moribund companies (Catesby) if they did not have such a system for financial control. As Mr Catesby, the Managing Director of Swallow Hotels and an Executive Director of the Vaux Group, put it computers became rather sexy things which you had to have!

So the reason for the introduction of computers is for a financial purpose. They are seen as a means of controlling labour costs and therefore increasing profit and are also faddish and lacking in understanding. Accountants have a strong hold over the operations of the hotels in these two companies. The rationale for the introduction of computers into Hilton International Hotels was the same as that of Swallow Hotels, the control of costs and revenue in order to maximise profit.

In 1972 the computer hardware company Burroughs installed the first 'Back Office' system into the The Queen Elizabeth Hilton International hotel in Montreal, Canada. In subsequent years 'Back Office' systems were installed in other HI hotels in North America. ('Back Office' systems are financial accounting systems used to manage and control costs and revenue of the hotel). In 1976 the first HI Front Office computerised guest reservation system was installed in the same hotel.

In 1986, 70 of the 90 hotels managed by HI had computerised financial control systems and Front Office systems and a further 23 are being evaluated, with the aim of matching the appropriate technology to their needs. So by 1988 all of the hotels in HI (by then 93) will have been visited by personnel from the Data Centre and the information passed over to the staff at the CDI. After all of the hotels have had computer systems installed up to their needs then there will be more time for evaluation on a regular basis. The aim is to have all the 50 major hotels

using the IBM 36 System and the HIS software by the end of 1987. The other hotels can not utilise this system because they are too small (100 to 150 rooms) to make full use of it.

In 1979 IBM (International Business Machines - a computer hardware manufacturer) introduced their latest hardware system onto the market. It was termed the 34 System which HIH adopted as their main computer system and they have stayed with IBM since then upgrading their system to the standard of the 36 System in the 1980's. There has not always been such a compatible relationship between IBM and hotels bearing the name Hilton.

In the early 1960's IBM developed a business system which, in pure Titanic spirit, they said would never fail in its capability to deal with work loads. Well the system did not have a back up facility, like the Titanic, which was a bad idea because it could not cope with an emergency and when the system failed (crashed !) all the inputted data was lost out of the computer's memory and the innovators, IBM, looked foolish.

Credibility had to be restored for the work of data processing after that. It took all of the next two decades for confidence to be restored and at least until the 1970's for any real interest to be taken in computerised financial systems by Hilton International Hotels.

From the mid-1980's onwards computers have begun to be used strategically in HIH, to collect marketing and sales information, as the basis for increasing profit became more, 'scientific' in its approach. This has meant that the value of such information has increased the cost viability of such a system, especially as there are more hotel companies in the 1980's competing in the international market place for foreign and domestic travellers than there were in the 1970's when Hilton International and Inter-continental hotels led the market.

HI collects information on the profiles of their customers through the Marketing Database programme. This is strategic way of using the information that the hotel has on their guests in a way which allows them to produce a marketing database and also facilitates them in the allocation of the advertising budget. This was initiated by HI and HIS responded. This produces a series of reports about where the customers of a particular spending category come from (location and customer type) and this type of information can be collated from the inputted data derived from the customer's registration form when they checked into the hotel. This is an easy way of finding out about your customers from a system which is justified by the contribution it can make to controlling costs and revenue.

It makes it more efficient when, at a marginal additional cost, such marketing information can be gleaned using an additional program which is added to the core financial software program package.

Information can be deduced from the marketing reports to facilitate the decision making process when it comes to allocating money between market segments and in what format/media advertising should be presented. The basic premise being to advertise what HI has to offer to those who are and are not using HI hotels and who can afford to do so. Anyone else and it is not worth HIH's time and money.

DELPHI, a software programme for revenue control, is used to draw up a yearly marketing plan for example, mix of sales expressed as a proportion of total sales. From this basic tabulation, an assessment can be made as to whether the budgetted figures for a particular customer category are going to be achieved. Furthermore, if lead times between the time an enquiry is made and the event is confirmed are inputted into the system then the program will calculate whether the resulting extrapolated sales pattern will meet the budget or will be + or - what is anticipated for the business year. This means measures can be taken in advance to remedy the situation rather than having a year end retrospective assessment and then a rather crude prediction of the sales for the following year.

HOTEL DATABASE is a system unique to HIH, the information that is stored is available to anyone in the corporation subject to their security level clearance. The premise the system works on is that there is only one answer that is accurate and that is the one calculated by the accountants in the financial control department. So if the figure for room occupancy and the corresponding revenue is not agreed upon then it is the accountants that are correct and the front desk clerks have inputted the data incorrectly: the belief of the accountants is that, 'Computer reports tend to be truth'(Manley) All other numbers that are presented must be corrected to the true figures. That is the aim of using the system.

The system also has the capability of producing spreadsheet models for use in Accounting. The aim is to create standard models for departments to monitor business performance against budgets. Some of the models will be standard only for the individual hotels through custom and practice and so will not be uniform to the corporation. However those models which are uniform will provide the documentation which will be used in training programmes to improve performance, generate the information needed to compare hotel unit performance. And also because they are uniform it means that training procedures can be standardised when installing a computer system into the hotel and support of staff is facilitated



by a tried and tested accounting system. It means that the experience accumulated in other hotels can be passed on in the form of written procedures to other hotels: so that the custom and the practice becomes standard in all of the HI hotels.

HIH have also established a Hilton Data Centre. The functions of this unit within HI are to (1) undertake research and development into software programs, how they can be modified, updated and made more efficient; (2) oversee the installation of systems into HI hotels around the world; (3) provide support and on-going training for hotel staff who have to operate the machines. This Centre in close liaison with Institute for Career Development which has as its main function the provision of advanced courses in computer operations. The staff go out and train the hotel personnel who are then responsible for the training of staff after that.

At present there is an annual meeting for the 22 Area Database personnel, and a newsletter goes out to each of the hotels about the use of computers. Each area person goes back and organises a meeting for the Information Support Managers for each of the hotels where the particular hotel's training needs are specified and acted upon and the appropriate equipment sent to the hotels. At present \$500,000 is spent each year on computer education in HI hotels. Though as the staff become more proficient in the use of the systems in their hotel and train new recruits then this figure will reduce. 'It is a mammoth task to bring everyone up to speed but when it's done then we're the same as every other department (Manley).

Hilton International also has its own exclusive worldwide system of communication called HILTONET. It allows messages to be sent between hotels and to HI headquarters in New York, USA. It allows the hotels to be on-line to the Hilton Reservation system (HILTRON) based in Dallas, Texas, USA. Which is owned and operated jointly by Hilton International Hotels and Hilton Hotels.

The reasons why there is such a system in operation is because it saves many \$100 000's per year in telex and telephone bills. According to Manley, the Assistant Director of Information Systems, although it would be cheaper to send a telex between New York and Paris it is more expensive to send one to an under-developing country. HILTONET is more reliable as a means of communicating between their hotels and overall it is cheaper. Each hotel can be attached to HILTONET if the hotel owner is prepared to pay for the facility. Also this system is sold for a profit to Budget, the car hire company, and to HILTRON outside of the USA. Further capacity will be added as the demand by HI hotels grows, and any excess capacity will be sold.

There has been a lot of “talk” about the imminent arrival of the “automated office”. As if this will herald in an age of the paperless office staffed by machine minders rather than thinking people. Advertisements in the pages of the *Financial Times* project this image of limitless possibility in the age of new technology side by side with the reports of health risks from working with machinery which can cause physical damage to the eyes as well as to muscle which is forced to maintain a certain posture for hours on end. But that is of less importance than the savings that can be accrued through less bureaucracy and a reduced labour bill. However the “hard” reality of “office automation” is different to the marketing hype.

The impression which was made upon me, both by what I saw and what I was told, was that there is a great deal of paperwork involved in the administering of a customer’s reservation. This is particularly noticeable in the work of the Desk Clerk and to a lesser extent in that of the Cashier. However the volume of paper reaches its peak output during the audit (day or night); it could take up to 30 minutes each night to prepare the printed reports from the computer!

The Reception Office is dominated by paper, without the pieces of paper there would be no organisation. A brief description of the administration of a customer’s reservation enquiry through to the point of settlement in the case of the London International Hotel will highlight this. All the correspondence, including telex messages, are photocopied by the Receptionist at the start of the afternoon shift (one photocopy for Reception and two for the Accounts department). The original copy, with the photocopy of the registration form stapled to it goes into the top drawer of a filing cabinet arranged alphabetically by surname with the photocopy put into an expandable file, again by surname, which is placed beside the pile of registration forms (printed off the night before) which are for the next day’s arrivals. Once the customers have registered, the correspondence is transferred over to the Cashier who places the wallet at the side of the portable room rack file (divided by room number so that a customer’s registration form is at hand in the event of a query at the time of settlement).

The previous day’s reservations correspondence is taken out of the expandable wallet and filed by day of arrival and all the original copies (minus the copies of the registration forms which are detached by hand and thrown away) are taken out of the top drawer of the filing cabinet and sent stapled together with the customer’s bill to the financial control department and are sent on to the customer if they have opted to pay on account for example, a company employee. All the other correspondence, including the duplicated material, is kept in a filing cabinet drawer and each month’s correspondence is put into a manila envelope and stored on a shelf in a cupboard in the back section of the Reception Office. This is so that

any queries about a customer's bill can be answered using this information. But as one of the Cashiers remarked all these envelopes get mixed up in the cupboard and you can not find what you need in order to check an enquiry. As the cupboard fills up a Porter transports them in cardboard boxes to a storeroom where they become, "Dead Files". In the George Hotel, Chollerford they had had a bonfire of all their "Dead Files", obviously they had been useful pieces of paper.

With the advent of the computer in the hotels I visited there has been the opportunity to interrogate the same information in a number of different ways. For example customer profiles can be compiled for particular room types and hotel services so that advertising can be targeted towards the most profitable market segment. Statutory information concerning foreign visitors can be quickly collated from the data in the Reservations index, although Swallow Hotels in 1985 still had not had a software programme written to deal with this. Gamble (1984) believes that this type of information is not reported on because the management of hotel companies have still to realise the potential of the systems they are dealing with in respect of generating strategic data for corporate and hotel decision making. The aim is rather to demonstrate that the computer can produce the same information that the management were getting by hand in the format of a computer print out. This was the view of the Southern Regional Manager, Mr Reed, who thought Swallow Hotels were not utilising the reports drawn from the data held in their system.

'...currently we've designed the system to accomplish the old tasks. We've never actually looked at them and asked what contribution can this computer make in terms of so much more information produced in terms of so much more accurate decision making...it ought to be telling who is coming next weekend from its great store of memory banks before the people have even thought about coming'

Reed

HIH on the other hand used their data to forecast trends in business and customer types for the products and facilities they offer. It may be that what is needed are more intelligent software programs to handle the data so as to present it in a form that is more easily understood by the management of such companies as Swallow Hotels who are not in a position to have their own Data Service Department and the other support facilities which HIH employs.

Some of the information that is printed on the reports is duplicated on a number of different reports which are themselves duplicated for circulation around the hotel's management and senior personnel, including the Front of House Manager. There were times during the night audit in the group hotel in London when copies were printed in the knowledge that they were to be thrown away because there was nobody to read them. Quite correctly the Front of House Manager remarked that another forest had been felled. However he was in a position to get the program altered to compensate for this over capacity but he did not. One of the Assistant Front Office Managers at the Kensington Hilton remarked that she does not see much use for all the computer print-outs, all they seem to get are memos telling them what they have not done and/or what they are to do: they do not see anything made out of all the figures which would be of use to them or to anybody.

It seems that the proliferation of paper has more to do with the ease with which such reports can be generated rather than their inherent usefulness to anyone in particular; more a prop and a means of rationalising the use of such a system than taking advantage of its ability to store information and have it retrieved in order to save time for the Reception staff. As one of the Assistant Front Office Managers at the Hilton International in Kensington put it,

'We produce all these reports but we don't see any benefit for ourselves'

An example from the Swallow Hotel in London has to do with the legal requirement by the police that the destination of all foreign customers is recorded. The computer system for the Swallow Hotel group allowed this information to be stored but there was not a program to retrieve it in a collated form: the attempt to do this manually for the London hotel was impractical given the time it consumed. On one evening two members of the Reception staff spent nearly two hours counting that day's number of foreign customers, for the Royal County, Durham it would take a Sunday afternoon to do the whole week's foreign customer arrivals.

In all of the provincial hotels in the Swallow Hotel group that I visited there was use made of manually written charts because of the lack of trust placed in the system. This had a human face to it in that it was expressed as a dislike of the head office staff; it was a short hand term to express their frustration at their powerlessness. They did not feel they were informed about the functions of the system, and as a result they developed apathy and indifference to the 'advantages'

of the computerised guest reservation and storage system. The manual charts were something known and understood, something they were in control of and hence could trust implicitly: the Reception Manager of the Royal County Hotel, Durham had this to say about her trust in the system she had to use,

‘They Head Office want to do away with the charts but the system is so slow it doesn’t give me any encouragement’

Anderson

It is as if their own handwriting just would not let them down and they knew the computer could and would at any time without warning. The Head Receptionists at the hotels in Carlisle and Chollerford had retained the daily letting sheet showing arrivals, departures and stayovers (that is those people who decide to stay on an extra night(s) after their original reservation dates). With the computer system such people would have to be re-registered into the system by the staff or else a final bill would be produced as they are in the system as due to depart that day and this means entering into the series of indexes again to process the customers reservation details. Although the Head Receptionist must do this she also utilises her daily letting sheet for her own convenience because the machine is programmed to list arrivals and departures separately, with stay overs being included in the arrivals and this she finds cumbersome, more so than having to duplicate the administration. The manual files were an added extra which they had to make time for. The staffing of each department was based on the fact that they had a computerised system and not the manual system. They were caught both ways; in that they were not helped in their work by a system which could fail them at any time yet their own piece of mind was sacrificed for budgetted labour cost limits.

In the Hilton International Kensington it got to the point that the Reservation Clerks had an Accommodation Density Board (a relic of the pre-computer era) on which were placed red triangles to indicate which days in the current and future months the availability of accommodation is low. This means that any enquiries for that day must be checked first in the appropriate index before a confirmation is given to the customer, whereas before the clerk would have had a chart to refer to at hand for such crucial information. This is still the case in the Royal County Hotel, Durham because of the mistrust in the system’s effectiveness and reliability and because there is no one member of staff whose sole job is to answer enquiries

and directly input the accommodation details into the system whilst the customer is relaying them over the telephone.

It was argued by Senior Executives and Personnel Management that no staff were being laid off but there again staff need not be hired or replaced when promoted. In any case staff reductions are difficult to assess when the rate of work can increase because of a greater through-flow of customers, averaging only one night stays; or using multi-skilled employees as a pool of labour during the busiest times of the day (check-in and check-out) (Vista International Hotel, Pittsburgh); changing shift patterns so that part-time staff can be used instead of full-time employees (Swallow Hilltop Hotel, Carlisle); wanting to use telephonists to deal with enquiries for reservations including inputting the information into the system whilst at the same time answering all the telephone calls (Royal County, Durham). All of these are ways in which the growth of labour can be slowed down as well as redescribing jobs in such a way that there is a reduction of responsibility and so a commensurate reduction in the salary (Consort Hotels, Central Reservations Office; Hilton Data Services).

Before the computerised guest reservation and billing system had been installed a Telephonist in a Hilton International Hotel for example, had had to enquire of a Desk Clerk the room number of a guest staying in the hotel so that their incoming call could be correctly directed: but now that the telephone operators can find this out for themselves there is less need for the Desk Clerk to be involved in this type of information provision. So the logic went on to dispense with a number of front Desk Clerks for this very reason.

Furthermore, the number of Night Audit personnel was reduced from 9 to 5 members of staff: with the aim of eliminating all of the Night Audit staff and delegating their work to the day Front Office staff, whose numbers had already been cut. According to Manley HIH was not alone in this cost cutting measure; both Hyatt and Inter-continental Hotels carried out similar programmes in 1979. As he stated,

'If we eliminate staff it [the computer system] pays for itself.'

Manley

The underlying premise being the same for other industrial sectors that of,

'... a cost feasible system.'

Manley

This is ironic given that the "service" industries are based on the smiling presence of a person. Without a smile or a face what is being offered by Hilton International can hardly be described as a service.

This policy of rationalisation will be further extended by cutting out the need for manual inputting of information by operators who have to transfer the results from say the Point of Sales terminal's report and feed them into the computer along with data from the Front and Back Offices. With the automatic transfer of information after the sub-totalling at section/department level, then more analysis can be carried out using less labour: the only staff contact will be at the point of initial input that is when a customer is for example; purchasing food and/or beverage, paying their hotel room bill. After that the information will be collected and collated and then arranged into predetermined patterns; this is the basic structure of the Hotel Database system.

Also jobs which are highly skilled and highly paid such as operation analyst have their duties, 'farmed out' to middle or even low to middle management; or the jobs which are considered to be of junior department head status are given to graduates; or more skill (responsibility) is added to someone else's job such as a Head Receptionist. This delegating results in management control and responsibility being dissipated amongst staff who are already on the payroll. So some staff such as operation analysts who are being paid US\$34,000+ per annum are being reduced whilst other staff who are being paid considerably less are doing more work and are being paid no more for the additional "skill" and management responsibility. A Food and Beverage Analyst gets paid US\$23,000 or in Germany DM40,000. However like the operation analysts they are being reduced because their skills are redundant with the advances in computer software. Once in the vanguard of the drive towards efficiency they have been discarded as being too expensive. The "clever" machines do away with expensive labour.

The aim is to be in a position, with respect to employees, where,

'... we don't need the people anymore'

Manley

This is a fallacy in an industry which sells “service” through the commodification of the personality of employees. Without them there would be nothing for the Hotel trade to sell to the consumer. This is a dilemma for the accountants in the industry who prefer dealing in profit than with people.

Of the three companies Hilton International has more obviously embraced the cost advantages of utilising new technology in its world wide business operation. Swallow Hotels is committed to developing its system of control and administration of its revenue. Whilst Consort Hotels sees the advantages of computerisation as a means of attracting more members and for the dissemination of information which will increase the profit advantage of belonging to Consort Hotels. None of the companies are committed to the welfare of their employees as workers and people. The business advantage of computerisation outweighs consideration of employees’ welfare or their continued employment at the same rate or to the same level as before computerisation took place.



## Chapter 5

### Regulating the Labour Market

This chapter will look at the way in which the Hotel industry and the Tourism industry generally can be seen as a source of employment in an economy that is increasingly reliant on the “service industries” for the generation of revenue. As a continuing back cloth to this chapter the position of women workers will be highlighted since it is in the “service industries” that the vast majority of female labour is employed. It is therefore pertinent to begin with a quote from a study of *Sexual Harassment at Work* about the status of female labour in the market.

'In spite of the Equal Pay Act, women still earn only 73% of the average male wage and in spite of the Sex Discrimination Act, 60% of women work in three occupational categories: clerical, welfare and education. In offices, women hold three-quarters of the available jobs, but only one-fifth are in management positions.'

Sedley and Benn, 1982, p.4

#### 1 The Labour Market in the Tourism industry

##### 1.1 The Employment Myth!

With reference to Table 16, 18.7% of all employment in the Hotel trade is in London. Added to this, 40% of all employment in hotels is centred in the South-East of England. Moreover, England accounts for 80% of all employment with the remainder shared between Scotland (14.6%) and Wales (5.4%). Comparing the figures there were 9000 fewer employees in 1981 than in 1971. Of the total for the Hotel and Catering Class 66 (SIC 1980) one-third was made up of employees in Hotels and Other Residential establishments in 1971. This had dropped to 24%

**Table 16 Hotels and Other Residential Establishments: Distribution of Employment by Regions in England, and in Wales and Scotland 1971 (and 1981)**

Region	1971 (10% Sample)	%	1981 <sup>1</sup>	%
North	1605	8.7		
Yorkshire & Humberside	1429	7.7		
North-West	2661	14.4		
East Midlands	777	4.2		
West Midlands	1341	7.3		
East Anglia	676	3.7		
South-East (excl. GLC)	3926	21.3		
Greater London	3452	18.7		
South-West	2777	15.1		
Total England	18,444	80.0		
Total Wales	1254	5.4		
Total Scotland	3365	14.6		
All Employees in the Hotel trade (SIC 6650)	23,063	100.0	22,162	100.0
All Employees in Hotel and Catering (SIC 66)	68,852	0.97% <sup>2</sup>	93,051	0.96% <sup>2</sup>
All Employess in Employment in GB	2,373,261	33.5% <sup>3</sup>	2,291,619	23.8% <sup>3</sup>

1. Because of differences in the presentation of figures in the 1981 Census a direct comparison within the industrial activities for employment by region was not possible.

2. Figure represents that part of the total working population which is employed in SIC Economic Activities 6650 and 6670 combined.

3. Figure represents that part of the SIC Group 66 (Hotels and Catering) which is employed in SIC Economic Activities 6650 and 6670 combined

Source: 1971 Census: Economic Activity, Part 2; 1981 Census: Economic Activity.

by 1981. As a percentage of all employees in employment in Great Britain, the figure for Hotels and Other Residential establishments had decreased from 0.97% in 1971 to 0.96% in 1981 \*. Thereafter the percentage fluctuates with 1900 em-

\* The SIC 1980 Economic Activities 6650 (Hotel trade) and 6670 (Other tourist accommodation) represent the previous SIC 1968 Minimum List Heading 884 (Hotels and Other Residential Establishments)

ployees being made unemployed/redundant in 1982/83. However employment has risen by 9700 since 1984. There are, as of March 1987, 247,000 people employed in the Hotel and Tourist Accommodation trade. In 1986 employment in SIC Class 6650+6670 represented 1.367% of all employees in Great Britain (see Table 17). Though as Gripaos (1985) realistically states in a climate of increasing net unemployment figures this is no more than, 'a bigger slice of a declining employment cake'(p.301).

There have been a number of predictions made over the years as to how many jobs are created through Tourism each year. The most common average figure for the mid-1980's is 50,000 full-time jobs per year \*. For example, in 1985 the two largest hotel and catering companies Grand Metropolitan and Trusthouse Forte employed 137,195 and 45,000 employees respectively. This represents 20% of the total employment in Hotel and Catering (SIC Group 66) which was 912,400 (June) (see Table 17). Such concentration of employment is not uncommon in manufacturing, and is yet another instance of the similarities between the two sectors. In 1986 Grand Metropolitan employed 12,121 more people and Trusthouse Forte planned to take on another 1500 workers (FT, 26.11.86; Goldsmith, 1986, p.3).

Other gross estimates have included 30-35,000 (Parsons, 1987, p.343), 40,000 and 80,000 full-time jobs per year leading to 400,000 new jobs by 1990, both figures were quoted in the same article (FT, 12.7.85, p.7). Moreover it was estimated that up to 70,000 full-time jobs were created in 1985 (Bluck, 1986, p.2; FT, 7.2.86, p.6). The Department of Employment claimed in their report, *Action for Jobs in Tourism* (1986 c) that in the year 1984/85 43,000 new jobs were created (p.7). This figure was contradicted by Medlik (1986) in a speech made at the FT Conference on, 'The Prospects for Tourism in Britain', he claimed that only 20,000 *net* full-time jobs were created during 1984/85 (p.9). What is pertinent to the analysis of all these estimates is Medlik's use of the word *net* (my emphasis). All the other figures are gross numbers and do not take into account labour turnover and redundancy rates. In the discussion of the figures presented in Table 18 it will be more clear that employment in the Hotel and Tourist Accommodation trades is not commensurate with stability and tenure. This is confirmed by the 13,636 redundancies in the Hotel and Catering Industry since 1983. The Hotel trade has felt this most keenly (see Table 17).

Furthermore if the various estimates are accurate, and they can not all be, then the rate of employment growth in the Tourism and Leisure industries, would range

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\* Bluck, 1986, p.2; BTA, 1986 a, pp.2 and 6; BTA, 1986 b, p.10; Forte, 1985, p.2; FT, 3.9.86, p.7; D of E, 1985 a, para.15

from 1.6% on Medlik's figures to 6% on BTA figures as quoted in the Financial Times. These assume a base level of 1.25 million employed in those industries for 1985 (DofE, 1986 c, p.7). The information presented in Table 17 shows that in 1985 the rate of employment growth in the Hotel and Tourist Accommodation trades was 3.9% (June 1984 to June 1985). Which had increased to 4.5% for 1985/86. In 1987 this fell to only 1.5%, the first time since 1984 that the rate of growth had been so small.

One question that needs to be asked is, are these growth rates uniform or are they skewed towards London and away from the provinces. As noted previously nearly one-fifth of employment in tourism is found in London. In a letter in the Financial Times this question about bias is referred to when the figure of a 5% growth in employment for tourism is applied to the North East (19.9.85, p.29). This, according to the writer, would mean the creation of 3000 new jobs on a base of 60,000 workers employed in tourism in the region. It is always possible but is it realistic? This presupposes everyone is certain about what figures are included for employment in the 'Tourism and Leisure' Industry's and that once agreed that the data is accurate!

The base figure of 1.25 million quoted above includes employment in SIC 1980 Classes 977 (Libraries, Museums, Art Galleries) and 979 (Sports and Other Recreational Activities) which are not included in the data used in Tables 16, 17, 18 and 19. Only those categories which come under the title of 'Hotel and Catering' (SIC Group 66) are included. Employment in June 1985 stood at 912,400. This is a continual methodological problem when using statistics issued by the Department of Employment. Parsons (1987) utilises what is termed the, 'three enabling activities' which includes Hotel and Catering as well as Travel & Passenger Transport; Tourism, Related Leisure and Associated Services (p.338).

However opinion varies as to how important each of these three categories are to Tourism as a whole. Morrell (1985) claims that 48% of all employment in the 'Hotel and Catering' industry's is directly attributable to expenditure on tourism whilst for the other two categories of Transport and Leisure services it is 10% and 23% respectively (pp.10-11). This makes the Hotel trade an important source of work within tourism since it makes up one-third of all employees in SIC Group 66 (Hotel and Catering) which in turn accounts for more than half of the employment in the 'enabling activities'. Or if one includes only 'Leisure services' then employment in 'Hotel and Catering' accounts for nearly 90%, thus increasing the importance of the Hotel trade as a source of work.

The figures Parsons uses for calculating employment in 'Hotel and Catering' are presented in a Tourism industry report published in the *Employment Gazette*

(August, 1987); it is stated that there are 921,900 employees in SIC Group 66. Whilst the figure for the same set of workers presented in Table 8:1 of the Labour Market Data in the *same* issue of the *Employment Gazette* is 932,900. Within each set of statistics every individual SIC Class total is different. For example, employment for the Hotel trade with Other Tourist Accommodation (SIC Class 6650+6670) is 284,500 in the Tourism report, whilst in the Labour Market Data it stands at 288,700, a difference of 4200 people. How is it possible to make meaningful conclusions concerning employment volume and growth when the statistics produced by the same government department are inconsistent? Certainly any conclusions based on “official” data needs to highly qualified and treated with great care.

One of the general myths of employment in the “service occupations”, which Jenkins and Sherman (1979) derisively term the ‘pink collar’ sector, is that it will absorb the displaced labour created by the decline in manufacturing (pp.123, 171-172). The reasoning being that in such labour intensive industries, which are apparently growing each year, there will be employment opportunities (ETB, 1986,pp.7-9).

According to an article in the Financial Times the share of “services” in employment has risen by just over one million in the period 1984-1985. Whilst in the same period employment in agriculture, mining, construction and manufacturing has declined by nearly three million jobs (FT, 14.10.85, p.20; 25.10.85, p.24). Though in an article earlier in the month the British Invisible Export Council are quoted as stating that the figure may be as high as 5.4 million (FT, 14.10.85, p.1).

Over this period the shift towards “services” and away from industry has made Britain one of the foremost de-industrialised countries in the world. Though the effect on employment in manufacturing has been greater than on its share of industrial output. This is because more goods are being made that can substitute previously purchased services. For example, the manufacture of frozen meals as a substitute for going out to a restaurant for a meal which in turn had been an alternative to cooking a meal in the kitchen using raw ingredients. Unless manufacturing can continue to substitute tangible goods for directly purchased services then employment will continue to decline. And it will not be absorbed through “service occupations” (FT, 25.10.85, p.24).

In an industry wide survey conducted by the Institute of Manpower covering 8 million workers it was stated that the “service industries” will increase their employment by 3.6% per year between 1985 and 1990 whilst employment in production will fall by 8%. With Leisure and Other Services (including the Hotel trade) being the largest source of employment (FT, 13.6.86, p.10). Furthermore,

the survey highlighted skill changes within these sectoral shifts with the role of the multi-skilled craft worker being increasingly predominant. This will be the case in the Hotel trade if people are also prepared to work part-time. So the trade wants multi-disciplinary workers who are prepared to work without the security of a full-time contract. Whether it is a de-industrialised or a post-industrialised society that Britain is in, or moving inexorably towards, one fact is clear employment in services can not match the unemployment created over the last decade in industry.

The notion that for example, the Hotel trade is an inherent user of large amounts of people is being eroded through the adoption of computerisation (FT, 25.10.85, p.24). We have seen this in relation to Hilton International Hotels. This is firstly reducing the amount of repetitive jobs for example, in the Front Office. And is now moving into the area of the hotel most associated with craft skill, that is the kitchen where processes are becoming automated. Indeed the industry may be growing in terms of gross employment but the effects of seasonality and fluctuations in the volume of tourist expenditure has influenced the rate of redundancy and the use of part-time workers. Though as will be shown later this point concerning part-time employment may have more to do with the adoption of flexible working practices than the immediate reaction by management to their hotel's business performance.

Another criticism of this gross attitude to employment generation is that it does not take in to account the type of work that is available. Later in relation to the discussion on Table 19 it will be obvious that the majority of the work in the Hotel trade as well as in Tourism is unskilled of the type associated with cleaning, washing, hall portering, food & beverage service. These are all low paid low status jobs. They could be unattractive and unsuited to the skills and experience of the redundant worker. This could be seen as indicative of the idea proposed by Braverman (1974) that when technology induced unemployment in for example a craft sector means that workers seek work in a less skilled industry there is deskilling by sectoral shift in employment patterns (pp.426-428).

## 1.2 The Pattern of the Employment Trend

With reference to Table 17 it can be seen that the trend in employment within the Hotel and Tourist Accommodation trade has not been consistent. The figures have ranged from 202,100 in March 1984 to 299,900 employees in September 1987. The months which show the highest levels of employment are June and September

**Table 17 Employment in the Hotel trade and in Other Tourist Accommodation 1982-1988**

SIC 1980		Employees in Employment					(10%)		
Year	Month	6650 & 6670	+/-	%	Total working population	%	Group 66	%	Group 66 Redundancies
1982	M	21,950							
	J	26,740			2,916,000	1.278 <sup>1</sup>	83,600	31.9 <sup>2</sup>	
	S	26,820							
	D	20,960							
1983	M	20,320							
	J	26,220	-5.2	-1.9	2,057,200	1.274	83,000	31.6	
	S	26,530							
	D	21,100							4.000 <sup>3</sup>
	Self employed	142.0							
1984	M	20,210							
	J	26,570	3.5	1.3	2,074,100	1.281	86,810	30.6	
	S	26,200							
	D	22,890							3.117
	Self employed	161.0							
1985	M	22,680							
	J	27,630	10.6	3.9	2,101,100	1.31	91,240	30.3	
	S	28,050							
	D	24,440							2.973
	Self employed	170.0							
1986	M	242.1							
	J	28,870	12.4	4.5	2,110,500	1.367	93,290	30.9	
	S	28,920							
	D	25,570							3.546
	Self employed	185.0							
1987	M	24,700							
	J	29,300		1.5	2,179,700	1.344	95,900	30.5	
	S	29,900							

1. Figure represents that part of the total working population which is employed in SIC Economic Activities 6650 and 6670 combined.

2. Figure represents that part of the SIC Group 66 (Hotels and Catering) which is employed in SIC Economic Activities 6650 and 6670 combined

3. The figure is an annual total of the notified redundancy figures for those workplaces which have laid off 10 or more employees in a month.

Sources: Employment Gazette, December 1985, September 1987 and March 1988; CSO Monthly Digest of Statistics, August 1987; Labour Force Survey, 1981, 1983/84 and 1985

**Table 18 Hotel trade and Other Residential/Tourist Accommodation: Employment by Status and Sex, 1971 - 1985 (June)**

(10%)	1971	%	1981	%	1984				1985					
Employees	2,373,261		2,291,619		2,074,100									
in	M 1,503,155	63.3	1,376,472	60.0										
Employment	F 870,106	36.7	915,147	40.0										
SIC	MLH 884	%	6650/6670	%	6650	%	6670	6650/6670	%	6650	%	6670	6650	
Class		23,063	22,162		20,342		1820	26,590		23,700		2,890	26,220	
Totals	M	9346	40.5	8824	39.8	7843	38.5	981	98909	37.2	8590	36.2	1300	9080
	F	13,717	59.5	13,338	60.2	12,499	61.5	839	16,700	62.8	15,110	63.8	1590	17,140
F/T		10,936	(47.4)	12,722	(57.4)	11,643	(57.2)	1079	15,820	(59.5)	13,910	(58.7)	1910	
	M	6227	56.9	6532	51.3	5857	50.3	675	7770	49.1	6690	48.1	1080	
	F	4709	43.1	6190	48.7	5786	49.7	404	8050	50.9	7220	51.9	830	7200
P/T		12,127	(52.6)	5799	(26.2)	5438	(26.7)	361	10,770	(40.5)	9790	(41.3)	980	
	M	3119	25.7	511	8.8	434	8.0	77	2120	19.7	1900	19.4	220	
	F	9008	74.3	5288	91.2	5004	92.0	284	8650	80.3	7890	80.6	760	9940

and the lowest March and December. This parallels the seasonal levels of bedroom occupancy found in the hotels that formed the basis of the fieldwork. However, although the Swallow Hotel in London had the most consistent bedroom occupancy figures the General Manager has dictated that 195 staff will be employed in the "Summer" months and only 160 staff in the "Winter" season. These employment levels are below those he inherited as General Manager which stood at an annual figure of 290 employees.

The indication of an upward trend in employment growth is contradicted by the evidence published by the Department of Employment. Moreover, on the subject of seasonality Dr Parsons (1987) claimed that there was no longer any kind of regular fluctuations in employment patterns in the Tourism sector (see also FT, 21.5.86, p.7; ETB, 1986, pp.11-12). The question of whether the practice of seasonal employment is still prevalent or whether it has now changed in to the form of casual and/or permanent part-time working will be discussed with reference to the data presented in Table 18.

### 1.3 The Occupational Structure of the Workforce



**Table 18 Part 2**

(10%)		1971			1981						1984					
		MLH	%	%	6650	%	%		%	%	6650	%	%		%	%
		884	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	6670	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	6650	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	6670	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	6650	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>b</sup>
F/T		10,936			12,722			11,643			15,820			13,910		
	M	6227	26.9	66.6	6532	29.5	74.0	5857	28.8	74.7	7770	29.2	78.6	6690	28.2	77.9
	F	4709	20.4	34.3	6190	27.9	46.4	5786	28.4	46.3	8050	30.3	48.2	7220	30.5	47.8
P/T		12,127			5799			5438			10,770			9790		
	M	3119	13.5	33.4	511	2.3	5.8	434	2.1	5.5	2120	7.9	21.4	1900	8.0	33.3
	F	9008	39.1	65.7	5288	23.8	39.6	5004	24.6	40.0	8650	32.5	51.8	7890	33.3	52.2

Notes:

1. The % figures in brackets represent that part of the total employment in the economic activity(ies) that is made up of full or part-time employment. All other % figures refer to male and female full-time and part-time employment. With the exception of Table 15 Part 2 where <sup>a</sup> refers to for example, the total employment in the SIC Class that is made up of male full-time working. Whilst <sup>b</sup> means for example, the % of female employment that is made up of part-time work.

2. Actual figures for full-time and part-time workers were not presented in the 1971 Census: however full-time was taken to be 40+ hours per week, and part-time less than 40 working hours per week.

3. The SIC 1968 Minimum Listing Heading 884 represents the SIC 1980 Economic Activities 6650 & 6670 combined.

Sources: 1971 Census: Economic Activity, Parts 2 and 4; 1981 Census: Economic Activity; Employment Gazette, September 1987; English Tourist Board, 1986

With reference to the distribution of employment (Table 18) the trend of more females and less males being employed is maintained over the 13 year period. Female employment has increased by 20% compared with 6% for men. The ratio of male to female employment was 2:1 now it is reversed in favour of female employment (62.8%).

In 1971 the proportion of part-time employment was greater than full-time working, but this position has been reversed. In the 1984 statistics full-time employment accounted for 60% of work, although this has paralleled the shift towards more female employment it does not mean that the two are correlated: in fact men have benefitted disproportionately; in 1984 nearly 80% of all male employment was full-time, representing 30% of all employment. Whilst part-time work has remained the major source of employment for women (more than half are employed in this way) this has changed since 1971 when two-thirds of female

employment was part-time and accounted for 40% of all employment. It represents a third of all employment for the two economic activities in 1984.

The statistics for the Hotel trade alone (SIC 1980, 6650) parallel those of the two economic activities combined. However a detailed analysis is not possible because of the figures for employees in self-employed establishments in 1981 are shown separately whilst for 1984 they are included in the figures for part-time and full-time work.

In an article based on the findings of an Institute of Manpower Studies' Survey on employer's policy on, among other issues employment, it was found that within the "service industries" one of the expanding professions is *part-time* personal services. This situation is polarised when it is seen that full-time employment in such occupations is contracting (FT, 13.6.86, p.10). So not only are there gross volume changes there are also structural changes in the occupational balance. This conclusion is supported by research conducted by the Manpower Services Commission (1985). This was explained by the recession which has caused a shift away from full-time to part-time employment (p.11). This is inexplicable as a reason when it comes to the Hotel trade and the Tourism sector where part-time working is a permanent feature of the labour market.

Part-time employees provide a reserve of labour for the employer in the Hotel, Catering and Tourism industries. This is when they are used only as casual labour rather than being contractually employed on this basis. As Dronfield and Soto (1980) point out this is because,

'...hotels don't have to have such a large permanent complement to cover for sickness, holidays and peaks in business. Management can constantly refill vacancies in the most unpleasant jobs instead of having to improve conditions.'

p.7

The percentage share of the total workforce employed on this kind of contract is increasing within the Hotel trade. However what can not be ascertained is to what extent this is a permanent pattern of employment or an ad hoc one that is required only on a casual basis by the employer. (Hakim, 1987, p.559). For example, the Shift Leader at the Swallow Hotel Carlisle was permanently employed as a part-time employee. She usually worked two shifts per day for 5 days each week; one on the Cocktail Bar at lunchtime and another on the Reception Desk in the evening. The number of hours she worked varied depending on the level

of conference business, and this sometimes meant a 13 hour day. Which meant that she was flexible in her availability thus making her also a casual part-time employee because she had no set total hours of work written into her contract. Therefore the boundary between full-time and part-time in terms of number of hours worked can be blurred.

In the survey of Swallow Hotel Receptionists 30% said that if they were to get married and have children they would only work part-time. 22% said that they would stop working altogether. The Head Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel in Seaburn said that she would only consider returning to work after she had children if a hotel provided creche facilities. Faced with a similar situation the General Manager at the Swallow Hotel Carlisle was thinking of allowing the Shift Leader, who is a mother of two children, the option of working on a full-time basis with the pattern of hours to suit her. This was only because he was unable to recruit the type of experienced staff he wanted.

In an industry which has organised the periods of work around the licensing laws and the times of the day when people eat then the practice of the split-shift is universal. Also part-time workers can be used as multi-task workers in order to cover the busiest periods in a range of departments and for when staff are off work. (Bosworth, 1982, p.35). Such split-shifts are not just confined to part-time employees. The practice is also prevalent amongst those who work full-time. In the survey of Swallow Hotel Receptionists one-quarter of the respondents answered that they had worked split-shifts. In this situation what they are meaning is that they will work from 7 a.m. till 11 a.m. and then from 7 p.m. till 11 p.m. at night. Not surprising 61% of the respondents to the survey disliked this work pattern. Some Receptionists had done this for an average of 4 out of the previous 28 days, though not necessarily on consecutive days although this did occur. For example, a Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel Alnwick was on permanent split shifts while the Trainee Receptionist was learning the procedures and the Deputy Head Receptionists was off work due to illness.

Hakim (1987) puts the figure for the share of the Hotel trade which is considered to be flexible - casual part-time employees - at 41.3% (p.551). But this is only an estimation. With 80% of part-time employees being female it can be presumed that it is they who either involuntarily bear the brunt of this situation or else choose to be employed on this condition.

Nationally part-time work accounts for about one-fifth of all employment. In the Hotel trade part-time work accounts for 41.3% of all employment nearly double the national figure (Labour Research Department, 1986, p.5). Furthermore,

part-time workers do not share in the employment benefits of their full-time colleagues in relation to sick pay, holidays, bonus schemes, maternity pay, pensions, and collective bargaining (IND, 1.9.87, p.2; Labour Research Department, 1986) Which makes their employment cheaper, and therefore more profitable, to the employer in the Hotel trade.

#### 1.4 The Distribution of Occupations

With reference to Table 19 there was an increase in the number and the percentage share of managers in the workforce between 1971 and 1981. The ratio of men to women remained similar. Therefore, given that women represent the majority of the total workforce this means that there are disproportionately more male managers than female ones. In Consort Hotels there were no female Hotel managers amongst the members and at the central office. Swallow Hotels had one female as a General Manager. Amongst the Hilton International Hotels that I visited in the UK and the USA there were no female General Managers or Deputy Hotel Mangers.

Where there has been an increase in women working is in manual work. In 1971 men outweighed women by nearly 7:1 in this category. A decade later the share was more evenly balanced as a result of a twenty-fold increase in female labour in this category of work. Overall employment in this category accounted for 5% of the total workforce in 1981 compared with only 0.7% in 1971. However the figures also show that women doing this kind of work are more likely to be employed on a part-time basis in the Hotel trade.

The figures for the non-manual category show a reverse trend. They highlight the change in the structure of the workforce in the Hotel trade - females working part-time in unskilled work. The percentage share of employment for this work category in the Hotel and Tourist Accommodation has gone down from 2.67% to 0.39%. With male employment in this contracting occupational type falling by 90% compared with 80% for women. Consequently the ratio of female to male employment has changed. In 1971 men held the balance but now the share is 2:1 in favour of women in a shrinking employment category.

One of the main conclusions of a report on employers' employment policy is that, 'the collapse of unskilled work is continuing' and that those without an exchangeable skill will be less likely to be employed (FT, 13.6.86, p.10). The full implication of this conclusion is not borne out by the data for labour in the Hotel and Tourist Accommodation trades. The single most important employment

**Table 19 Hotel trade and Other Residential/Tourist Accommodation: Employment by Activity and Sex, 1971 - 1981**

(10%)		1971	%	1981	%			
SIC		MLH 884		6650/6670		6650	6670	
Total self-employed				3641	(16.4)	3261	(16.0)	380
	M			1781	48.9	1552	47.6	229
	F			1860	51.1	1709	52.4	151
Managers		2061		2570		2271		299
	M	1303	63.2	1605	62.5	1386		219
	F	758	36.8	965	37.5	885		80
Manual		162		1077		1007		70
	M	141	87.0	608	56.5	558		50
	F	21	13.0	469	43.5	449		20
Non-manual		616		88		62		26
	M	318	51.6	32	36.3	24		8
	F	298	48.4	56	63.7	38		18
Apprentices & Artied trainees		516		360		349		11
	M	432	83.7	300	83.3	292	83.6	8
	F	84	16.3	60	16.7	57	16.4	3
Professional Employees		71		42		39		3
	M	57	80.2	38	90.5	35	89.7	3
	F	14	19.8	4	9.5	4	10.3	0
Other Employees		15,720		14,383		13,353		1030
	M	5313	33.8	4460	31.0	3996	29.9	464
	F	10,407	66.2	9923	69.0	9357	70.1	566

Notes:

1. The % figures in brackets represent that part of the total employment in the economic activity(ies) that is made up of full or part-time employment. All other % figures refer to male and female full-time and part-time employment.
2. Actual figures for full-time and part-time workers were not presented in the 1971 Census: however full-time was taken to be 40+ hours per week, and part-time less than 40 working hours per week.
3. The SIC 1968 Minimum Listing Heading 884 represents the SIC 1980 Economic Activities 6650 & 6670 combined.

Sources: 1971 Census: Economic Activity, Parts 2 and 4; 1981 Census: Economic Activity; Employment Gazette, September 1987

category in 1971 and 1981 was that of 'Other Employees' which includes the unskilled sections of the workforce in the Hotel trade for example, bar staff, kitchen porters, cleaning staff. They represented 68.2% of the workforce in 1971 and 64.9% in 1981. The majority - 66% - of those 157,200 people employed in 1971, were women. This proportion rose to 69% in 1981 on falling numbers (down by 5%). The number of men employed fell by nearly one-fifth. It is women who are associated with menial tasks not men, at least in the opinion of men.

The results presented in Tables 17, 18 and 19 have contradicted the consensus that employment generation in the service sector, especially Tourism, will take care of the unemployment created through the decline of manufacturing industry. Both in terms of volume and occupation this myth has been uncovered. The workforce in the Hotel trade in 1984 is made up of females working on a part-time basis (permanently or casually) undertaking unskilled labour. Men are being employed in the expanding category of manual work and in management, both are considered by men as high status and masculine.

### 1.5 Employment in the Three Hotel Companies

Consort hotels Central Office consisted of 17 full-time and 1 part-time member of staff in early 1985. The intention is to let this slowly grow to 25 members of staff. With this being paralleled by the "*departmentalisation*" of the Central Office functions of Sales, Marketing, Purchasing, Membership/Training, Accounts, Central Reservations, Group Reservations, "*Venuefinder*" and Consort Club. The latter is a free club which regular business travellers can join which allows them to a discount off the full tariff price of accommodation in any of the Consort hotels. The idea being that if it is free then business people are more likely to take it up and so use Consort hotels when next they are travelling on their business accounts. Yet another way of increasing the volume of sales for member hotels.

The idea behind the "*departmentalisation*" of the various activities stems from the fact that as Consort hotels has expanded so the effectiveness of everyone doing a bit of everything became uneconomical according to Mr Pope, the Chief Executive. To that end job titles of the executives were made more explicit in the early months of 1985. Where someone had been doing one job but being nominally referred to by another title then that was rectified and what they did determined what they were being called. So the executive who had been associated with Sales and Marketing was from that point on known only as the Director of Sales. This

was also to to make sure that those who are responsible for carrying out policy are accountable for their actions and for their mistakes,

'The buck now stops with people directly. They can't be covered up by others, which they were before.'

Pope

The staff are broken down in to the following job titles. There is the Chief Executive, Director of Sales, Group Purchasing Director, Marketing Director, Membership/Training Manager. All these senior management posts are filled by men. The office junior had been a female on the Youth Training Scheme now they had a male office junior, again on YTS. Then there is the Accounts Manager, Secretary to the Chief Executive, Central Reservations clerks (Senior and Assistant), Group Reservations clerks (Senior and Assistant) and "*Venuefinder*" Sales Executive (including Consort Club membership). All these positions are filled by women.

The plan, as Consort hotels grows, would be to have both senior reservation clerks as supervisors and to expand the number of sales clerks. Moreover various of the executives, especially the Director of Marketing, would have either their own or a shared secretary. This is the case with the Group Purchasing Director and the Membership/Training Manager who share a secretary. The Director of Sales uses the assistant Group Reservations clerk as a typist, whilst the Marketing Director has an assistant and in the future plans were to give him a secretary as well.

The layout of the Central Office was, and maybe still is, quite simple. A visitor coming into it would first encounter a secretarial area. Here the secretary to the Chief Executive and the office junior along with one other secretary work. Going along the corridor there are two doors on ones left hand side. The first room is where the Group Purchasing Director and the Membership/Training Manager work. In the adjacent room is the office of the Chief Executive, Mr Pope.

Further along there is an open doorway leading to a large office. It is here that the Central Reservations Office is located and where Group Reservations are taken. Also in this office is the enigmatic '*Bernard Welcome*' of Consort Club and the "*Venuefinder*" Sales desk. Furthermore the Directors of Sales and of Marketing also work in this room. And the Accounts Manager has a desk in the corner. And in the middle of the room stands a large house plant!

In 1985 there were plans to erect screens to allow for some means of privacy as well as to stop unnecessary distraction between the members of staff. This was the disadvantage of having an open plan office which otherwise allowed for immediate discussion of ideas and dissemination of information without having to move from ones desk - literally!

The idea to shift certain of the executives to other rooms, as yet not under the control of Consort hotels, had also been discussed. As had the relocating of certain items of office equipment and the desk of the Consort Club and “*Venuefinder*” Sales Executive. (The only female in the office, at that time with such a title. What the title means in reality is questionable given that the job specification was dictated by the Chief Executive personally).

On the 27.8.85 there were approximately 3840 employees on the payroll of Swallow Hotels, both full-time and part-time. There are no published figures for labour turnover but in the 1984 Annual Report for the company as a whole the labour turnover figure was reported to be, ‘very low’. In past Annual Reports it has been noted that employees have been with Vaux Breweries for 25+ years. In the 1980 Report it was written,

‘Swallow are justly proud of the fact that a large number of the staff have been with them for many years’

Annual Report, 1980

However one of the reasons why the Personnel Manager of the group wanted me to carry out some of my research at the London International hotel was that in the Summer of 1984 all of the Reception staff had left over a period of a few weeks. The labour turnover figure for that department was 100%.

In his report on the situation in the Hotel Reception departments of Swallow hotels he wrote that,

‘Last year, we recruited 80 Receptionists. (*One third* of the vacancies notified to the Personnel Office are for Receptionists.)’

(my emphasis) Smith, 1985, p.1

This means a 16% labour turnover rate for Swallow Hotels given that there are 240 vacancies out of a total of 3840 members of staff. Furthermore, with a total



of 172 receptionists in Swallow Hotels (1985) this means that nearly 50% of them leave the company each year. A drain on the training resources of the company.

Later in his report he stated that,

'Due to the quality and the lack of good training, young Receptionists are put under pressure very quickly. The mistakes that they make are not easily retrieved. Often they do not have the maturity and self confidence to cope. This I believe, is one of the contributory factors to our labour turnover'

Smith, 1985, p.3

Taken overall the number of staff leaving *Vaux Breweries Plc.* may indeed be, 'very low' but the hotel industry is characterised by a "casual labour" system where employees, badly paid are willing to leave one place of work for another job because of better pay, conditions or prospects. Often these employees will come back to work for the company/companies they worked for before. The seasonal nature of employment often makes this attitude of nomadism a necessity as resort hotels close down for the Winter months leaving the Summer staff unemployed.

Hilton International Hotels started with three people one of them being the present Chairman Curt Strand. Worldwide HI employs 39,900 people of which there are 4500 Key Personnel and 200 members of staff at the corporate headquarters in New York.

'With that number of people, communications are simple, questions resolved without a lot of paper shuffling and formality, and top-level decisions can be made quickly'

#### Background on Hilton International

Key personnel (which cover 80 nationalities) are those people whose records, performance evaluation, qualifications and willingness to relocate are monitored by the Human Resources Department at corporate headquarters. They are the employees who will be considered first for promotion; these are heads of department and their assistants.

These are the 'core' staff as opposed to the 'periphery' employees. The distinction is made obvious by the advertisement of promotions. All those below management level are posted on the Staff notice board in the hotel. And those for

management positions are not. The applicants for those positions are invited to apply for them by the management of the hotel after they have been nominated (Vista Employee's handbook, p.26).

In HI as a whole the turnover amongst the Key Personnel was 7% for 1986, according to the Director of Personnel. Whilst in a hotel like the one in Kensington an annual labour turnover of 60% or 5% per month is considered to be acceptable, according to the hotel's Personnel and Training Manager. Turnover however includes internal promotions within HI as well as people leaving to join other hotel groups. Internal promotion will be a more important reason for the turnover figure for Key Personnel than for others since it is HI's policy to recruit from within.

## **2 Corporate Policy**

### **2.1 Recruitment and Training**

With Consort Hotels being such a small organisation the recruitment of personnel is done only when a new job is being created for which someone already employed is unsuited. How they have advertised jobs in the past is through a local Job Centre. However the question of training is also ad hoc, and as will be shown this has repercussions for the social relationships amongst the staff.

When there are interviews for jobs then it tends to be the Chief Executive who undertakes this duty, unless it is for an assistant to another executive then that person will also interview applicants. Whilst I was at the Central Office they were advertising for the new position of assistant to the Marketing Executive. A number of applicants came in and were interviewed. One woman came in who was several inches taller than the executive and the Chief Executive. She was also rejected because she was asking to be paid at least the same as she had been paid at her previous job as a filing clerk and that was £100 per week. Not one member of the female clerical staff got paid as much as that. The successful applicant was a woman apparently to complement the male executive and to be his secretary as well, of course!

Training in Consort Hotels was done on the job by trial and error either on-the-job with the added pressure of having to produce accurate results or during one's own time. The assistant to the Group Reservations clerk had had to take

home the instruction volumes concerning the IBM wordprocessor/computer and learn how to use it for herself (there were 4 volumes in total). Her training had been done in her own time. Even she did not have the confidence to feel she was doing her job efficiently, yet it was agreed, by those who were not as proficient, that she was the most competent in the use of the wordprocessor/computer, 'It would be alright if I knew what I was doing but I don't know what I'm doing half the time' (Group Reservations assistant).

Each year the Central Office sends out a Sales Guide to all the members telling them what Consort Hotels is offering in the way of packages of marketing material which they can take advantage of so as to increase sales. The 1985 Guide was due to be finished and there were mistakes in it with only a few days in which to rectify them before the printing and distribution deadline.

The Central Reservations clerk had been working on it during Saturday mornings for overtime money. The Group Reservations assistant who was relaying the incident to me was not sure whether she had been asked to do it by the Chief Executive or that her colleague had volunteered to do it. In any case she was using it as a means of learning how to use the wordprocessor and had made a number of mistakes in the page numbering and order of material. This was an important document and the person doing it had not been given any training in the use of the machine nor was she being supervised by someone who could operate it correctly.

She did not blame the other clerk for what she had to do, in fact she felt sorry for her. She did say that she should not have used the Guide as a means of learning how to use the wordprocessor. In fact, because of all the mistakes, it would be just as quick to start all over again as she will be amending the mistakes and changing the the details of the 1984 Guide for the 1985 Guide at the same time.

Because of the way the office was run the most junior member of the staff were inundated with requests to do photocopying and collating of the weekly mailshots and correspondence for the member hotels. This entailed a lot of routine and a great deal of pressure for a young person. There were three members of staff in the office who had been the office junior, in addition to the present one, who confirmed to me that when they first began doing the job they would go home on a Friday afternoon after doing the mail either in a state of nervous agitation or still crying after breaking down at work. 'I've seen them in tears at the end of the mailout because of all the pressure' (Consort Club clerk). The pressure was too much for them to handle. This is the result of having to be responsible for such a

heavy workload so soon after taking up the job. A job which, being a first entry position, could well be the first that person has ever had.

There is also an additional advantage of having the office junior being on the Youth Training Scheme and that is the employer, in this case Consort Hotels does not have to pay any wages. For Mr Pope who is for ever looking for ways of gaining a financial advantage this is a big plus. As he put it the first two months of a new worker, such as an office junior, is, 'wasted money' because they are learning the job. It is this that Consort Hotels, 'can not afford'. So they take advantage of the YTS run by the Department of Employment.

The minimum entry into Swallow Hotels as a Receptionist is the City and Guilds 709 Certificate. In his report on the state of personnel and training conditions in the Hotel Reception departments of Swallow Hotels Mr Smith, the Personnel Manager, also found that in 1984 only two-thirds of the recruits had this qualification with the remainder either, holding clerical qualifications or they were school leavers on the Youth Training Scheme. However the survey on Swallow hotel Receptionists included a section on how they had been trained to do the job of a Receptionist; 47% had completed the City & Guilds 709 Certificate as well as an in-house training programme. The remainder had been trained an in-house training programme.

Looking at the syllabus for the Hotel Reception 709 course you can see that the major emphasis is on developing the administrative "skills" associated with running the *Front Office*. The development of social "skills" and sales techniques to work in a *Reception* department is negligible. Approximately 75% of the syllabus is devoted to the operation of an increasingly outmoded method of storing data - the manual tabular ledger. As well as clerical tasks which are more effectively executed using the software program of a computerised system.

Although computers are being introduced into the Hotel trade, and specifically within Swallow and Hilton International Hotels, there is no apparent change in "the system". The Hotel trade is characterised by uneven development with reference to the introduction of computer systems, being largely installed within hotel chains rather than individual hotels, and a general inadequacy of training in the use of such machinery in the UK.

Mr Smith believes the certificate is more than 10 years out of date. And that the time spent on the development of social skills which constitutes only about 25% of the syllabus does not reflect the true nature of the job of the hotel Receptionist where nearly 60% of the time of the hotel Receptionist is spent dealing with the guest and only 40% of their time is spent on clerical duties (Smith, 1985, p.6).

However in the survey of Swallow Hotels' Receptionists it was found that the most time consuming activities were inputting information into the computerised storage system during the morning shift whilst during the evening shift their time was spent in customer contact. However clerical work, apart from inputting information into the computer, was one of the more time consuming activities during the course of the morning shift and especially during the evening shift. This was due to the fact that fewer Receptionists were now employed in the Front Office since the computerisation of the Reservations and Billing system. Furthermore, with the requirements of report completion there was a timetable which a Receptionist working by themselves would have to keep to without the aid of a colleague. This resulted in a conflict for the Receptionists as to whether they should talk to customers or get on with their paperwork which had to be completed before they could go off duty. It was not such a clear demarcation for the Receptionists as to whether their job was more social than clerical. If they did not have the requisite reports printed off then they simply were not finished their work no matter how late in the evening or early the next morning it was.

However the time spent in training during the course of either shifts was considered to be negligible according to the results of the survey of Swallow Hotel Receptionists.

The Personnel Manager then went on to detail the inadequacies of the scheme as he saw it; the lack of pre-entry qualifications for students in some colleges, the lack of recent industrial experience of many of the course teachers, the lack of modern equipment in the colleges providing the course. He had praise for those colleges which also included housekeeping and food service. He was disappointed that few courses included learning how to use a computer, answer the telephone, how to sell, and writing letters. In fact he was suspicious of the student's numeracy and literacy on many of the college courses which had no pre-entry qualifications.

The results of the survey question on the use of computers in the courses that the Receptionists had been on supports Mr Smith's view, to some extent, that few courses included experience with computers. Of the 81 respondents to this question 60% (49 Receptionists) said that they had not used computers of any sort on their City & Guilds 709 course. That still leaves 32 Swallow hotel Receptionists who had.

Mr Smith told me that South Tyneside college were in the process of purchasing equipment (VDU screens and keyboards) in order to use Swallow Hotels' Guest Reservation and Billing System. In return Swallow Hotels gets a potential 40 recruits trained in the use of their system without having to pay for their training. In fact the college pays for the privilege of training on a unique system which is

not compatible with any other system in the hotel trade. Every year the Personnel Manager for Swallow Hotels draws up the company's training plan which is carried out using a central budget. Out of this hotel managers can claim back money spent on sending employees on the courses offered by the Administration and Training Manager, who is responsible for the running of the courses.

In relation to the Reception department training is given on-the-job in the areas of customer relations, accounts, reservations, telephone techniques, sales and computer operations. Mr Smith went on to criticise many aspects of Hotel Reception in Swallow Hotels in his report on the, 'present situation' (Smith) in the Hotel Reception departments as regards recruitment, training, conditions of employment and management support.

'Swallow Hotels' training is inadequate. From five sample visits in the Autumn, I was unable to find any evidence of systematic training. It was mainly "sitting by nellie". The responsibility for that is mine. As a company we have no up to date reception training manual. None of the Head Receptionists had devised one of their own.'

Smith, 1985, p.2

However in the survey on hotel Receptionists 76% said that their training as a hotel Receptionist had given them the confidence to do the job of a trainee Receptionist and only 24% felt that their training had been unsatisfactory. One needs to also bear in mind that they were referring to the entirety of their training which included that which they had received as company employees which represented the only training that 45 of the respondents had ever received.

An example of what Mr Smith meant by there being an ad hoc and negligent approach occurred in The Royal County hotel when the Deputy Manager said to the Reception Manager, 'How is this lass coming along? I think we've got to make an effort to find some time for her' (Stephenson). He was referring to the training of a newly recruited Receptionist straight out of college who had yet to be inducted (introduced) into the way the Hotel Reception department operated. The new recruit was dissatisfied with the training she had received whilst in the hotel. She felt, 'useless' and 'uncomfortable' (Crammond) because she had not even been shown where the customer facilities were and all the time she had to ask a colleague whenever a customer asked her.

It was this recruit that the Reception Manager hoped would stay because she had been college trained. Yet she had not shown her around the hotel or given

her systematic training in the use of the computer system. The approach of the Reception Manager towards training was to let new recruits make mistakes and then to correct them.

'To capture there and then, after she's done it. And take her behind the scenes and sort of say to her, "You did that wrong!". Ummm. "Not to do it again!". It's finding, it's getting the time. Because the girl should be told, more or less straight away. Because after a hard day's work she's not always aware of what she's done or how she's reacted to a guest or the exact wording.'

Anderson

The insecurity that that engendered was one of the factors that had caused so much tension amongst her staff previously. Her intolerance of staff that could not do their job properly created an atmosphere in which they would quit their job rather than stay and endure her ferocity.

In the London hotel the situation had been even worse. In 1984, the year before I did my fieldwork in the hotel there had been a labour turnover crisis in the Reception Department when the entire team had left in the space of a few weeks. The Summer I was there a similar situation had occurred in that half of the staff had left in the Spring and recruits were drawn from other hotels in the north of England and from colleges.

Having come from smaller hotels, with one requesting a training position, and finding themselves working on the front desk the day they arrived it was not surprising that they made mistakes and consequently lacked confidence in their ability. They had not been introduced to the members of the Reservation Department or the Telephonists with whom they would work most closely in the course of their work.

The training of these new recruits had been on the basis that they were to learn only as much as was needed for them to survive. One of the other Receptionists thought it did not make sense to put somebody on the front desk without putting them into the Reservations department first of all to find out how it operated,

'I mean they're doing it now, so why didn't they do it before. I mean I was training so I mean they should have put me in there in anycase because it was part of my course. They just kept on saying, "We'll put you in, we'll put you in" I never got round to it'

One of the Receptionists who had come down from the Royal County hotel in Durham told me of her experience of learning how to use the computerised guest reservation and billing system. She had been a Receptionist at another hotel before going to the hotel in Durham so she knew the basics of the job. What she did not know was how the computer system worked. She had learnt on-the-job like the trainee Receptionist at the Royal County, Durham. She also had not found it a comfortable way of learning. If she was responsible the training of a new Receptionist she would be determined to train that person so that they would feel confident to do their job from the outset. This would take at least two weeks.

'If I was going to train somebody then I would know what she was going to need...to know on the Receptionist desk...on the Cash desk...as regards other departments...And I would probably do a fortnight, which I think is long enough in this hotel anyway because it's repetitious; mostly everyday's the same...and by the end of the two weeks she'd have covered everything.'

Bowman

However when one of the Shift Leaders at the London hotel suggested to the Front Office Manager that she introduce just such a training programme he questioned her ability to carry this out. As it happens she holds a Trainer Skills 1 Certificate proving that she can train staff to carry out simple tasks of which the work of the Receptionist in a hotel is based on.

This attitude towards training slowly changed over the course of the Summer of 1985 to the extent that one of the Shift leaders told me that when the next recruit arrived, 'She can take as long as she feels' (Wright). This is in reference to a training programme being for 4-6 weeks. As opposed to the few hours for two of the more junior Receptionists who had been recruited earlier in the year.

The Personnel Manager at the London International outlined the newly created training programme for the hotel Receptionists. It was to be for a period of 8 weeks. This would begin with the answering of telephones so that the person can get into the, 'habit of speaking to guests' (Leahy). The person would move on to reservations for 2 weeks learning about the rates for various categories of customers; corporate, groups and package tours. This would be followed by a three week period on the reception desk, 'face-to-face with the customers' (Leahy) under



the direct supervision of the Shift Leader (Chef de Brigade). Finally ending the training period on cashiering and dealing with customer bills. As he correctly said this is a, 'logical chain' (Leahy) following the progress of the customers movements through the hotel, from their initial enquiry to the paying of the hotel bill.

He hoped that the structured training programme would help stabilise the staff, for him that was the main aim of a good training programme. The loyalty of the staff was more important than them as people wanting to feel comfortable in a situation which was alien for them.

'If nothing else you might gain some form of loyalty which is essential. And that loyalty can give you another 6-12 months service out of a Receptionist'

Leahy

Although he would not comment on the quality of the training that had gone on before he had arrived in the hotel at the start of the Summer he did link poor training and the low wage rates to the problems of staff leaving. It was the exodus from the reception department earlier in the year that had created the need for Receptionists from other Swallow Hotels to be brought in. The management had simply reacted to a staff shortage without thinking of the effects this would have on the morale of the staff over the months to come. Thus sowing the seeds for another round of resignations towards the end of the Summer season. For example, the Shift Leader who had her plans of devising a training programme dismissed out of hand left to take a post at another company hotel where she felt her career would be developed. Another left to take up a job which paid better. One of the other Shift Leaders left to take up a job in a travel agency. All of them were disillusioned with the management's attitude to them and the department. They felt that they were being used as clerks and that no attention was being paid to their career development. Totally contrary to the official Personnel and Training policy of Swallow Hotels.

The only area where the training had been a success was in relation to the computerised system. That had been carried out by the Accounts department under the supervision of the Company Accountant. It is not surprising since it was this department which was at the early stages of defining the parameters for the computer system. The Accountant saw it as a machine for generating statistical reports more accurately than the Receptionists could do by hand rather than easing the workload of the Front Office staff. That is why he was keen to ensure at least his staff knew how to operate it efficiently.

'We are fast moving to a computer era where much of our accounting and the input of all data will be done by reception staff. The accuracy of their work is vital since mistakes could have a resounding effect on guests, other hotels and central reservations'

Smith, 1985, p.1

Although Swallow Hotels is divided into two regions there is still a large amount of discretion on the part of the General Manager of each hotel as to how the installation and operation of the computer system was to be put into effect. Hence the patchy response towards computerisation which was one of the things the Personnel Manager wanted me to specifically report about to him. It was this attitude to training that dictated the choice of hotels for my fieldwork. He decided that the most interesting hotels would be those which on the whole were either ambivalent or anti-technology. Though in the end the hotels that I visited were pro-technology, or ambivalent. Though as was noted in the previous chapter the form that this Ludditism took was superficial that is the use of hand written charts as well as the computer system. It did not take the form of sabotage.

When a new hotel is under construction that will bear the name of Hilton or Vista International the recruiting of and the training of those personnel that will staff the hotel is undertaken by the corporation's future management. These are the 'Key Personnel' who have been identified as such early on in their career's with Hilton International. They will be trained in all aspects of hotel operations before being given a position of authority in one of the hotels. By this means of training existing personnel, rather than recruiting from outside the company, standards are maintained at a uniform level in any of the operations that HI manages.

As with Swallow Hotels a Receptionist, Reservations Clerk or Telephonist needs to have a City & Guilds in their appropriate field; which in the case of the first job is the Certificate 709. However HI also considers a knowledge of languages, salesmanship and an, 'organised mind' to be advantageous. Especially if the person is to be promoted within the corporation to any one of 90+ hotels around the world. It is also stressed that qualifications are ultimately secondary if the applicant has the appropriate work experience and an ability to learn under HI (Hilton International Kensington Careers Booklet). Something which a Receptionist/Desk Clerk found to be so with Swallow Hotels when she was promoted to Shift Leader ahead of more qualified colleagues.

In HI it is the Senior Vice President - Human Resources Development, the Corporate and Area Directors of Personnel & Training and the Vice Presidents

- Operations that visit Hotel Schools to recruit the future HI management. For other positions advertisements are posted in local Job Centres, or their equivalent. However because HI has to deal with different employment practices throughout the world this is not always the most appropriate way of staffing a new hotel. In Shanghai for instance HI recruits staff through a local "group" who are paid to select the staff that HI is to consider as hotel employees. In Japan, staff for a hotel are sometimes selected before they have even left school and the decision they make whether to join one company or another is usually the only one they will ever make throughout their working lives (Strand, 1986, pp.9-11, and 14).

The training policy is different in such a large organisation as Hilton International. Whereas for Consort it is for immediate verifiable needs and for Swallow it is that and some measure of future planning, in such an international corporation the policy is globally uniform. That is not just because of the question of size and geographical location of the hotels but primarily because of the desire to ensure that any person can be transferred within the corporation and start work anywhere else in the world. As the Reservations Supervisor said to me, in answer to my question how many staff were here before the system was installed 10 months previously, 'There is no one working here now that was working with the manual system of Reservations.'

As well as the training centres in New York there are Area Training Centres in Basel, (Europe); Cairo, (Africa) and in Manila (Asia and Australia). It is at these centres, as well as at the CDI and at their own hotels, that management personnel are trained. The Key Personnel at each of the hotels are also responsible for the training of locally hired staff.

New employees attend an orientation program before they start working in the hotel. During the session they are given a talk and shown a film about the operations of the hotel they are to be working in and the company they are working for. On entering the department the recruit will undergo specific training by the member of staff assigned to carry this out.

For any employee that has been with the company for 6 months there is the opportunity to apply for, 'cross exposure training.' This allows for the employee to train in other departments of the hotel so that they can come to a better understanding of the entire operation. This is also used for those employees whose performance is monitored with the aim of developing them into the future members of HI's Management. There is also an on-going training program to train Supervisors, Assistant Department Heads, and Heads of Department in the art of developing good management techniques. This program is called HILITES (Hilton International Lessons in Teaching Effective Supervision).

Also on offer on a periodical basis are courses designed to help the employee in their job or qualify them for promotion. These are called Special Training Workshops and employees are assigned to them by the hotel's management. As a part of this there is also a Management Training Program to develop the potential of those employees who are seen to have the necessary attributes for promotion within the hotel and the corporation. One of the programs that is required to be taken is called, *Personal Service Programs*: which is aimed at developing the employees awareness of the exclusive guest categories of Vista Club, Executive Business Service, and Hilton Preferential Card.

The method used by Hilton International to train its staff is the same for all recruits. In this way everyone receives the same kind of training. It is both formal and repetitious and trainers are themselves indoctrinated into taking each learner through the learning process methodically. This takes the learner from the point of their own knowledge through the identification of the way in which operations are carried out differently in HI and then on through each part of the task that is to be taught. Once this has been done the person carries out the task in its entirety, supervised by the trainer, and any problems are then identified and solved. The performance of the learner is then evaluated by the trainer who then releases them back to their assigned department to perform the task in the workplace (1972 a, Skills Training Flow Chart, p.20).

The following example based on the Vista Kansas shows how this works in practice. The training schedule for a Front Office clerk in the Vista Kansas is intensive and structured. It covers a period of 15 days. The first five days (Week 1) are spent introducing the recruit to the way in which reservations are made and the use of the computerised guest reservation and billing system. The employee gets practice in making, changing and cancelling reservations as well as actually taking reservations over the telephone towards the end of the first week. This is the only contact the clerk has with the customer in the first 5 days of the programme.

Only at the start of the second week of induction training does the clerk get a tour of the front desk area and instruction in how the equipment works. The first half of Week 2 is spent dealing with the procedures involved in checking customers into the hotel and the second half of the week concentrates on the work of the cashier. The third week is spent putting into practice what has been learnt during the previous 10 days of training. The recruit is encouraged and expected to ask questions of their trainers with whom they will work during the latter stages of this induction training (Front Office Clerks Training Schedule, Vista Kansas).

As a part of the process of staff evaluation HI developed the Quality Assurance Programme (QAP) in 1977. This is a means of drawing lessons from the response of customers to the quality of the service they received in the hotel whilst staying there and the degree of satisfaction about the provision of customer facilities. The data is analysed in each of the hotels in the chain and immediate action is taken to rectify any, 'negative trends' and praise any good customer reactions (Background to Hilton International).

All of this has as its aim the production of uniformly competent workers who are substitutable anywhere in the world. So that each person is as useful and as expendable as the person next to them. Individuals do not matter in an organisation like Hilton International. We saw with respect to Swallow and Consort that there is more individual discretion and supervision of training but all that this led to was unease amongst the staff when they could see that no structured programme had been devised for them or for anyone in the company at their level. It is too simple to say that the smaller company has the greatest potential to deal with individual needs and aspirations when it comes to training because as we have seen with respect to Hilton International the company-wide training programme is also geared to develop an individual's potential albeit within a standard framework. Therein lies the paradox. It seems more obvious that it is the large company which makes individuals conform to that company's business ethos but it is also true of organisations like Swallow and Consort Hotels. What each of the three types of hotel group share is the overarching need to maintain a uniform standard at whatever cost to personal and individual goals. So that if you want to have a career in Consort Hotels you have to put up with low wages and either wait for the company to expand so that new posts are created or until someone leaves the company. Within Swallow Hotels the situation is such that the only path to promotion once you have reached the London hotel is out of the company altogether unless the provincial hotels are considered attractive. In Hilton International the watchword is conformity, including the sacrifice of self for the drive to maximise profit.

## 2.2 Promotion

One of the most striking differences between the hotel companies is the size of the operation. Consort Hotels employs less than 20 personnel, 14 of whom are secretaries and clerks. This means that opportunities for promotion are defined by people leaving or the company expanding and new positions being made. In Swallow Hotels and Hilton International there are groups of people put on to

training programmes with the express intention of promoting them for supervisory and managerial positions knowing that these will arise in the future. With Consort Hotels it is a case of waiting.

It is the same with the male executives, they can not be promoted any higher other than by being given greater budgets to be responsible for. As they do different jobs requiring different sums of money then that is an inadequate way of differentiating between them. It is clear that making the Marketing Manager an executive job and taking the title of Marketing Executive away from the Sales executive could be seen as a demotion for the latter and a promotion for the former. But that is not to see it in its correct context.

In reality the Marketing Manager was already solely responsible for that area of the Central Office's functions and thus held one of the two key posts. The other, arguably, being Purchasing which potentially saves a hotel at least their deposit and sometimes many times that figure in a single year by way of centralised purchasing. However marketing centrally the products that each of the Consort hotels can provide opens up the opportunity for the hotel to increase its sales of accommodation. It is at this point that the administration comes in under the management of the Director of Sales.

Both Swallow Hotels and Hilton International had developed a policy around promoting from within. The aim being to keep those personnel who most resemble the values of the company. This has as its basis the maximisation of profit through the most efficient use of personnel, rather than just corporate identification being the simple expedient. As Burawoy (1979) writes, this internal labour market, 'is governed by a set of administrative rules and procedures' as opposed to the external labour market which is, 'controlled directly by economic variables' (p.95).

Both Swallow and Hilton International employ the attraction of status for example, Reception Manager (Swallow) and Key Personnel (Hilton) to get employees to believe that their company has a career structure which will be to their benefit. However this practice of promoting from within does not end there. Burawoy identifies six criteria with which to judge the completeness of this internal labour market. The first is different types of jobs and levels of authority. The second is a company wide method of advertising job vacancies. Candidates must be selected using nonarbitrary criteria that is no discrimination. There must also be a system of training staff for the possibility of promotion. Arguably the most important is the need to create a loyalty amongst employees to the firm because other job offers with rival company's are seen to be unattractive. Finally, to maintain the allegiance of employees after they have been laid off (p.98). This section will deal with the first three criteria. Training has been dealt with previously and

maintaining loyalty through financial gain will be looked at in the next section on pay.

For positions which are a promotion then these are advertised first of all within the company itself.

'It is our policy that the majority of assistants managers are recruited and trained through our internal programme'

Personnel Manual, January 1985, p.60

For example, one of the hotels in Scotland was requiring a new Head Receptionist and a letter was sent out to each of the hotels from the head office. Or the post could be advertised using the computer system's message facility and sent to all the hotels in the group simultaneously. When I was conducting my fieldwork at the hotel in Carlisle a message came from the London hotel advertising the post of Reception Manager. There is also a newsletter for the division called, *Swallow this!* and this is also used to advertise for vacancies within hotels.

It is also the case that sometimes the position can not be filled from within the company itself and then the management of that hotel must look outside for possible contenders. 'On the occasions that we have a Head Receptionist vacancy, there are few takers and too often we have to go outside the Company. (Smith, 1985, p.3). This happened when the London International hotel needed a new Head Receptionist/Reception Manager. The post was advertised and someone who had worked with the Front Office Manager in a previous hotel was given the job.

Mr Smith wanted to provide a career structure for the Hotel Reception department with the intention of making the Head Receptionist a management position. Such that the job title would be, *Reception Manager*. This was the title given to the new head of department in the London International hotel. As a part of that she had to do shifts of work as the Duty Manager of the hotel.

About the way in which HI recruits personnel to fill more senior positions this is what the Chairman has to say,

'Ours isn't an organization that was glued together to take advantage of a sudden attractive hotel prospect. We're a close-knit group. We've known each other and worked together a long time and we've learned to work well together, and this is what has made our company grow. We risk a bit of inbreeding,

I suppose, but we have a family feeling that few organizations have, and the family pride that goes with it.'

Strand, quoted in, 'Background on Hilton International'

The people who are chosen to apply for any promotion are the Key Personnel of which there are 4500. This follows from HI's commitment to what it sees as a need to emphasise career development coupled with the maintainance of the corporation's standards. So for example HI General Managers have a minimum of 10 years experience with the company before they are given the responsibility of an operation. When it comes to the trainers themselves this is what he had to say,

'The personnel and training managers... have been indoctrinated in our way of doing things'

Strand, 1986, p.4

It is they who recruit and monitor the training of new staff. However it would seem that despite the company's commitment to equality the opportunity for women to rise to the level of General Manager is limited. In an article in the *Caterer & Hotelkeeper*, Derek Taylor points out that only in 1985 did HI appoint its first female General Manager after 36 years of operations. Now she is one of several *token* General Managers in a company of 91 hotels. As Taylor correctly asserts,

'We should all be totally committed to promotion *on merit*'

Taylor, 1985, p.7 (author's emphasis)

Edwards (1979) terms this structured promotion policy a, ' "career ladder" ' (p.172). This is the aim of Hilton International, to promote those staff which have the potential and the experience, which will be of most benefit to the company when they are in positions of management. Experience which is of two kinds. Firstly, the number of years the person has been employed and secondly, the range of jobs they have done through *cross exposure training*. It is these that link one job with another in Hilton/Vista International.



This is not the case with Swallow Hotels or with Consort Hotels. In the latter the company has only three levels of promotion; office junior, assistant clerk, clerical supervisor. For the male executives their path of entry has been at managerial level from other companies. For them there is no internal job ladder of the kind that Edwards talks about. For the female staff opportunities for promotion are, as has been said previously, restricted by the size of the organisation and the limited scope for internal promotion.

With Swallow Hotels there is also no formal programme for the training of staff who have the potential for positions of management. This had caused the situation where a Receptionist with three years experience in Swallow Hotels was being paid only marginally more than a Junior Receptionist in the same hotel. Edwards sees this as contradicting the basic premise upon which an efficient internal labour market can be created and maintained. Furthermore, without it staff will not remain loyal to the company. Which exacerbates the problem of labour turnover so prevalent in the Hotel trade. It is this lack of a formal training policy leading to promotion based on seniority and experience which caused the problems in the Swallow Hotel in London during the period 1984/85.

### 2.3 Wages

In the early months of 1985 the Government proposed in a Green paper (consultative) that there should be a revision in the terms of reference of the wages councils or a complete abolishment. It was the role of the wages councils to set minimum rates of pay for the industries they covered, including the hotel and catering industry. The reform of the councils was to entail taking out of their jurisdiction minimum pay controls for young people; involvement in the setting of overtime rates; and to establish a single, minimum, hourly rate for adult workers (Caterer & Hotelkeeper, March 1985, p.13).

The Government favoured abolition of the councils which in the hotel and catering industry covers 555,000 workers in more than 30,000 Licensed Residential and Licensed Restaurant establishments in addition to those employees covered by the Licensed Non-residential and the Unlicensed Place of Refreshment Wages Councils. However the opinion amongst employers in the hotel and catering industry was mixed. Some feared that it would mean industrial relations would return to the 'sweat shop' era: the circumstances within which the wages councils were first established. Some saw the advantage of reducing the cost of training young people in a labour intensive industry. This was the overall consensus

amongst the members of Consort hotels at their Annual General Meeting (Caterer & Hotelkeeper, March 1985, p.5)

Throughout 1985 and 1986 prior to the Government's reformation of the wages councils trade unions and employers put forward reasons for the abolishment, reformation and maintainance of the councils. More than that the trade unions wanted to see the establishment of a national statutory minimum wage so as to safeguard the interests of such minority and vulnerable groups as the young, women and foreign workers. However this has not come about. The Government reformed the wages councils under The 1986 Wages Act and it now only oversees single basic and overtime rates and the limit for accommodation deductions in the hotel and catering industry (FT, 10.8.87).

With respect to the policy of Consort Hotels on wage rates there is no formal written statement. The process by which staff get an increase is through the decision of the Chief Executive. Because the central office is staffed by only a dozen people this means that there is no need to have grades of pay appropriate to positions of authority. That is only the cosmetic logic applied by employees in defence of their employer. Their real feelings come out when they complain about their poor pay and have no recourse to previous facts concerning wage rates for the job they are doing. This is ideal for the Chief Executive who can then ensure that he pays the lowest sum possible to keep the staff employed in the office. With the hope that the prospect of working in an organisation that is developing quickly into a large group of hotels will be enough motivation for them to continue working for about £4000 per annum (1985).

One of the clerks told me that she had taken a wage cut of £900 to work here after being employed for a television rental company at £5400 per annum. Now more than three years later she is back at that level with the yearly round of wage rises. These are directly supervised by the Chief Executive who himself got £29,000 at the age of 32 and at 36 in one of more senior posts in the industry is earning more than that. The Managing Director of Swallow hotels earned £48,500 in the year 1985/86 according to the Salary roll details of 27.8.85. His position is equatable to that of Mr Pope who is the Chief Executive of Consort hotels.

I was not able to obtain details of all wages paid at Consort. However I was able to obtain some data, by way of informal questioning and deduction. For example, two of the employees were just off the YTS and would be paid just over £2200 per annum. This is based on the figure that one of the junior clerks had given of a net take home pay of £39 per week. This would allow another calculation to be made based on something said by the Chief Executive and the assistant to the Group Reservations clerk. The executive had said that the latters

wages had doubled in the last two years. He qualified that by adding that they had started from a low base. And links in with what the assistant clerk told me when she said she was going to demand to be paid £4500 per annum when the Chief Executive brought up the question of wage rises in the forthcoming round of salary reviews. So if she was paid a little less than the present clerks were being paid when she herself progressed from being on the YTS then it follows that 3 of the eight clerks, the more junior ones, were on low pay with one at least being dissatisfied with what she was being paid.

Furthermore one of the more senior clerks had had to take a wage cut which had taken three years to be rectified to what it had been. This still meant a lower level of wages than what she could be earning if she worked elsewhere. Now she also thought that the two Reservation clerks (senior) were also being paid less than her, that is less than £5000 per annum.

People were being paid on the promise of better things to come. And that they would enjoy, in some voyeuristic way, the success of the consortium whilst being paid low wages and knowing that member hotels were adding £15-20,000 to their profit margins through savings made on purchases. This could reasonably strike one as ingenuous. They were the conditions the Chief Executive expected people to work under. Since there was no formal bonus scheme, except at the whim and caprice of the Chief Executive, or guaranteed annual % wage increase, or bonuses for helping to make the member hotels more profitable then the material success of those hotels was something, as individuals, they would not be sharing in.

Swallow Hotels does have a formal policy on wages. The lower limit is set at 5% above the Wages Council minimum and the ceiling is whatever the General Manager can afford within the constraints of his/her labour budget. So there is the uniform company wide policy, something which Consort Hotels does not have. Yet like Consort Hotels there is enormous local discretion on the part of the General Manager. This discretion enables the company to tie employees to their superiors since it is their decision which determines how much more they will receive. It is this mutual relationship which also mitigates against unionisation amongst people who feel that they are doing well out of the present arrangement.

As the Personnel Manager stated to me in a letter,

‘So far as a pay policy is concerned, we have one. It is quite simply to allow Hotel Managers to pay both what they can afford within the local labour market over and above the Company’s minimum criteria. Since this has generated

sufficient profit (see last years financial results) we can only assume that it suits our needs'

Smith, 22.12.86

His 'needs' as he puts it are not necessarily those of the employees. Where there are such disparities of wage levels such that, 'A Receptionist with three years experience is paid the same as a Receptionist newly appointed' (Smith, 1985, p.3) it is to be questioned where the conflict really lies if there is one in the first place. Why is he so concerned with such differentials when it suits his 'needs'? Taking each of the five hotels in turn it can be seen that there are some striking disparities amongst the Hotel Reception staff with respect to wages paid. The following analysis is based on information correct up to 27.8.85 and is used as a means of comparison only.

At the Royal County, Durham a trainee receptionist on £3267 per annum (p.a.) was being paid the same live-in rate as a Receptionist who had been working for the company in that hotel for more than a year. Furthermore, the trainee was being paid £450 more than a Receptionist who had joined that hotel as a trainee two months earlier. Moreover it is also interesting to note that the salary for the Deputy Head Receptionist at £4420 p.a. was only £600 more than the live-out rate of pay for a Receptionist in that hotel, but £3000 less than the salary for the Reception Manager.

The difference between a live-in and a live-out salary is that the former includes a deduction for staff accommodation and all meals within the hotel, whilst the live-out rate is the full rate of pay for that position. All meals are provided free of charge to employees who live out with the hotel whilst they are working.

At the Hilltop hotel, albeit a slightly smaller than the Royal County and with only 3 stars, the Reception Manager was paid £2100 p.a. less than her colleague at the Royal County who was on £7350 p.a.. This was inspite of the live-in rate for a Receptionist of £3198 p.a. being nearly on par with that for colleagues at the Royal County who received £3267 p.a. for a live-in salary.

Perhaps the most outstanding anomaly, with regard to the salaries paid at the London International Hotel, was the levels of pay for the Shift Leaders. One of the Shift Leaders was on a salary of £6500 p.a. whilst another received only £4940 p.a.. This was £100 less than that given to Receptionists who had worked for the company for only two years, whilst she had been in Swallow Hotels for more than eight. In addition the other Shift Leader, who was paid more than her, had only worked for the company for 12 months.

It is difficult to compare the rates of pay given to any of the Receptionists at the hotel in London with those of others in the company because there was an additional payment given to the staff for working in the capital city.

The different rates of salary for staff in the Hotel Reception department in the George Hotel, Chollerford progress upwards by seniority and length of service in the company. Though a Receptionist on a live-in salary of £2080 p.a., is on low pay. If they are being paid at the Licensed Residential wages council minimum, plus Swallow Hotels' additional 5%, giving £1.88 per hour then her gross weekly income of £75.20 for a 40 hour working week is being reduced by £35.00 per week through National Insurance, Income Tax and the company's deduction for living in the hotel. Taking the Royal County Hotel in Durham as an example, this is in the region of £650 p.a., or £12.50 per week. It does not leave the employee with a great deal of discretionary income. For the opportunity of living in the hotel come all the disadvantages of being where you work and the commensurate lack of privacy. It is hard to imagine £40.00 compensating for all of this.

More anomalies can be found in the salaries for the staff in the White Swan, Alnwick. Here the Head Receptionist, earning £4218 p.a., is being paid £1000 less than her Senior Receptionist (Shift Leader) even though she had been with the company two years longer and holds the more responsible position.

As Smith put it earlier in the report,

'Pay is generally less favourable than the retail trade and certainly compared with clerical jobs at Government Departments or similar. These are then made even less favourable by the hours of work - splits, odd days off, very late and early duties. Receptionists by and large take a professional approach to the job and seem to finish a shift and the duties needed rather than go off duty to the clock. This again dilutes the hourly rate considerably'

Smith, 1985, p.3

In the survey of Swallow Hotel Receptionists nearly two-thirds of the respondents were dissatisfied with their rate of pay. Moreover, when asked if they could afford to live out if they wanted to the same number answered 'No' as had answered 'Yes' to the question *Do you live in the hotel?* that is one-third of the respondents.

Yet they are only paid what the management of the hotel think they can afford *within* their budgets. As is obvious there is no national rate for the job within

Swallow Hotels. And only a national minimum rate set by the Wages Council. No extra money is allocated to recruit the calibre of staff that Mr Smith thinks is needed for the Hotel Reception departments. Even though he wants to upgrade the level of entry qualifications needed to be a hotel Receptionist, review the training programme for that department and provide a career structure for the staff there is no direct mention of upgrading the wages. All that is mentioned is that conditions must be improved.

Vaux also provides a pension scheme for its employees as a means of securing their long term commitment to the company. If the employee leaves before they are due to retire then they are no longer entitled to receive a company pension. It may be free to join but the employee pays in decades of loyalty. An employee may also secure additional benefits if they so wish by making voluntary contributions out of their wages (Vaux, 1980). There is also a *Profit Sharing Scheme* run by Vaux on behalf of its employees. A percentage of profits is set aside in the form of shares which are held for the employees by Trustees who are senior management personnel in the company. One of these is the Managing Director of Swallow Hotels. The amount of profit that is taken out is calculated on the average cost of each employee to the company. This means that the more productive they are, that is the more Value that is Added through their employment, then the greater the percentage of profit that is set aside.

This is therefore a productive bonus incentive scheme to encourage the employees to work harder and so to remain loyal to the company. It also acts as a means of reducing labour turnover as an employee must be employed with the company for 2 years to begin to qualify and then they only do so at the end of the third year of employment (Vaux, 1982).

'The success of the company is dependent on keeping good *men* in senior management positions. One of the ways of doing this is to give them the opportunity to benefit from the Company's success which they help to create. This [Share Incentive] scheme would grant an option after a period of some years to buy shares at the price ruling when the option is granted. As a result of this, the executives will benefit when the company's success is reflected in increased share prices'

(my emphasis) Annual Report, 1972

Employees can also purchase shares themselves through the *SAYE Share Option Scheme* which like the scheme outlined above for the management of the

company, which was started 9 years earlier, gives employees a financial stake in the success of the company (Vaux, 1981).

As will be shown in the reaction of Swallow Hotels to the presence of trade unions in their hotels these are all ways of subverting the advantages of joining a trade union for the employee. The cynical logic which the company would like to see being developed could run something like this, ' If the company can give us these things now, what can the trade union do for us.'

There are no wage bands for employees in HI other than for Supervisor and Management positions. In the Hilton International Kensington the Receptionists were paid in the region of £2.50 per hour giving a weekly wage of £100.00 and a monthly salary of £400.00. This increased with promotion. On these wages staff were forced to live in staff accommodation which was not so much for the benefit of the employee, but as a means of ensuring that wage rates could remain low.

In the case of Hotel staff in New York, and Receptionists in particular, wage rates are set higher. But in that city, like with Dublin in Eire, the Hotel and Catering unions have the city in a closed shop situation. Which means that pay and conditions are better in the Vista International New York than in any other of the Vista hotels in the USA. This also meant that with unions only being strongly organised on a city-wide basis they did not have the same kind of control over conditions in hotels in the rest of the USA. So that for example, a Desk Clerk in any one of the five Vista International Hotels I visited in the USA in 1987 there would be five different wage rates for this first entry position. However as the Personnel Managers for each of the hotels stated the living standard for each of the cities in which the hotels are located is different. They "estimated" living standards on a "rule-of-thumb" based on food, travel and accommodation costs.

In New York a Desk Clerk would receive for the first 6 months an hourly rate of \$9.49. Relate this to the cost of a low priced studio flat at \$800 per month and the rate appears only adequate since on these rates the accommodation would take \$200 per week out of a wage packet of \$380 (approximately) for a 40 hour week. In Washington D.C. a Front Desk Clerk would be paid \$8.30 per hour for the first 6 months, rising to \$8.45 thereafter. In comparison accommodation prices start at about \$600 per month in the city for a studio apartment. On a working week of 40 hours this works out to about \$440 out of which at least \$150 will be spent on accommodation. Which is proportionately less than for a Desk Clerk in New York. The Desk Clerks in the Pittsburgh hotel are paid \$5.25 per hour; at the Vista Kansas \$5.50; and at the Drake in Chicago an hourly rate of \$6.25.

There are perks for employees of HI and these include complimentary accommodation, if space is available, or at a minimum rate of \$30: in addition there is a 50% discount on the cost of food & beverage whilst staying in a HI hotel. Furthermore life insurance is provided free of charge to all employees as well as medical, drug and dental coverage. The latter is necessary in a country where all such things have to be paid for and where there is no National Health Service (Vista Employee's Handbook, pp.11-12).

There is a policy document on the calculation of wage rates entitled P-17 issued by the Personnel Department, however I was not given permission to view the document. The Personnel Director claimed it was considered to be a sensitive corporate document. What the policy document does provide for is,

'A sound and effective salary administration program [which] is synonymous with good management. Personnel Policy P-17 provides a format that will assure Hilton International maintaining an effective salary program'

1982 b, p.44

This means in practice paying about the same as other hotels in the city in which the particular hotel is located without regard to the fact that it is the same job whether it is carried out in New York or Kansas City.

## 2.4 Trade Unions

In a report published by the Commission on Industrial Relations (CIR) it was recommended that managements and unions encourage the development of collective bargaining as a way towards better industrial relations. The report entitled, *Hotel and Catering Industry, Part 1 Hotels and Restaurants Command Number 4789* was published on October 6, 1971. This main recommendation has yet to be put into effect. The policy that the commission was recommending was one where the employer, 'accepted' the right of unions to negotiate on behalf of employees and so invite the union to recruit and encourage employees to join.

One of the main reasons why the commission looked at industrial relations in the hotel and catering industry was because trade union organisation was relatively weak. This is still the case today. The commission recommended that companies and management should approach the General and Municipal Worker's Union as the appropriate union and grant facilities for union recruitment.



This *recommendation* was seen as favouring one union over another. In the example of the Grosvenor hotel, Sheffield (which will be looked at later) the attitude of the management towards the more militant TGWU, as opposed to the union they had invited in, the GMWU, can be seen as an example of the effect of external manipulation by a political body, the CIR, on the internal workings of an industry, such as the hotel trade. It also demonstrates how the industry is well aware of how it can manipulate such recommendations in order to suit its own operations and long term interests.

The 1986 Wages Act however reversed this situation and the GMB general union (formerly the GMWU) is no longer recognised as the “recommended” union for the hotel and catering industry. This had the two-fold effect of taking away the moral pressure on a company which has had to defend its anti-union stance in the past in the face of a political recommendation to deal with a trade union. It also does away with any inference that an employer could be doing deals with the trade union that is supposed to be defending the employees interests. However in an industry where trade union membership is low, as can be seen in the following paragraph, this is a further deterioration in the quality of industrial relations (FT, 10.8.87,)

Figures for membership of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) and the GMWU - Hotel and Catering Workers Union (HCWU) are neither precise nor up to date. Dronfield and Soto, in 1980, put the figure for the TGWU at 12,000 and for the GMWU at 30,000, representing less than 6% of the workforce of the Hotel and Catering industry (p.31). So trade union membership in Swallow Hotels is less than the national coverage for the two major unions. Because of this any agreement that they come to with any of the unions over pay and conditions are not binding on the company because no one single union has more than 50% of employees as members which would qualify them to claim rights of representation in negotiations.

Mr Pope would never allow members of his staff to belong to trade union. His politics would not allow it. As far as I am aware no attempt was made by any of the staff to become members of any trade union. When I interviewed staff in Croft Hotels they said that trade unions would not be tolerated by the senior executives. Croft Hotels was the founding hotel group of Consort Hotels and the owner was the first chairman of the consortium (1981-1986).

Pope freely admits that he is a true blue conservative and a fervent supporter of Margaret Thatcher. If “Thatcherites” exist in Britain, Pope is one. He relishes the contact that he has made with the Conservative MP for York which allows him to be a part of the world of politics from the sidelines. At one time venturing

with the idea of standing for parliament he decided against it because he could not bring himself to toe the party line. Now in a position to dictate the political climate of the office where he reigns supreme he prefers to get people to chant rousing choruses like American business people do. Supposing this makes them work harder and be more enthusiastic for their job and for and their employer.

The policy of Swallow Hotels towards Trade Union membership is laid out in the *Employee's Handbook*.

'The Company does not require any employee to be a member of a Trade Union. The Company believes that it is the right of each individual employee to decide whether or not to subscribe to any Union, according to his or her own particular circumstances'

Employee's Handbook, Section 12

As the Deputy Manager of the Royal County hotel put it,

'We don't, "promote" it, we don't, "not promote" it... we leave it entirely up to the individuals. If anyone wants to join [a trade union] they can feel free entirely to do so'

Stephenson

This is the policy of the company put into practice. This could be described as a 'neutral' policy towards trade unions; where the employer offers neither assistance or resistance to the union(s) whilst granting recognition to the union for negotiating when it has shown it has the support of over 50% of the workforce (Wood and Pedler, 1978, p.34).

However as Mr Smith, the Personnel Manager, said less than 4% of the 3000 employees (his approximation) of Swallow Hotels are in any trade union. He sees the pre-negotiating meetings for the yearly round of wage increases as a, 'farce' (Smith) because all they are is a forum for the company to tell the unions - TGWU and GMWU - what they are going to pay their employees next year. There is no discussion, all the company requires is the 'formal acceptance' by the unions of this decision. If they do not then the Personnel Manager still goes ahead and implements the pay policy regardless (Smith, Memo to Hotel Managers, 3.4.85).

In the questionnaire sent out to all the Hotel Receptionists as part of this research there were two questions about trade union membership. To the question, 'Are you a member of a Trade union?', 95% answered, 'No'. The follow up question, to ascertain the opinion of the staff about the effectiveness of Trade Unions, brought the following results; 21% of the staff thought that, 'Trade Unions do a good job in protecting their members interests', whilst 26% thought they did not, the most significant figure being the 47% who did not know. This lack of knowledge about the success or otherwise of trade unions was repeated to me during my interviews with hotel Receptionists. Many of the Receptionists I talked to did not even know Swallow Hotels' policy towards trade union membership, and some of the members of hotels' management did not either.

The ignorance amongst the Hotel Receptionists stems from the way in which the unions promote their presence and activities. Because of the history of the GMWU in such disputes as the Grosvenor hotel, and the recommendation by the CIR that it be the industry's 'union', it has come to be seen as the 'manager's' union. However, their strategy to be conciliatory towards management can not detract from the fact that in 1980 they had a membership amongst Hotel and Catering workers of 30,000 and the TGWU had a membership of 12,000. The approach of the GMWU to this industry, relatively unknown for its militant activity, is one of promoting itself as the body which can represent workers in all the different areas of the hotel, rather than seeing them as another group of workers in a workplace as the TGWU has been criticised for doing. The approach of this latter union has been one of getting members who identify with the image of the union rather than fitting the union to the workers (Johnson and Mignot, 1982, p. 20). More recently this approach has changed and later in this section it will be seen how the TGWU has adopted a strategy of recruiting part-time workers to its ranks. A policy which will have great appeal in a seasonal and cyclical industry, such as the hotel trade, which relies on such workers to fill in the staffing gaps created by sudden changes in business demand.

Mr Smith also believes the unions are ill equipped to deal with the administration that the hotel industry demands, given the number of units and the extent of their geographical spread. It needs to be remembered that there are 19,782 units in Great Britain of which Swallow Hotels represents 0.2%. In all the Top 50 hotel companies represent 4.5% of the total number of hotels in the UK. These are spread over an area of 89,000 square miles. The response of the GMWU to this problem of logistics was to concentrate its recruiting activities amongst the larger hotel companies in the hope that this would create demand amongst employees in individually owned and managed hotels throughout the country. This was

decided at their annual conference in 1976. Over the period 1976-1979 the membership increased by 19,000 with company agreements with for example, Grand Metropolitan, Rank, Crest, Thistle Hotels (Dronfield and Soto, 1980, p.35).

The CIR report also recommended the GMWU improve its organisation so that it could, 'effectively' represent workers in the hotel and catering industry. Furthermore, that the union should,

'... train its officials to understand the day to day working requirements of hotels and restaurants; recruit on a company basis where management is prepared to develop progressive industrial relations policies; recruit on an area basis in towns and resorts - especially where there is a local hotels association; recruit systematically starting with kitchen workers where conditions for organisation are most favourable; try to negotiate check-off arrangements, that is deductions of union subscriptions from wages by employers'

CIR, 1971, p.2

The Head Receptionist of the Carlisle hotel felt that because of the diversity of jobs in the hotel with different craft and skill levels such a union of employees would not be possible. She thought that to have anyone but a member of ones own department representing you would not only be a disadvantage but also impossible because they would have no idea of how your department operated and how the work was carried out. She felt that this was the reason why trade unions had found it so difficult to organise themselves in hotels. As Mars and Mitchell accurately state the products that go to make up the hotel's business (accommodation, food and beverage) operate within different labour markets and so create different patterns of industrial relations. It was this that the CIR report was referring to when it recommended to the GMWU that it recruit, 'systematically' beginning with the kitchen where the hierarchy of staff and clearly defined job descriptions make the organisation of the employees easier (CIR, 1971, p.2).

This in effect means that the type of representation that employees need is more along the lines of departmental delegates rather than a blanket representation. However this could perpetuate the very condition that would undermine any need for collective action and that is the inter-departmental rivalry associated with the relative status of skilled manual and non-manual work. Such is the case between the Kitchen and the Hotel Reception departments. It is this that the Head Receptionist at the Carlisle hotel is referring to.

“... if there is a union that will fight for what we want, I'll join it”

quoted in Wood and Pedler, 1978, p.31

This remark is indicative of the fact that there is a latent feeling in the hotel industry that trade unions could be of some assistance but they have to be seen to represent the more conservative element that exists amongst hotel workers in the tradition of loyalty to the customer and to the employer. For example amongst the Receptionists in Swallow Hotels 21% feel that unions do a good job in protecting members interests. One of which is the improvement of conditions which Bain and Elsheikh (1976) term a, “ ‘credit effect’ ” (p.64).

By no means universal or absolute this means that personal power is more often expressed directly and is more influential than that of collective action through trade union membership. Although oppressed as groups and as individuals employees are still reluctant to see progress being achieved in any other way than by the yearly company decision on wage increases and the additional benefits that can be obtained as individuals.

All this does is maintain the power of the manager over the individual and so it is only through trade union membership that the person would benefit as a part of the collective and be free of the worst excesses of this patriarchal relationship.

‘The central issue in the Grosvenor dispute is the attempt of the employees to move from an individualistic to a collective relationship with the employer. In an organisational context, the significance of the recognition process rests on this status passage. Even the non-striking employees in the Grosvenor dispute admitted the need for a union, many of them had been amongst the first to join the TGWU’

Wood and Pedler, 1978, p.34

Such individuality is at the heart of working in the hotel trade brought on by the fact there was no means of checking the excesses of management prejudice towards the worker(s). This relationship between boss and worker which is along the lines of cosmetic haggling is mourned as a passing relic of the way in which the hotel industry goes about its business. The manager of the Royal County hotel in Durham sees this as being the quintessence of the friendly spontaneity between Heads of Department and the Manager, he relishes it as a demonstrable example of his patriarchal power: which will still go on at his hotel so long as

there is not a union to represent the employees. This will not happen at this hotel if the workers believe they will do less well out of the union negotiating on their behalf than a head of department dealing directly with the manager.

There are a number of *incentives* a company can use to make an individual believe they are better off financially taking what the company has to offer than trying to negotiate through a trade union. Swallow Hotels adopts what Wood and Pedler would call a, 'subversive rejection' of trade union principles by granting its employees certain fringe benefits (Wood and Pedler, 1978, p.34).

In a study of the role of trade unions in obtaining basic and additional rewards for employees Johnson investigated the policy of a number of hotel companies. Depending on the method he adopted the number ranged from 10 to 36 companies. His results showed that there were some rewards, basic and additional, that would normally be provided in both unionised and non-unionised hotels; others more commonly in unionised hotels; and some more commonly in non-unionised hotels (Johnson, 1983, p.33). Examples will be drawn from data obtained from the three hotel groups.

Taking Swallow Hotels as an example the provision of live-in accommodation, complimentary hotel rooms in company hotels, employee introduction bonuses, meals on duty, occupancy bonuses and provision of bonuses would normally be provided by hotels with or without union negotiating rights. Whereas long service payments and pension schemes would normally be provided only by a hotel or company where there was a trade union negotiating on behalf of the staff. It is probably the case that the presence of trade unions in the brewing divisions of Vaux has benefited the staff in the hotel division rather than anything the unions have been able to do for the hotel workers themselves. However Johnson concludes his results by indicating that such additional rewards on top of this, such as the Employees Share Schemes, are normally only provided by companies which are non-unionised. This would seemingly contradict Johnson's theory unless Vaux were using these measures to undermine the influence of the unions in their company by trying to negate the 'credit effect' that trade unions could be associated with.

Mr Smith is also of the opinion that people work in the hotel industry because they, 'love it and thoroughly enjoy it' (Smith). Furthermore staff would be insulted if they were not asked to work at a special function, irrespective of whether they were to be paid overtime rates of pay for it. In Mr Smith's opinion the reward is working in a quality job which is glamorous. This is similar to the voyeurism expressed by Mr Pope, that his staff would work for less money than they could get elsewhere because they were sharing in the success of a growing hotel consortium.

The fact that they received no material advantage in the way member hotels did was to him irrelevant. Like Mr Smith he saw no advantage or necessity for staff to be in a trade union.

The TGWU through a series of half-hearted disputes with THF, over the period 1976-1979 lost the initiative to the employer. One of these was in the Grosvenor Hotel in Sheffield. It highlights two major reasons why unions will never recruit within the hotel trade until these obstacles are overcome. The first is the determination on the part of the union to be prepared not only to picket one hotel but to blacklist all the hotels within a group. Which with respect to THF there are several hundred in this country. Because until this strategy is put into operation the second factor will always mean that the employer can maintain business. This is the ability to bring in supplies of provision from other hotels within the group or switch suppliers from those who employ union transport workers to those which do not. Only and until the unions employ a national strategy with the large groups of hotels will they first be able to capture the confidence of workers in the company and then proceed to create demand amongst the smaller hotel groups like Swallow Hotels and the other 19,000 hotels in Great Britain (Dronfield and Soto, 1980, p.34-36).

The history of union activity in the Hotel trade in Great Britain is one of missed opportunities. The GMWU in the mid-1940's had the best opportunity they have ever had for establishing themselves as the representatives of hotel and catering workers. However in the case of The Savoy strike of 1946-1947 the union trusted the management to negotiate for full recognition within the group of luxury hotels and they returned their members to work before the details had been agreed upon. The Savoy Hotel management reneged on their gentlemen's agreement and never formally recognised the union. The strike leaders were dismissed and unbelievably the militant leaders of the London branch of the GMWU were suspended (Dronfield and Soto, 1980, pp.28-30).

Within 18 months of the strike ending the membership of the GMWU plummeted from its peak of 13,000 at the height of the strike in early 1947 to 2192 members in 1948. For the next twenty years this position was maintained. The unofficial policy of the GMWU became one of leaving the workers in the hotel and catering trades to look after themselves. They could see no advantage in terms of membership within such areas of work. In any case whenever there was a recruitment drive there were ex-Savoy workers ready to degrade the efforts of a union which had betrayed their trust in the principle of solidarity (Dronfield and Soto, 1980, pp.30-31).

Rivalry for union membership between the TGWU and the GMWU came to a head in the seaside resort of Torquay (1968) and over recruitment within Grand Metropolitan who invited the moderate GMWU in to the hotel over the heads of the TGWU officials who had been leafletting outside the group's London hotels (1972). The result was that now Grand Metropolitan is one of the strongest GMWU branches (Dronfield and Soto, 1980, pp32-33). However when Grand Metropolitan sold their London hotels, including what is now the Swallow International Hotel, this position was not maintained. With respect to the Swallow Hotel union membership has gone from over 50% to under 5% of the employees. The General Manager pays no attention to the requests of the GMWU. A feeling shared by the Personnel Manager for Swallow Hotels.

Another outcome was the 'spheres of influence agreement'. In this, the first market segmentation policy for trade unions, 40 hotel and catering companies were allocated, by the TUC, to one or other of the two main unions; depending on the unions previous activities and areas of infiltration. The GMWU was allocated large groups with a national distribution, whilst the TGWU was given a larger amount of restaurant chains, especially in the London area, and smaller companies in the hotel trade (Johnson and Mignot, 1982, pp.13-14).

A Receptionist at The County Hotel, Durham thought it would be an advantage to be in a trade union if that would mean the long and unsocial hours could be reduced. Whilst another at the Swallow Hotel in Carlisle felt it would be a dis-service to the customer if the hotel workers went on strike and literally, 'down tools'.

In the survey on Swallow Hotel Receptionists there was a question designed to discover what the staff thought management's reaction to trade unions is. Of those who answered this question, of which there were 85, 61% of the respondents thought that the management in their hotel were indifferent towards trade unions, 36% were positively against trade unions and only 2 out of 85 Receptionists felt that the management in their hotel were positively in favour of trade unions.

More disturbing however was that most of the opinions expressed by the Hotel Receptionists about trade unions were largely based on media hype and stereotypical views rather than first hand experience. However as one of the Shift Leaders in the Royal County hotel in Durham put it,



'Mr Hawley [the General Manager] is liable to sack the staff. If you've only got a little one [trade union membership] he is liable to sack the staff. He knows there's plenty of people unemployed out there who'd welcome the chance of having a job'

Nicholls

A Shift Leader at the hotel in London felt it would be more detrimental to the management of the hotel than it would be to the staff,

'I don't think management would like anybody being in a trade union because there's too much at stake if everyone went out on strike. The number of times people leave hotels they'd be a strike every week'

Wright

The hotel's management often felt, like Mr Smith, that the nature of the operations of hotels, the seasonality of the business and hence the uncertainty about tenure of employment meant that the presence of trade unions would be a hindrance that no unit manager could work with. In one of the hotels in Gateshead, Tyne and Wear there is a union membership of one-third of the staff. The job descriptions that the union have agreed on are stuck to precisely by them. Too much so for the management who have found that one of the biggest problems in having clearly defined job specifications for the Restaurant and Housekeeping staff is that they can not get anyone to clean the outside of the Restaurant glass door!

In 1981 when Swallow bought the hotel from Grand Metropolitan they reduced the number of staff by 70 resulting in there now being 5 staff for every 10 rooms, a ratio of 1:2. In 1985 staff levels were reduced by 20 to 195 for the "Summer", and by 55 to 160 members of staff for the "Winter" season. As the Deputy Manager of the hotel said,

'I think everyone is working *a little bit harder*. But at the same time we've improved the standard to our clients and increased the number of clients who stay here. We've increased the number of meals we serve and we've increased the *profitability* generally throughout the whole operation over these 4 years'

(my emphasis), Harvey

It is this kind of industrial relations practice, good for the employer but not for those seeking employment, that hotel companies such as Swallow would find it hard to execute if there was a union presence in the hotel. It is this which motivates the Personnel policy, and management practice, for non-promotion of trade union membership amongst company employees. It is this that mitigates against the view that service industries like hotels and catering will sponge up the unemployment created elsewhere in the economy. To become more efficient the London International hotel had to shed labour. For the management of the company looking to bottom line net profit results this was the obvious thing to do. For them and for the shareholders of Vaux it made economic sense.

The reasons why the CIR report recommended voluntary collective bargaining was because of the benefits that would be obtained for the companies and management through better industrial relations. The commission suggested that provision should be made for,

'... regulating payment and conditions of employment, especially service charge, hours of work and shift working; determining pay levels; making better use of manpower; reducing labour turnover; providing procedures for resolving grievances; providing procedures for consultation and communication'

CIR, 1971, p.2

The reasons for these recommendations were because the CIR found that,

'... rates of pay were largely determined by individual hotel managers according to local market pressures - there were very few collective negotiations; the basis on which the service charge was distributed varied considerably, was not often disclosed to the staff, and caused discontent; split shift working and irregular hours often created personal difficulties for staff; there was a lack of procedures for dealing with grievances or for communicating between staff and management'

CIR, 1971, p.2

Little has changed since 1971. However Swallow Hotels has a grievance procedure for all its members of staff which is organised hierarchically. Beginning with the Head of Department and following on through the Hotel Manager or the Shop Steward if there is one. If the problem is not resolved to the satisfaction of the

member of staff then it can be taken to the Regional Manager and then on to the Managing Director of Swallow Hotels. Only if there is trade union representation in the hotel would it go to the full-time Area Representative. This is,

'... the basis for good industrial relations in Swallow Hotels'

Employee's Handbook, Section 14

In the second week of 1987 the TGWU launched a recruitment drive to enrol temporary workers on to its membership files. According to the Institute of Manpower Studies there are more than 1.7 million temporary workers in Britain. These are people on short-term contracts, seasonal, casual and agency workers. In the hotel industry use of casual and seasonal workers is prolific especially in resort hotels and during periods of the week and year when business demands additional staff to be hired or fired. The TGWU sees these workers as a target for increasing its membership from its current 1.4 million level (which has fallen from 2.1 million in 1980) and plans to prevent employers from exploiting this two-tier labour market (FT, 5.12.86, p.12).

It is an important initiative by one of the largest unions which has been criticised in the past for its slowness in reacting to changing labour market patterns especially in the service industries where the market is divided into a 'core' and 'peripheral' workforce and where the tenure of employment is non-existent for the casual and seasonal workforce (FT, 8.12.86, p.9).

The strategy of the TGWU was to target particular areas of the country, starting in the Midlands, and do a comprehensive recruitment drive using all its resources of manpower and administration. They also found that companies in the retailing sector employed the same temporary workers year after year (FT, 7.1.87, p.9). This is also the case in the hotel industry where seasonal and casual staff will have their names on a list and the management of the hotel will contact them as business demands during the course of the year. The TGWU started its recruitment drive in the hotel industry with Ladbroke's the second largest hotel chain in the UK with 63 hotels. Ladbroke's employed 4382 people in its hotels in 1985 including 'many' temporary and part-time workers (FT, 2.3.87, p.8). As Mr Pearson, the TGWU's hotel and catering officer was quoted as saying in the Financial Times,

' We believe sustained recruitment activity of this kind is the only way to establish a credible trade union presence for staff. We are providing a range of advisory and legal back-up services as part of the drive'

FT, 5.3.87, p.6

He also acknowledged that it would take more than a, 'few days' of union action before results could be expected to occur (FT, 5.3.87, p.6).

One of the criticisms of this policy is that the union is trying to recruit in an area of the labour market which is traditionally non-unionised. That is exactly why the union is trying to recruit in the service sectors of which the hotel trade is one sector. Furthermore that this is too narrow an area for the union to recruit members when it is experiencing a turnover in membership of 20% a year and needs 300,000 new members a year 'just to stand still' and it is looking to only a maximum 1.7 million workers to stem its falling membership and industrial 'clout' (FT, 8.12.86, p.9). As a result of this it also decided to embark on a more all embracing strategy to recruit on a regional wide basis as well as the specific target of Ladbroke hotels.

It will be interesting to see if the TGWU in this country who are trying to recruit members from Ladbroke hotels have any degree of success. Now that Ladbroke owns the Hilton International hotel chain the TGWU could also try and secure negotiating rights in such hotels as the Park Lane Hilton. This would send shudders of capitalist horror throughout the luxury hotel market in London.

It is written in one of Hilton International's policy documents that:

'The best interests of Hilton International and its investors are served when union agreements clearly set forth, unequivocally, that Hilton International has the right to manage the enterprise. The success or failure of Hilton International hotels is in management's hands. This responsibility should not be delegated under any union agreement. Consequently, every effort should be made to exclude from the terms of a union contract all those supervisory employees who have the right to hire or fire or to recommend such action. . . Because of the service nature of the hotel business, a strike, work stoppage or lockout may result in serious inconvenience to the public. All union contracts should specifically exclude clauses that could create this situation. Local customs and legislation, of course, will dictate many of the collective bargaining agreements, but the aforementioned clauses should be inserted unless specifically forbidden by local law.'

Although I was not given details of it there is a Policy document (P-6) entitled *Strike Plan*, drawn up for Vista and Hilton International General Managers, which is specifically developed for each hotel. So that in the event of a strike happening there is an emergency plan which can be put into operation.

The basis of this document is the right to manage, and is the same premise that drove Rupert Murdoch, the Australian multi-media entrepreneur, to handle the striking workers at his printing works at "Wapping", London in the way he did. In 1985, with his newspapers 'The Sun' and 'The Sunday Times', he was determined to subdue the power and autonomy of the printing unions by asserting his own entrepreneurial control and by establishing a single union agreement with the electrician's union the EEPTU.

## Chapter 6

### The Working Day

#### Introduction

This chapter is concerned with three things. First, the kinds of tasks the Hotel Receptionist is expected to do. Second, the way in which computerisation has affected the nature of the job. Finally, the ways in which the introduction of technology has meant that the Receptionists are being controlled by the demands of the system which has created a dependence by them on it. This has an impact on the quality of the relationship between the employee and the customer, in that the presence of such machinery undermines the personal nature of the discourse. Rather than making the administration of the Front Office more efficient, it has only increased the gross productivity of the Receptionists as measured through the decrease in direct labour costs. If the customer is paying for “personal service” then this is not what they will receive as the Receptionist is forced to deal with more customers on a more superficial basis.

#### 1. The Hotel Receptionist’s Tasks.

For the Receptionist there are up to three work shifts. There is the morning shift (7 a.m.-3 p.m.); the late shift (3 p.m.-11 p.m.) and the night shift (11 p.m.-7 a.m.) In some hotels the night shift is not necessary because the auditing of the days work is done during the late shift. The end of the Hotel’s financial day is marked by the balancing of the customers’ bills with the money received. This is the job of the Reception office. All of the financial transactions go through this office which is the central administration point for the hotel. Their job is an up-front one. They receive all the flak from people in other departments if they need accurate information to make the right amount of meals or clean a certain number of rooms and the Receptionist cannot give it to them at that precise moment. If there is a question to be asked then the staff in the Front Office are expected to be able to answer it or know of someone who can.

The clerical work includes the inputting into the computerised customer reservation system or onto reservation forms and into a filing system all the details of the customers enquiry and their registration details. This, in a cumulative sense, means the names of all the customer's, the type of room they are occupying, how much they are being charged for it, how long they are going to be in it, whether they are on a package holiday, paying for it themselves, getting it paid for them by the hotel, another person or by whom they work for. So it goes on, including how much they are allowed to spend in the hotel, whether they have any particular demands like a room with a view on a particular floor beside a lift in a quiet part of the hotel not too far from anywhere....! Well all of that is recorded. There is more. There is the issuing of room keys, continually updating accommodation availability, having to sort through, deal with and file correspondence, registration forms, customer bills and statistical reports, having to staple one thing to another and it to another and unstaple one thing from the third thing and then file them under separate days, months or alphabetical letters.

The Hotel Receptionist has two main roles. The first is to welcome the customer into the hotel. The second is to ensure all the information pertaining to the customer's registration is correct and accurately inputted into the system. These are the Front and the Back Office aspects of their work, the social and the administrative.

During my fieldwork I interviewed a number of lecturers in Front Office Management. The fact that there are such people is indicative of the change in attitude within the Hotel trade towards this department in the hotel. It is a measure of the growing trend of specialisation that is driven by profit and executed through organisational choices, including that of the utilisation of machinery in the labour process.

In an interview that I conducted with Mr Pullen, a lecturer in Front Office Management at the Oxford Polytechnic, the order in which the tasks of the Receptionist are placed is indicative of the status attached to their job. As he said the hotel industry is craft oriented in its teaching and approach to the prioritising of jobs. In this context the person behind the desk of the *Front Office* is seen as a glorified cleric. This is reflected in the way in which the tasks of the staff of the department are presented in the teaching literature for Hotel Receptionists. These are Record Keeping; Communication between customer, management and staff (in various permutations); Receiving the Customer into the building; and Selling the hotel's products to the customer.

Pullen's view is that the order of the tasks ought to be reversed. So that the Receptionist is in the first instance a Sales person, then a Welcomer of the

Customer, and not merely a Receiver, and finally the information clerk and contact person for departments is last. This would place the Receptionist at the heart of the network of control which includes money, people and materials.

His opinion is made with the knowledge that it is the computer based automated systems that are available to handle the administration that have freed the clerk to be more social rather than any change in the fundamental perception of the role of the Hotel Receptionist/Desk Clerk. It is an opinion which is contingent on the developments in technology in the industry rather than one that is based on the changing demands of the consumer and is therefore one that sees the advancement of computers into the hotel as both inevitable and progressive in as much as they can lead to an enrichment of the work of the Hotel Receptionist. This view is shared by 83% of Swallow Hotel Receptionists who, in the Survey, answered that the introduction of a computer based system into the Front Office had not reduced the initiative needed to carry out the duties of a Hotel Receptionist. Furthermore, 98% said that the work they do requires them to be more than a smiling host/hostess.

In an interview I had with Mr Hobson, a lecturer in Front Office Management at the Manchester Polytechnic, he added to Pullen's remarks by indicating that the job of the Hotel Receptionist becoming one that is multi-functional and multi-skilled with the advent of computers into the Front Office. This can have the effect, as in the London International Hotel and the Vista International Pittsburgh, whereby the jobs of the Receptionist and the Cashier are combined. So that staff can be drawn from the general pool of labour to handle the change in pattern of work at the period of greatest customer check-ins (late shift) and the most check-outs (early shift) What this means in terms of the "skill" content of the job will be discussed in Chapter 8. At present it is sufficient to mark the changes that are being made in the way that the role of the Receptionist is developing.

So we have seen organisational choice, with respect to the ordering of the tasks of the Receptionist, being directed by the hotel companies themselves through the criteria upon which they recruit staff. These criteria result from the changing nature of the work of the Receptionist. It is clear that organisational preference is being exercised in order that staff are employed in the most productive way. It is through the use of computerised machinery that this process is being carried out. Machinery which is being used, not for the direct benefit of labour as is commonly portrayed within the Hotel trade, but for the material advantage of the owners of both Swallow Hotels and Hilton International Hotels. The systems in use within these two companies are representative of the history of such exploitation. Machinery, which as a manifestation of human invention, is also the means by



which the owners of the capital which controls the possession of such technology have the power to dictate the way in which it will be used (Braverman, 1974, p.193). One of the results of that is the changes in job specification for the Hotel Receptionist.

The aim within Swallow Hotels is to get to the situation where, 'the Receptionist will be purely a Receptionist'. What Mr Gold, the General Manager of the Swallow Hotel in London means is that she will no longer be involved with clerical and administrative tasks and the job will be a social role performed by females. This is also the opinion of the Northern Regional Manager for Swallow Hotels, Mr Carrigan, who wants to see the paperwork relegated to a, 'back office function'. This will allow for the hostess/Receptionist to act, like the Guest Relations Manager works in the Hilton International Kensington, as a Welcomer. This is to divorce 'her' from the unglamorous image associated with clerical administration.

As we will see this is different from Hilton International Hotels (HIH) in that both the social role and the clerical are to remain in view. Also the tasks are to be brought together, seemingly to enrich the job. This has been made possible through the application of technology which is being adopted in order to reduce labour costs.

The job of the Receptionist in HIH used to be task oriented, according to Ms Storm the Director of Front Office Systems, so the personality traits matched up with the job description. This meant that such jobs as Desk Clerk and Cashier could be separated and two different types of people employed. Now with the present system, one person is employed to do both jobs, so someone with a, 'great deal more potential' is looked for. This policy will depend to some extent on the size of the unit. As Ms Storm stated, 'you can't promote all the time.', though she did say that career moves to supervisor level and 'higher' management are possible from a first entry position as a front desk clerk. This is different to the policy of Graduate Recruitment for Reception Managers which is carried out at Swallow Hotels. What is looked for is not someone with educational qualifications, but a person who will be a, 'plugger', (a hard worker). They aim to bring the person and the system together so that they, 'fit' and then, 'package it altogether'. Rather like the process of matching the corporation's needs with the available software. The applicant needs to have a great willingness to learn and they must not be afraid, or shy, to work with computers. The company doesn't require the clerk to know how the system works, just that it does. The system is made to be as, "user friendly" as possible so that the clerk doesn't have to think. All they have to be able to do is read and type, and with these "skills" there is, 'room for advancement and growth' (Storm) within the hotel.

This is made possible in HI through the cross training between departments and the exposure that staff are offered because of that policy. This results in the introduction of multi-skilled workers for example, combining desk clerk with cashier. As a consequence it is possible for the company to deploy staff between the two areas as the customer cycle moves through its various phases. The late afternoon, when customers are checking-in to the hotel, staff are put on the front desk and the following morning when customers are settling their bills staff are deployed as cashiers where they had been desk clerks the afternoon before. This policy increases flexibility and customer service, staff can no longer “pass the buck” and point the blame at other departments/sections or pass customer enquiries to the Cashier or the Porter because they are able to do the jobs of three workers. ‘...the boundaries are broken down by computerisation.’ (Storm).

This opportunity is seen to be there amongst the Receptionists and Front Desk Clerks I interviewed during my fieldwork. In the survey on Swallow Hotel Receptionists there was an expressed desire to learn about the operations of other departments in the hotel. This was especially so with regard to Financial Control and Management for which up to three quarters of the Receptionists expressed a strong interest. Further down the list was Housekeeping for which the demand to have more knowledge about was indicated by 25% of the respondents. The Food & Beverage departments held relatively little interest for Swallow Hotel Receptionists. No more than 1 in 7 wanted to learn about these departments. However 74% of the respondents saw working as a Receptionist as the means of getting a job as senior as Reception Manager, whilst 8% saw it as a path to a career in Hotel Management and 9% seeing it no more than a dead end job without promotion prospects. This was in spite of the fact that 97% felt that a female could do the job of a General Manager.

As one Trainee Receptionist in Swallow Hotels put it as a female she had been attracted by the glamour of the job, the opportunity of meeting people and to travel the world (all commonly held views amongst those I interviewed). Now with a few weeks experience of working in the County Hotel in Durham (Swallow) she admits there is more to the job, ‘than meets the eye’ (Crammond). She thought the work would be as glamorous as the surroundings in which she would be working. However it is more than, ‘... getting the guests in, seeing the guests out, and getting their money from them’. It involves the monotony of working to a timetable which never varies. A schedule which is dictated by the software program for the system organised around the inputting of information within specific periods of time so that the reports can be printed in their pre-fixed order.

That is only true of those jobs which are repetitive and pose no mental challenge. As the Reception Manager of the Swallow Hotel in Carlisle put it Reception is a deadening job, 'with pure selling there's so many facets. It is a challenge, whereas Reception isn't. . . the hours begin to grind you down after a while' (McGahan). Her reward is knowing that the hotel has made more profit than the previous year and that she has had a direct part to play in that. Even though she sees no bonus for her work and considers the wages to be so appalling that she could bring herself to, 'put a match under the place'. What keeps her going, and others as well who have the opportunity to meet with customers in the arena of selling, is an interest in the job rather than seeing the, 'job for the job's sake' (Bowman). Without being able to believe that the job was more than simply filing away pieces of paper Ms Bowman, a Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel in London, would not be able to cope with the abuse she receives from customers. However the Receptionists with whom I talked also accepted that they were contributing to their own feelings of frustration by allowing themselves to be subject to such working conditions imposed on them by the management of the hotels they worked in and the company they were employed by.

There may be scope to develop an awareness in other departments, something which is a part of the training in Hilton International Hotels, but this does not mean that the task they will learn is any more interesting and self-fulfilling than the one they already do. The fallacy of such job enlarging processes is that the job will automatically become more fruitful simply through the addition of yet more mundane tasks. This leads the Receptionists of both hotel companies to make real in their imagination the escape route that their imaginative ambitions create for them.

Ms Crammond was not alone in finding her images of the Hotel trade dashed when faced with the reality of it all. One Front Office employee in the Vista International in Kansas City (USA) had initially wanted to work as a travel agent, but when she heard that she could have the grand title of *Guest Service Agent* working in the hotel then she chose that because it sounded, 'nice'. She has not been trained to be courteous to customers but she has been taught how to operate the computer. And this is in a company which apparently lays such importance on guest relations. Another thought that just seeing such a large hotel as the one she was working in was enough to make her go, 'Wow!. The opportunity to be in a "glamorous" go-see-the-world industry as well was for her, 'fabulous'. She worked in a hotel where the brightly coloured wool carpets soon changed to fluorescent lit staff passageways lined with concrete.

It seems that the glamour of the surrounds in which Receptionists work is a form of compensation for the greyness of a daily routine. The appearance of a smartly dressed female serving the customer behind the desk belies the truth that the world of the Front Desk clerk is one of chaos and mess. If the truth were told about the drabness of the working environment for the staff behind the customer facilities and the foyer then hotels would be hard pressed to hire staff. What is attractive is the feeling amongst the staff that in some way the luxury of the hotel and the opulence rubs off on to them. This is reflected in the ambitions of staff working in the hotel trade which, induced by the atmosphere of material acquisition, in turn become a palliative for the frustrations of the present working conditions and job content. So that present job and personal fulfillment are sacrificed for the glimmer of commercial success in the future. The following two examples highlight the contrast between ambition in the USA and the UK.

Ms Hirsch, the Front Office Supervisor at the Vista International in Kansas City, wants to be a General Manager but in her middle years and intends to own a small private resort which has exclusivity and personal service as its basic premises situated in a tropical location such as Tahiti or the Virgin Islands. In stark contrast Ms Bowman, a Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel in London, wants a job that will mean more than just getting the tasks for that day done within a specific and unchanging routine. She wants something that will make her get up in the morning and look forward to the challenge of the job and say, ' "I hope I get through today because it's important" '. At the moment even with her languages and working in a London hotel she is not being stretched. Swallow Hotels does not require any of their staff to know a foreign language unlike Hilton International which sees it as a positive advantage.

Swallow Hotels and Hilton International Hotels seem to stifle ambition through the drudgery of the work they expect the Receptionists to do. All that the company demands is that the person conforms to the organisation's way of doing things and in return they can have the grand title of Guest Services Agent as compensation as in the Kansas City hotel. Or that of Reception Manager for those with ambition in Swallow Hotels.

One of the main differences between the two companies is their hotels. With Swallow Hotels, it is only those of more than 100 letting bedrooms that have staff employed to answer the telephone, make reservations, check in customers and take the money. In the majority of cases this is done by only one person - that is the Hotel Receptionist. This is so no matter how many are working on the shift. This advantage which Ms Storm cites is now made possible through technology which has allowed for the monitoring of the administration of the Front Office in

addition to the opportunities for self-service machines for customers to process their registration and settlement of their bill on departure. It is this that Gold saw as the means by which he could separate the social role from the clerical tasks within the 417 bedroom Swallow Hotel in London.

We can see in the following quote the impression that is now being created of increased specialisation within the Hotel trade. The message is that firstly, the customer knows little of the operations of the hotel he was staying in and secondly, he assumed because another hotel he had stayed in had staff for all the separate tasks that all hotels did.

'Mason: How much is the guest aware of the work of a Hotel Receptionist?

McGahan: Very little because they really only see what goes on at the front desk... They don't realise when they walk into the average city hotel which is about this size 110 rooms that it's the person who's checking them in has dealt with their bit of correspondence as well. Very often switchboards are away from the Reception desk, it's surprising the number of people who come down to Reception and they've been on the 'phone to me and they've asked for a telephone call themselves and they come down and say, "Can you check with your Telephonist how much money I owe for the 'phone call?". And they don't realise it was me they were speaking to'

Dialogue, Swallow Hotel Carlisle

Although the distinct tasks of the Hotel Receptionist can be and are separated out for the sake of speed of customer turnover the jobs of the Advance Reservation Clerk, the Desk Clerk and the Cashier are interdependent: the accuracy of their work is dependent on a colleague inputting the necessary and the correct information. It is supposed to be the practice that all inputted data is checked for accuracy by the operator at the point of input and doubts raised with the relevant department/section which has passed on the information. However this did not always happen, it was thought that no one ever made a mistake or that the computer would correct the mistake itself, both of which are nonsense.

In the London International hotel the Switchboard and the Advance Reservations were located in different parts of the hotel from each other and from the front desk area where the Receptionists and Cashiers worked. Their job title was Receptionist/Cashier but in practise they were allocated principal duties.

In the Hilton International Kensington the arrangement was different. Both the Switchboard and the Cashiering were separate sections within the hotel, with the Cashiering section coming under the authority of the Financial Manager. The Advance Reservation and front desk clerks came under the control of the Assistant Manager-Front of House.

## **2. The Interrelationship of the Tasks**

### **2.1 The Person who Answers the Telephone**

Although the main points of comparison are between Swallow Hotels and Hilton International Hotels this does not mean that the Reservation Clerks in Consort Hotels are excluded. As a tele-reservation clerk the amount of work is dictated by the number of telephone calls they receive and the amount of reservation enquiries they receive by mail. So although they do not see the customer whom they are serving they do have contact with him/her by way of the 'phone. This is the same as the Switchboard operator in all of the hotels that I visited. The difference being the clerks at Consort Hotels also combine the work of the Advance Reservations person.

Within the Swallow Hotel group out of the 5 hotels I visited 4 had manual switchboards and only one, the London hotel, had a direct dial telephone system. Of the 4 hotels, 2 were going to get automated systems within that year. All of the HI/Vista International Hotels that were visited had automated switchboards.

The automated switchboard (in the London International hotel and in all of the HI/Vista Hotels) allows direct dialling from the bedrooms. The call is automatically recorded by a micro-processor system which logs the details of the call and the charge incurred, which is then automatically posted (charged) to the customer's hotel bill. In the Swallow Hotel in Durham (The County) the outgoing calls were monitored in this way. However the charges had to be manually posted to the customer's bill by the Telephonist or Receptionist.

Generally speaking the work of the Telephonist during office hours (9 a.m.-5 p.m.) is to answer incoming calls and connect the caller to the desired party; person, department or manager. This pattern was particularly reinforced in the Swallow Hotel in London where only one member of staff was on duty between 7 a.m. and 10 a.m. and between 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. After that time, and until 7

a.m. the next morning, the Switchboard was staffed by a Receptionist, either on the late or the night shift.

The Switchboard was staffed by two members of the section between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., with a change of personnel at 2 p.m. The work of the Telephonist after office hours was mainly to do with making calls for customers who were either unsuccessful in making the call themselves or in spite of this direct dial telephone wanted someone to dial the number for them.

The manual Switchboard required someone to connect all incoming and outgoing calls and to manually record off a meter unit the charge to the customer of the call(s) made. All those to whom I talked and who did not have the automated Switchboard were anticipating a reduction in time spent on the telephone, the majority saw it as a distinct advantage. However the Senior Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel Carlisle enjoyed working on the Switchboard because there was something tangible about putting in and pulling out plugs and leads and flicking switches twenty to the dozen. The lights indicating callers would flash on and off like illuminations, it was fascinating to watch this person answer incoming and connect outgoing calls on several lines simultaneously. There was a knack in maintaining a contact with all the callers and not keep any waiting either for their initial call to be answered or in connecting them to their destination.

In contrast the new system requires buttons to be pressed and little dexterity or decision making. That is programmed into the machine. The telephonist is also the human link for the customer phoning the hotel. However even here I was told by one Senior Receptionist you can learn a great deal about the people who will be coming to the hotel whilst on the telephone. (This is the way the staff learn about the customer rather than merely being dictated by a guest history brought up on to their screen). As she said there is the, 'surprise' of not knowing, 'who you're going to get at the other end' (Richardson). With the advent of direct dial systems that personal touch will be dispensed with entirely. The customer will then have the choice to be connected electronically or personally. It is choice that is a part of service rather than maintaining the human contact at all times.

This, however, is not all of the story. For example, in the one hotel (Royal County Hotel) which combined the manual Switchboard with a telephone logging machine the true criteria for the choice of automation could be seen more clearly. This is an intermediary stage between a manual system and a fully computer-linked one. Each call was monitored and a printed record was made of the room number, the called number, the duration of the call in units and the total cost. With a manual system, though the meter was connected to the call lines, the

evidence was handmade in as much as the chitty (piece of paper used as a temporary bill) showing the cost of the call was handwritten. Because of this it was open to doubt in the mind of the paying customer. However with combining both systems the recording of the charges was done by the machine even though the initiation was human. The result on a printed piece of paper, no more substantial than a chitty, provided the Receptionist with sufficient evidence to convince all of the querying customers - honest and lesser alike. The Receptionists found the evidence reassuring in the face of an obstinate customer. They even relished the prospect of rising to the challenge made to their integrity. It made for an interesting spectacle.

So on the face of it written evidence saves the Cashier from being suspected of not being honest or incompetent and having to back down in front of a customer who adamantly refuses to pay their telephone bill. It is not unusual for a Receptionist to believe the customer knows they have made a call and is merely trying to use their favoured position as a customer to get out of paying. Technical evidence removes this possibility. The installation of such logging machinery ensures that the hotelier gets all the revenue from a customer. It is as if infallibility is vested in the machine and all that it produces and the bill becomes the final word on the matter.

The machinery is not there for the benefit of the Receptionist. It is a feature of management control over the worker and of their relationship with the customer (Braverman, 1974, p.194). The person who insists on the customer paying the bill is executing the direct wishes of the management who decided to install such machinery so as to ensure the minimisation of worker initiative in the context of payment of bills. This is in contradistinction to the views expressed by the Swallow Hotel Receptionists in the survey I carried out. In this 74% claimed to have the, 'authority' to handle customer complaints. In Hilton/Vista International this means the power to deduct up to \$10 off any customer's bill if they believe the complaint is valid. This is translated in Swallow Hotels into negotiating on room rates, of which 62% of the Receptionists claimed they had the authority to do. This includes the deduction for clerical errors. However, with the telephone logging machinery the instances for such initiative will be minimised. Some would see this as a distinct advantage since they do not have to stand up to irate customers. What it means is a diminution of the personal element in the job of the Hotel Receptionist, a trend which is only sufficiently possible through such machinery which requires a managerial decision to be made before it can become a reality. Organisational choice is therefore the necessary condition for machinery to become instruments of managerial control.



This was a common occurrence at Swallow's London hotel. The telephone charges were automatically posted to the customers bill, yet the evidence on the computer print-out was in the Switchboard room away from the Cashier. The only effective means of communication was by telephone. However at the time of the majority of customer check-outs (7 a.m. to 10 a.m.) there is only one person staffing the telephone. The Telephonist was left with the problem of having to answer all calls whilst trying to search through many pages of printout to find the details of the calls made. The more time that had elapsed since the call had been made for example, earlier than yesterday, then it became even more difficult to find the information. The lists tended to be filed away at the end of the day. The Cashier was left with a customer refusing to pay their bill usually with a plane to catch and a taxi waiting outside and behind them a queue of customers waiting to pay their bills or worse still to argue about them.

A common resolution to this situation was the cancelling of the disputed charges on the authorisation of the Senior Receptionist/Shift Leader. The Cashier would then lose face and feel that it was a tacit acceptance that they had not been telling the truth. This kind of accountability creates division, distance is made between those who lay down the guidelines and those who have to work within them. The accountants do not consider this as an appropriate matter to be concerned about when there is profit to be retained. Human dignity becomes cheap, and the relationship between customer and employee is savagely undercut by mutual feelings of dishonesty. As one of the Receptionists said,

'They probably think we're liars'

Doherty

Smith, the Personnel Manager of Swallow Hotels, stated that the reasoning behind the introduction of computers had an inbuilt, 'financial bias' in that they were to be used as a, 'control tool' for management and against the staff.

The staff on the Front Desk are in the front line for all kinds of expressions of feelings on the part of the customer. They are there to take the complaints, to answer endless questions about the location of the lift which is directly in front of the desk or the toilets which are adjacent to the foyer! Then the person who deals with money receives flak from customers who claim they have not put on the video machine in their room. This was a common cause of complaint in the Swallow Hotel in London where a draught of wind was enough to throw the switch on the machine which then charged the occupant of the room with having watched

a full-length film at over £4.00 a time. Little wonder customers complained if the technology was inconsistent. It got to the stage that every time a customer said they had not watched the film the Cashier would deduct the £4.00 charge off their bill. The Front Office staff had no illusions about the reliability of computers with this experience to remind them of the uselessness of new technology.

However such instances of Receptionists being embarrassed by customer complaints, especially those which they were aware had been made many times already and for which the hotel's management had no intention of resolving, were of no particular concern to the management of the hotels that I visited. Their concern was for the minimisation of revenue loss through clerical errors. Whichever method reduced this was considered more important than the feelings of the Receptionists. Hence the fact that none of the Receptionists that I talked with and interviewed who had worked with Swallow Hotels or Hilton International Hotels at the time of planning for the introduction of the computerised system had been consulted as to their views about the changes in working practices. As a direct result of this the Senior Receptionists and Reception Managers did not trust the system which they had been able to work without previously.

This negligent attitude towards the Receptionists was one shown by other members of the hotel staff. It signalled to one member of the staff at the Swallow Hotel in Carlisle the narrow mindedness of other departments and the obvious lack of a sense of collective purpose, which in turn affects the potential for any collectivised action against the hotel's management.

'Another thing that annoys me, the Kitchen [staff] get upset when we can't stick to [staff] meal times. . . [customers] can ring up anytime they want, they can walk through the door anytime they want, they can come in and start complaining anytime they want, they can ask questions and ask us to do things for them anytime they want. Which means we can't stick to an exact time and say, "Right I'm going for tea now and to hell with the guests". Really we can't do that.'

Stephens

Hotel Receptionists are caught between the rules of the job as directed by the management and the demands of the customer. They are in front line for all sorts of abuse. In Hilton International Hotels this is a necessary part of the job of the Desk Clerk. As Ms Storm says that is what they are paid to do.

'The hotel projects what the guest expects. A guest doesn't want to hear an explanation, he doesn't want an explanation. He just wants service and he wants it now'

Storm

For example a customer no longer needs to tolerate the situation where a message for them gets lost. The system allows for messages to be stored and in any part of the hotel a worker can see that there is a message waiting to be collected by someone because a flashing message sign appears on their screen and they can key the message and locate the recipient if they are in their part of the hotel. This is facilitated if the customer has indicated where they will be to either the front desk clerk or the workers in that part of the hotel. Ms Storm said that this system helped messages reach the intended person because before there was too much reliance on human memory which in a large hotel with many things to remember is liable to result in errors being made. So the system clearly needs less human memory except at the point of service, that is between the customer and the worker.

As Ms Storm explained the expectations of the customer have risen with the advent of the computer but more pertinently with the increase in room rates. Whilst these have risen so has the attitude towards the business person and the tourist. The time saving advantages associated with a computerised system are only made real with respect to the handling of groups of customers as with a tour party. This bulk handling of people is made more efficient, timewise, through such a system. However there is a disadvantage of more time being needed to deal with individual customers such as business persons as witnessed by the implementation of such policies as the non-stop check-out system in Hilton/Vista International hotels. The aim is to reduce the time spent dealing with these customers for which the system is not designed. Yet the trade off is that this customer is by total volume of trade the most profitable. The system is designed for bulk, the hotel is there to make a profit out of the business person.

## 2.2 The Person who Makes the Reservation

Before the introduction of computerised customer reservation systems the work of the Reservations clerk was based on the manual recording of all provisional and confirmed reservations, the customer's requirements were noted down on a reservation enquiry pad as still happens in those hotels which do not have a

computerised system. The information that is required with any system is the name, type of room required, date of arrival, number of nights that the customer is going to stay, and the method of settling their bill that is, cash or credit.

This is the same for all three hotel organisations. The clerks at Consort Hotels as with those in the Swallow Hotel in London, those at the head office of Swallow Hotels as well as all the Reservation clerks employed by Hilton/Vista International Hotels. Until the reservation operations were computerised at the Hilton and the Swallow hotels they were identical to that which was in operation at Consort Hotels that is, handwritten reservation documents. As this operation is computerised then the clerks at Consort Hotels will also spend their work time seated in front of a VDU all day with the consequent problems of eye strain and back ache as well as the attendant physical and psychological ailments attributed to VDU's. This point is raised again in Chapter 9.

The customer's details are noted on an Advance Reservations chart and a room is assigned provisionally for these dates. The customer's reservation enquiry would be filed under the date of arrival along with any other correspondence and forms for the same day. It is the usual practice for a reservation to be confirmed in writing prior to arrival either by telex or letter, this guarantees that the room will be kept reserved for that customer until 6 p.m.. This is one of the characteristics of the hotel industry: after that time the reservation in effect lapses and the room is available for re-letting. It seems reasonable to assume the later it is in the evening the more difficult it will be to sell the room and 6 p.m. is a convenient time for businessmen who may want somewhere to sleep and have not reserved anything in advance. However if the customer informs the hotel that they are going to arrive late that is, after 6 p.m. the room will be left vacant for them. It is all part of the service.

Once a customer reaches the front desk on the day of arrival then the Receptionist takes over. It was also the practise in the group's London hotel for the Receptionists to deal with any reservation enquiries for arrival the same day so as to prevent overbooking of the hotel (or overbooking beyond the hotel's policy!) Up until then it is the task of the advance reservation clerks to deal with all enquires.

In both of the London hotels I visited there were people employed to deal specifically with reservations. In both the work came under supervision of the Front of House Manager, but in the case of Swallow the Clerks were separated from the Receptionists where they were not in the Hilton International Hotel. In the Swallow Hotel in London the staff were specifically allocated to that work whilst in the Hilton International hotel only the supervisory staff were permanent,

the clerks themselves rotated between the Front Desk and Reservations. There was also a separate telex and communications operator whereas in the Swallow Hotel in London this was the responsibility of the reservation section. In both of the hotels the staff were divided by task; the supervisors were responsible for group reservations and the rest for individual bookings.

In neither of the London hotels were handwritten charts for marking down customer reservation details used. In all of the other hotels I visited in the Swallow hotel group charts were still utilised. The reason given to me was that the information was, 'to hand' and could be seen at a glance. This was the rationalised answer to the problem they were experiencing. Amongst those Swallow Hotel Receptionists who had worked in the company prior to computerisation the feeling was that the system, because it had broken down on so many occasions whilst they were working, could not be relied upon. Hence the back-up system of handwritten charts and reports which were constantly in use. The alternative was to search through several computerised index screens to find the information this was especially difficult if the visual display units (VDU'S) were being used for another purpose at the time. The delay was costing customers money and losing the hotel potential accommodation business.

The result was a mix of manual charts alongside the system's reservation programme; the details of the reservation being recorded by hand and then typed, again by hand, into the system. To have either a person dealing solely with reservations or a VDU screen set at the reservation mode was seen as impractical given the labour budget and the capital budget for the hotels involved, it was a case of making do with what one had. So no time was saved in any of the Swallow Hotels when it came to the inputting of reservations. That had been the intention, to input directly into the system.

In all of the Hilton/Vista hotels the staff could more easily input directly into the system. The resources were made available to have clerks whose sole responsibility was to sit at a console all day, answer telephones and type in the relevant details on to a single screen. Unlike the Swallow system which required the clerk to input information on several screens before the customer's reservation could be confirmed. To prove to me that all the members of the Front Office at the HI hotel in Kensington could do this they showed me. Impressive - once! - but when I watched a clerk do this for several hours during a single shift then the monotony s/he was feeling was relayed to me. Damage will have been done to their eyes for example, the Assistant Group Reservation clerk had had to wear glasses since working in front of the VDU. With having to sit in the same position

the muscles in the back can be affected as well as noses and lungs because of the fluid used to clean the screen.

'It stinks here! It's enough to make you throw up! I'm breathing a sigh of relief, it gives me a headache.'

Reservation clerk

Muscle spasm in the eye caused by the flickering image on the VDU screen can become permanent without relief, which can be as simple as regular breaks and relaxing eye exercises. Technology is not there to accommodate people.

With a manual system there were also things to do with bits of paper, charts and record keeping were constant activities the staff had to be involved with and updating. The reservations had to be recorded onto strips of paper, either by hand or by typing the information, they were then inserted, either into a rack or into a revolving drum. This allowed for easy visual reckoning of the number of rooms available for that evening and the coming days. There were no such intimate activities to be involved with, the computer system stored and sorted all the information in the way it had been programmed to do.

The lack of visual information about the state of accommodation sales became critical when there was uncertainty as to how near they were to a full house and therefore overbooking which was always embarrassing for the reception staff; especially when it is they who have to face the disappointed or annoyed customer who has to be booked into another hotel.

There can be any number of reasons for overbooking for example, a member of management may not have put down in the hotel's diary that there was a conference staying in the hotel, advance reservations may have taken bookings for that day of arrival believing there to be room in the hotel and so on. All of the reasons are based on a lack of communication. The onus is on the receptionist to clear up the mess.

With reference to dealing with reservations in the Hilton/Vista International Hotels system, errors can be, 'disguised' from the guest which, 'creates an image of perfection'. In addition information is not so easily misinterpreted. Previously when the customer had to physically register with pieces of paper and produce a confirmation slip and the desk clerk had to check the truth of the customer's claim mistakes could be made and people are upset, now this is no longer the case. With the computer storing all the information on customer reservations the clerk

can easily check whether they have a reservation for that customer. Moreover the system helps the hotel ensure that the customer does not accrue a large bill because all reservations are inputted into the machine and only confirmed reservations are given a credit rating. All other reservations are on a cash only basis.

The work of the majority of the clerks at Consort Hotels was made up of Telephone/Reservations. Initially the clerks dealing with Group Reservations and those for individuals were seated at separate desks but that changed with the arrival of a six sided table which was to be the workspace for the Central Reservations function with space for more telephones and VDU screens and keyboards (when a system was ready to be installed). It was nicknamed, 'The Round Table' and, 'The Magic Roundabout' by the staff of whom 4 would work around it with space for two more Reservation clerks.

It was used as a means of focusing the activity of the Central Reservations 'Office' around a fixed point, the staff would no longer have individual desks from which to work but would be together for easy communication amongst themselves for the purpose of work. The files of information they use to answer queries would be located in a central carousel which turns allowing everyone access. With the clerks seated at their workposts with all the information at their finger tips they do not need to get up out of their chairs and walk anywhere to find an answer to a callers question. They are fixed to the spot by the introduction into the office of this work station. The amount of work they do is dictated by the frequency of telephone calls and their freedom of movement is now restricted by the immediacy of their resource files. This will mean they will be able to answer telephone calls more quickly and more often. Both of which are to the advantage of the employer who will for a minimum investment in office furniture gain increases in labour productivity. The staff lose out through the intensification of their work. In the future through the introduction of a computerised system this will increase their workload.

This is the aim of Swallow Hotels, to fully "automate" the Front Office and the Receptionist. So as to divorce her from the social role and intensify labour productivity with respect to the clerical administration. As the General Manager of the Swallow Hotel in Carlisle said,

'With the advent of the computer, which are mostly fitted into the Reception desks itself, I think a lot more can be done up front. Especially with the new Switchboard coming into many of our hotels. Like we're having one here. It'll be also on the front desk. The girl in fact can, in fact man almost like a pilot's

flight desk almost. They will have at their fingertips the information on the computer, Switchboard and the charts and things. They should not need to be up and down as they have been on previous years; backwards and forwards from the charts to the Switchboard to the machine to the paper. Much of the time has been spent running round the Reception to various charts, files, Switchboard. . . hopefully with the advent of all this modern gizmology, or what you want to call it - gadgetry and that, it'll all be streamlined. Hopefully they'll have time to get a more friendly, a sales role. . . they are the flight deck, that steers the ship through the night or fly's the ship to its destination. The Reception if you like is the helm of the organisation, in my opinion, and the Captain comes down to the Flight Deck and makes sure it's running.'

Sagar

Apart from the use of metaphor what is of interest in this quote is firstly the centrality of the Hotel Receptionist in all of this and secondly the continuation in the use of handwritten charts for the recording of Advance Reservations. These mean that the specific tasks will be brought about through technology. Which will both increase the importance of the clerical side of the job and yet also degrade it to something of less value than the social role of the Front Office. Yet this is only possible with such application of technology which as noted previously is for profit motivation rather than the benefit of the staff. So the hiving off of the "Welcoming" task of the Desk Clerk, the one who checks-in the customer, is also only possible through this process of coalescing. However this is a degrading process for one simple reason: all the tasks of Telephonist, Reservations, Desk Clerk and Cashier will be condensed in to that of the operator of the 'flight deck'.

This is what Mandel (1975) is referring to when he talks about technology bringing about a multi-skilled work force (p.268).

'...increasing industrialization causes an absolute growth in the number of wage-earners, while increasing automation causes it to diminish; that growing mechanization and semi-automation increases the number of semi-skilled workers at the expense of both skilled and unskilled workers, while full automation reduces the number of semi-skilled workers and gives rise to a new and highly skilled polyvalent worker force'

p.268



However in the case of the Receptionists of Swallow and Hilton International Hotels it will mean only an increase in tasks rather than an increase in skill. This process will also have the effect of reducing employment, as well as the creation of a new position, at least for Swallow Hotels, that of the host/ess or, as is the case in Hilton International, the Guest Relations Manager. This is a demeaning position for both the female and the male. Though it is envisaged, at least by the Northern Regional Manager, that this will be for a female. The association with exploitation of a female's sexuality is not to be understated. This will be discussed in Chapter 9.

### 2.3 The Person who Handles the Cash

There is a strongly held belief that the use of a computer generated set of reports means in the long run better presented reports and customer bills. This can result in time being saved by not having to re-write handwritten bills which have become spoiled through the addition of items to be accounted for and alterations in the total for charges, such as telephone calls which have not been made! It was no substitute being able to print the bills off the night before because handwritten amendments looked untidy on the printed sheet. The Receptionists at the Swallow Hotel in Durham admitted it looked unprofessional and professionalism and pride in ones work is instilled as the first rule of learning to be a receptionist. The textbooks are united on that fact. It is how it looks that is the important thing not the means to achieve it.

The difference in attitude towards this was emphasised in the way in which the Receptionists at the Royal County (as one example only) and the London International Hotel handled the settlement of customer's bills. In the provincial hotels the bills were printed the night before so that any additions/corrections to the final bill were made by hand saving no time, especially when another bill was requested by the Cashier. In the London Hotel all bills were printed at the point of departure so as to take into account charges incurred that morning. It seems perverse that in hotels with fewer customers departing each day the bills were printed in advance whereas in a large hotel dealing with a daily turn around of customers of upwards of 800 they were not.

For the Cashier the mechanisation of the system is an illustration of the way in which the "service" is reduced to the point where the customer is made to feel a non-person. The production of bills and the lack of direct personal involvement reflects on the commitment that the employee has, and in turn the hotel has

towards servicing individual customer needs. The overall procedure of paying bills becomes more important than the individual. Mechanisation makes the "guest" just another paying customer.

This process involves a set of critical issues which were raised in an interview with me by Mitchell, a lecturer at Oxford Polytechnic, calls, 'the vacuum of time' (November, 1984). This is created whilst the bill is being processed for the customer. Such a vacuum is not critical when the customer merely signs the bill and leaves, as happens with Hilton/Vista International Hotels no-stop check out system. However when there is a queue of customers waiting to pay their bill then the time that is spent waiting for the bill to be printed becomes an irritation which is exacerbated when the need to make corrections arises. The customer waits and the Cashier can only stand, watch and wait. Both have blank faces as they wait for the final bill to be printed. Gushing sales talk is not really appropriate when the customer is paying their bill and leaving the hotel. They have already made up their mind whether they will be returning to the hotel again. They have little to say to each other and even less inclination, especially if the person next in the queue will hear the same sales talk or topic of conversation. Such dependence on the machine is made visible to the customer. The Cashier is cast in the passive role rather than the initiator. Not only are they at the mercy of the machine but they suffer the humiliation of this indignity in the face of the customer.

### **3. Computers: Problems of Control and Dependency**

The application of technology is not neutral. It is a means of control and fosters dependency on the part of the workforce. Simply without the machine work has no meaning. Yet such work, framed by a software programme, is devoid of personal meaning. This is one of the major themes documented and researched into in the literature on the sociology of industry and the factory and is central to the debate on the labour process as will be shown to be the case in Chapter 8. Control and initiative are in the hands of the owners of the machinery, not in those of the operators (Braverman, 1974, pp.194-195). Though there is a debate on this point to the effect that control is actually negotiated (Burawoy, 1979) The necessary requirement as well as the result is that there is a:

'working population conforming to the needs of this social organisation of labor, in which knowledge of the machine becomes a specialized and segregated trait, while among the mass of the working population there grows only ignorance, incapacity, and thus a fitness for a machine servitude.'

Braverman 1974, p.194

With reference to Table 20 it can be seen how the mode of technology chosen by hotel companies, such as the ones studied in this research, has changed the pattern of working practices. Examples will be used to highlight in detail the affects this has had within the labour process.

### 3.1.1 The Programming of the System... Room Allocation

In the words of Ms Storm,

'The system will put the guest right where he should be'

Storm

This refers to the allocation of the customer's room(s) upon completion of the registration process in the hotel. This means that the system will automatically select a room from those that are available and allocate it to the customer. The way this is done is by configuring the rooms in the hotel according to the level of room rate that they are willing to pay so that the customer will not be offered a low or a high priced room if they are only willing to pay for medium priced rooms. Room ratings are calculated according to position in the hotel and interior furnishings and not by size of floor space within room type; that is twin, double, king and queen size beds. Judgement is only required if the clerk wishes to override the choice of room brought up on their screen for some special reason such as the customer does not like its location in the hotel in relation to the guest service area or the direction it is facing. However that apart the system speeds up the process so that, '*he*' the guest is not kept waiting.

Further changes have been made to the software allowing rooms that have been cleaned by the chambermaids to be shown on the screen even though they have not yet been inspected by the floor supervisor. This allows these rooms to be used, or as Ms Storm put it, '*... so at a pinch we could use those rooms*' (Storm).

**Table 20 Data Handling by Modes of Technology**

Process	Mode		
	Non-automated	Semi-automated	Fully automated
Reservations	Hand recorded onto a calendar notebook. Horizon is usually 3-6 months.	Typewritten onto a reservation file card and kept in a reservation rack. Horizon usually 6-12 months.	Entered onto an electronic record through a VDU keyboard. Horizon is 12-24 months.
Registration	Customer signs in on a page in a registration book.	Customer signs a registration card which will be carried in the room rack.	Customers with reservations simply verify preprinted registration cards. Others complete a form to be coded for data entry via a VDU.
Room & Rate Assignments	Rate is based on rate range and assignment upon housekeeping reports.	Rate is stated in the room rack. Assignment is based on availability within the room rack.	Rates are automatically assigned through preprogramming. Rooms are assigned automatically based on housekeeping updates.
Guest Acctg.	Account records may be cards or line entries in a ledger. All postings and calculations are performed manually	A posting machine and a set of folios, stored in a tray, are used to chart accounts. The machine facilitates an effective audit base.	The computer assigns each revenue centre a control folio and uses remote POS to electronically post and balance all accounts
Check-out	Checkout is accomplished by a return of the room keys, a notification to housekeeping, and a verification of the customer's account.	The preparation of the customer's statement, return of the keys, and notification to housekeeping complete the checkout process.	The checkout process contains some precheckout listings and folios. The keys must still be returned. Simultaneous to checkout the system notifies housekeeping
Billing	Cash payments are subtracted from the statement balance. Deferred payments must be billed.	Posting machine entries will accompany any form of settlement. A transfer voucher must be processed for deferred payment transactions	Settlement transactions are entered via the VDU and the system will automatically transfer payments to permanent or semipermanent folios
Guest History	The registration book or file cards will be placed into a storage container to form the file.	A collection of used registration cards, sorted and filed by last name will form the required data base.	The computer will automatically transfer the customer's personal data from another record and compile the history file.

Source: Kasavana, 1981

This overriding ability to serve the customer means that the floor supervisor is

leapfrogged. A situation that puts the housekeeping staff under pressure to inspect rooms more quickly and maybe less thoroughly. As well as creating an element of doubt in the minds of the desk clerks who allocate these uninspected rooms. Where this facility does have an advantage is when the desk clerk wants to rush the inspection of a particular room, that is force the supervisor to inspect that particular room as soon as possible in the knowledge that is understood by such a request that there is a customer waiting in the hotel foyer ready to take their bags up to that particular room. This will ensure that staff are deployed in such a way that revenue from the sales of rooms is maximised through, 'putting customers into the right slot'.

There was a similar system in use by Swallow Hotels in the London International Hotel whereby the chambermaid could dial a number using the telephone in the room they had cleaned and this would register with the reservation index that the room had been cleaned but was awaiting inspection by the Floor Housekeeper. It was this stage that HI were wanting to eliminate by making the chambermaids more responsible as well as speeding up the flow of ready rooms for customers.

That did not mean the Chambermaids had more control just that they were more accountable for the amount of work that they did through the monitoring of how many rooms they had cleaned. If anyone was not working hard enough during the course of the day then the Floor Housekeeper would search for them and elicit an explanation. This stopped the informal practice of soldiering, whereby Chambermaids would work hard in the morning to do the majority of their allotted rooms and then take it more easy in the afternoon. With this system they were not only being monitored for their overall level of work but also their location in the building at any one time. This meant that the order in which they did their rooms was dictated by the Housekeeping Office rather than on their own preference. The machinery has reduced the initiative and flexibility the Chambermaids had imported into their work and replaced it with management control of the decision making process.

However the system in the LIH was not in operation because there was a dispute between the computer software manufacturers and British Telecom as to who was responsible for the breakdown which was at that time more than 10 months old. In the interim the staff had reverted to using a 'Ready Room Book' which was the means by which available rooms were shown to be ready under a manual system, or in this case when the technology falls foul of human "buck" passing.

Furthermore, there is the facility to close off discounted rooms in advance if the marketing information you have gathered from the computer informs you, after

analysis, that revenue can be increased if groups are no longer offered low rates but are charged at a higher room rate (tariff). So upselling/trading up can be discontinued because rooms will be filled by occupants who will be paying higher room rates. However some of the international hotels only have one rate on their tariff so that is not so pertinent except if they decide to use the information to offer group rates to smaller parties knowing they can sell more rooms at a higher tariff to individual travellers who also spend more per head than the tour group customer especially if they are on business expenses.

### 3.1.2 The Programming of the System... The Guest (Customer) "History"

With this facility all the previous details about a customer are,

'...catalogued and captured automatically'

Storm

The system allows for a guest history to be kept. This is a facility which allows the front office staff to list the likes and dislikes of any customer, usually regular customers. So that when the customer registers in the hotel again the staff on the front desk know in advance any quirks that the customer may have. The result is rather perverse. Because then the customer expects the clerk to have a better memory. They do not realise, because they are not supposed to, that it is a computer that is "servicing" their needs. The clerk reads the information off the screen and relays it to the customer in such a way that it seems they are remembering it from the last time they stayed there. It is deceit on the part of the hotel's management and places the member of staff in the alienating situation of being part of that process which serves to manipulate the customer's needs into a computer print-out, devoid of human intervention and is then the basis upon which profit is extracted from the customer to maximum effect. Ms Stephens a Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel in Carlisle was aware of what she was doing when she said that, 'in a lot of cases [ I am] just making conversation... I don't think they [the customer] are aware of that fact'.

Ms Storm of Hilton International Hotels thought this functional and an efficient use of the Desk Clerk's labour. She saw it from the point of view of "service" as the basis of a profitable business.

'Storm: They [the desk clerk] don't have to be there 20 years to have a feeling of knowing you [the customer].

Mason: It is like you know me without knowing me?

Storm: Yeah, but a guest doesn't think in that way normally ... a guest wants all their preferences taken care of without going into a song and dance about it ... You don't rely on the memory as you did before.'

However there is the danger of the product becoming the service, that is the computer becomes an end itself. This can result in an, 'invisible wall between the guest and the desk clerk'. As Ms Storm put it one, 'can't lose sight of that!' The system is there for you rather than you working around the system. If this is true in practice then Ms Storm sees this as a bonus. 'If a Receptionist is on the ball then she can be really cute'. So for example having, 'Happy Anniversary' printed on the customer's confirmation slip and their folio is only a, 'one key stroke'. So for example a Desk Clerk in the Tokyo Hilton could type in, 'The HI Tokyo wishes you both a very happy anniversary.' However this takes no effort to do, 'It's not a lot of effort on our part, it really isn't.' It certainly means more to the person receiving it, if it means anything at all, as it has come from someone they don't know by way of a computer printer!

The Desk Clerk is learning how to be a confidence trickster. This is one of the new skills s/he will have to learn to remain employable in Hilton International Hotels, anywhere in the world. It is a part of their hidden training programme. A programme that teaches them to care and tells them that this is what they are paid to do, to *show* that they care.

### 3.1.3 The Programming of the System... Printed Reports

It is without doubt easier to get a computer to collate the data and present it as a report than to do it manually which may take either more staff or a lot more time for the present staff to do. Their power and authority over the machine is expressed in the depression of a button on a keyboard. They can see the machine doing what they have told it to do.

They can summon the information in a printed form but someone else has given them the possibility for that moment to happen. They have not made it for themselves. The information that they summon is exactly that which they have been told to retrieve and the data is that which they inputted. There is nothing new about it nothing unique, they have not created anything. All they have done is started a phase of the process which they did not initiate nor will they complete. That is for someone else to do.

In fact they are contractually obliged to press the button if they are to get the reports which is a requirement of their job description which defines their role in the hotel in a formal way. This is how the Senior Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel in Carlisle put it when speaking about the effect of the computer system on the pattern of her work,

'It's all geared to time. You know where you ought to be in the business at a certain time of night, and if you're not at that point you know you know you are going to be late'

Richardson

If you do run over because the computer has broken down then, 'you're working hours you're not getting paid for. Through no fault of your own (Richardson).

It is not so very different from the manual system or a mechanised billing machine operation, which incorporates features of both. It is just that less is done by hand so less manual labour is required. It may not mean redundancies but it does mean that fewer staff will be replaced as staff leave or are promoted.

### **3.2 Control and Dependency**

Perhaps the most critical social consequence of a Receptionist using a computerised system is that the control they have in terms of initiative decreases immediately the operator enters into the indexed system. Each time you want a specific piece of information, '...you've got to get into the system to get one point out. Whereas with the old system you could just pull a piece of paper out of the file and there it would be in plain english, exactly what you wanted' (Broughton).

He was frustrated with the inflexibility of the operation. A system which he did not understand and was uncomfortable using as a consequence. He was wanting



to be trained in how to use the system properly so that he could understand. He wanted to be a part of the system itself. Because outside of this working knowledge he felt alienated. Yet once trained in the use of the short codes to input data and to move around within the various information files he will be under the control of the system. The attraction of being able to operate within the system is that you give up your power of initiative to the structure of the sequences through which you must, as an operator go through in order to get at the desired result as in the printed report. Which for the Receptionist is both the manifestation of their illusory power over the machine and the absolute control the system has over the operator. With the machine being the result of organisational choice.

One of the Shift Leaders at the Swallow Hotel in Durham (The County) admitted to not understanding the workings of the computer system. As she explained,

'...you see really on our computer all you need do is to press numbers, press transmit and it'll [information] come up. I know how to pull things [reports] off from the printer, and things like that... If I had to go to another hotel with a completely different system and completely different numbers to press I'd be lost.'

Nicholls

One of her colleagues at the hotel, a Junior Receptionist, did not share her absolute trust in the system. As she put it, 'I was a bit wary at first... You don't know how far to trust computers but obviously you have to.' (Crammond). Both of them were stuck in the trap of seeing only the immediate consequences of their actions. They did not seem to want to understand the way in which the programme had been designed to establish a set pattern to their daily work routine.

What can be interesting about computers is the invisible execution of tasks and the silent atmosphere of impersonality which induces a feeling of awe and mysticism, heightened and deepened by such statements as,

'Don't try to understand the micro-circuitry realise its applications'

Tourism In England, 1980, p.4

Passive acceptance of the inevitable clouds the difference between needing to accept what one cannot know and wanting to understand what one can know and

then sorting out the difference for oneself, then realising that it is not you who has made the political decision within the labour process. It is on this organisational choice that the alienation of labour rests and where,

'... the work is *external* to the worker, that it is not a part of his nature, that consequently he does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery, not of well-being, does not develop freely a physical and mental energy, but is physically exhausted and mentally debased.'

(Author's emphasis), Marx, 1966, pp.98-99

The centralisation of power with regard to storage and execution ability negates the authority of the terminal operator within the unit, that is the hotel. The Receptionists become subject to an external power over which they have no ability to control. They are both alienated from the product of their own labour and from themselves through the labour process.

This becomes very clear when the system breaks down. For the management of Hilton International the system was something they could bring themselves to like. They could see the potential for eliminating personal service and packaging it as something, 'cute' for the customer which would deceive them in to believing it was personal. However for the staff, especially the Receptionists and Desk Clerks, they were no longer deceived by the mystery of technology. They, or their colleagues, had experienced moments of clarity as to the extent of their dependence on computerised machinery. For them it was no longer something, 'cute'. It became an adversary.

They were all well aware of the reality of technology for them.

'We are a little too dependent on computers'

Hirsch

They expressed fear at the prospect of losing all the information they had inputted during an electricity power cut or a break in the telecommunication lines upon which the entire system is dependent for relaying the information. The Receptionists I talked to lived with that as a daily possibility. In the Swallow Hotel in London this happened whilst I was there and it also happened during the night audit shift at the Hilton International Kensington in London. The effect

was to throw the staff into disarray. They did not know any back up manual procedures or how to deal with informing the respective computer rooms. They were lost, and they knew it, which terrified them. They felt at their most helpless in this situation.

In both of the London hotels the staff acknowledged the reality of their situation. It was now too late to go back, as they put it. Staff had been depleted and they had grown to rely on a machine. A machine which could let them down with critical implications for data stored on reservations for hundreds of people in hotels of 800+ and 900+ bedspaces. They refused to even consider the possibility when I asked them. It was just too much of a nightmare for them. For them the machine had to work, it could not afford to fail. Others, like the Night Audit Clerk at the Hilton International Kensington could not even begin to think that there was any other way but to sit tight and wait for the system to come alive again. They were fully dependent on it,

'We can't do a thing without the computer'

McLennan

The first Swallow Hotel to have the system installed was adjacent to the headquarters in Sunderland and the Head Receptionist related the story of what happened when the computer system broke down for 48 hours as a result of a thunderstorm. She found that her staff did not know what to do to carry on working using manual charts because the only method of working that they were used to was computer based automation. They became, 'confused' when it came to calculating figures in their heads because the computer had done it all for them. In the end the balance of revenue received and what was expected was only a £6 shortfall which the Head Receptionist thought was, 'marvellous' (Kenny).

However the lesson that they all learned that day was that they had relied too heavily on the computer and that it was not as easy to work without it when it broke down. This lesson would carry with them throughout their working lives influencing their attitude towards the consistency of computers. This probably explains the negative reaction amongst the Heads of department at all of the Swallow Hotels that were visited which was reflected in the continual usage of manual charts in the Reception Office.

Some Front Office staff did not know how their computerised system was constructed. They were only concerned with what they had been trained in which

were its applications. Others who had worked with a manual system of customer reservation and billing at least knew what the processes were by which the information in the system would have to go through even if they did not understand the structure of the programming. This influenced their reaction to the question of what would happen if the system failed to respond to commands and they had to maintain operations.

Some opted out and considered it a nightmare that they would rather not think about. The Front Office Manager of the Vista International Pittsburgh who had experienced the situation where a system within a hotel had gone for several hours had this to say about the hypothetical situation of it going down for 24 hours, 'I don't care to think about it.' (Agnew). He simply refused to consider what would happen and what measures would have to be actioned to deal with the administration of the customers' bills. When asked if there was a back up system he said there was but that he would have to, refresh himself about its contents. In fact he was so dependent on the reliability of the system that he trusted it implicitly through his blase approach to a manual support plan. He is 26 years old and has had no training with a manual system, his staff, who are all younger than him, know nothing but the computerised based operation. They are totally dependent on it. This is illustrated by the fact that they get worried when the system goes down for a few hours simply because they are not able to input anything. They are also dependent on it for the continuation of their working lives.

Other Front Office departments had provided for a rough plan of operation that only the senior members of the staff would have any idea how to implement because they were the only ones that had any experience with a manual system. The advantage of using a storage system that is hidden is that there is no paper to handle which makes the administration less laborious. However as the Front Office Supervisor of the Kansas City Vista International concludes, the absence of any hard copy (written) information means that,

'If the system breakdown then we are to a point helpless'

Hirsch

The Assistant Front Office Manager of the Vista International Hotel, Kansas City told of how as a result of having to work till 5 a.m. one morning re-inputting customer registration details into the system. The Front Office Management are looking in to ways of providing a manual back up to the system. They were

reacting to a situation which they had not envisaged and planned for. This is all reminiscent of the situation in the New York Hilton in the early 1960's when because of the entire hotel's system malfunctioning and the volume of customer complaints Hilton abandoned computerisation for some years. They did not have a back up system then and they do not have one now. Yet it is the same company, IBM, whose machinery is used in all of HI's hotels today. The Titanic sails again?

In this hotel in Kansas City, the Front Office Manager and her Assistant are the only ones who have had experience of working with a manual system of Guest Reservation, Registration and Billing. Their response to any future system failure has been esconced in the writing down of the 'basic' procedures which are involved in the manual execution of the Customer Cycle. This series of "aide memoires" will be useless to the rest of the staff who do not know how to balance a manual tabular ledger because they have lost the aptitude needed to handle figures in one's head. By using a computer the staff will have lost the feel for calculating figures, they will literally not be able to add up in their heads because of the continual reliance on the calculating abilities of a computer. It may indeed give the Front Office Management a, 'lot of grey hairs' but what will the remainder of the staff feel faced with a totally unresponsive machine and the inability to deal with customers waiting to register or pay their hotel bill.

There had been a fear of change in the early stages of computerisation. For example, an incident occured with the Executive Floor Manager of the Pittsburgh Vista when she had been working at another hotel. One of the older female members of the Front Office staff thought that with the introduction of a computerised reservation and billing system her job would be lost. She began to transfer this into personal animosity for her Head of Department who had recently been appointed and was therefore directly linked with the new technology especially as she was an advocate of the changeover. So as the person could not take it out on the machinery she took her anxiety out on the human most closely associated with the motivation for change. It took a personal intervention by the Head of Department to reassure this person that her job was not being sacrificed in the drive for efficiency before she could calmly testify that she had been frightened by the thought of having to work with a computer.

It was a complex neuroses that had culminated in the fear being expressed so personally and bears testimony to the idea that we need something tangible to work from or even to get angry with and that a faceless and inanimate screen means both pent up anguish and indiscriminate expressions of emotion.

The Assistant Front Office Manager at the Kensington hotel had not only overcome her ignorance but she now embraced the system because she knew how

it worked. She had been taught and through practice had come to the conclusion that computers, '... work for you if you know how to use them' (Plug). However as we saw with the incident above, the wrong approach by hotel management can lead to stress and anger. Even though this was overcome it still leaves a legacy of basic mistrust, the person will not feel totally at ease with the machinery. This may be one of the factors that results in a mechanistic approach to work. Individuals will learn what they need to and no more. So that someone like a Reservations Clerk in the Kensington hotel will find themselves confessing they only know a little and, '...the rest I don't have a clue about'.

The premise for the training of staff is on a "need to know basis". It is this planned ignorance coupled with the person's fear of not knowing how something works that leads to the mystification of the technology into something that is both totally relied on and mistrusted. The resignation that there is no alternative to the technology, that the technology is irreversible is the result of such instilled mystification which carries with it hollow promises of a future work environment which is more pleasant and where the work is interesting. This is the central myth of mysticism that bears with it technological determinism and is more insidious because of the ignorance that it needs for it to be perpetuated.

Such was the opinion of the Head Receptionist of the Royal County Hotel, Durham when asked how useful the system was in giving her the information that she needed to answer enquiries about the availability of accommodation.

'There are times when you could pick the thing up and throw it out of the window'

Anderson

However there were a variety of views over the rate of slowness of the system. It was expressed in a way which assumed there was a quicker rate of order execution. As one Senior Cashier at The Drake, Chicago said, 'the information is at your fingertips.' (Edelman). Which further allows her to do two things at once. She saw this as a distinct advantage in the carrying out of her tasks since there is so much work to be done. However what she failed to realise was that this was precisely what the management of the corporation had wanted to happen. The perceived usefulness of the system in getting the work done in the same amount of time and with fewer staff. As was noted previously this is the "flight deck" attitude of both the Chief Executive of Consort Hotels and the views of the Swallow Hotel management as relayed by the General Manager of the Carlisle hotel. All three

organisations are seeking to make choices which will reduce costs through the intensification of labour.

It is a testimony to how quickly and unproblematically the need for the system has been adopted that all criticism should be expressed in terms relating only to that way of doing things. There was little acknowledgement of the restrictive way in which the work is carried out in relation to other systems of working. Admittedly the age and experience of the receptionists meant that their experience was solely with computerised systems. Amongst the older receptionists there was either a willingness to accept the inevitability of the change, criticise the "slowness" of the system or try and hang on to the parts of the manual system that they felt were most needed. An alternative was not a consideration. That they had not been consulted about the installation of the present system probably had a great deal to do with the passiveness and the cynicism they felt about it all.

However the quality of the customer service is affected due to the fact that the system intervenes in the eye contact between the customer and the clerk on the front desk. However it is all a matter of training according to Mr Manley. There is only the need to input 5 fields of information to check-in (register) the customer as a guest into the hotel. This can be done whilst the customer is completing the customer reservation card. The remainder of the required information can be inputted after the customer has left the front desk, either immediately or at the earliest convenient moment. It is all,

'Practice and practice and practice.'

Manley

It is knowing what questions to ask and the procedures to follow and then the keys to press. So that in time the desk clerk can read the information they require upside down on the registration form in front of them which the customer is completing. The result being they can, 'maintain eye contact' with the customer, according to Mr Manley.

He went onto re-affirm what many of the Receptionists were saying which was the computer was making their work more difficult. Whereas before when the information they needed to make decisions was at hand, now the clerk needs to search in the indexes which is a time consuming activity. This is useful for keeping track of the whereabouts of a group which are using another Vista Hotel and even

other company's hotels (through another Reservation System shared by several chains) but this does not mean that the paperwork is reduced.

However there was not a predominantly positive view towards the advent of computerisation. Especially amongst those who had worked with handwritten charts and lower levels of technology such as mechanical billing machines and cash registers. As the Senior Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel in Carlisle put it, there was a feeling of implicit trust between the operator and the machine.

'I liked the old machine - very reassuring rattle, it was quite good... you knew it was working'

Richardson

Even though this person did not fully understand the workings of the computer, perhaps because of that, she expressed a preference for the, 'old NCR's'. These were mechanical billing machines used for Cashing customer's bills. She had worked through all the stages from manual tabular ledger through the NCR's to working with electronically operated machinery: but her preference lay with something she could hear working and believe that it was doing its function properly. In this she had trust, she could understand how it worked: with the computer she could not work it out and this lay at the heart of her mistrust and indifference of its usefulness. This was echoed by a Management Trainee more than 20 years her junior who was not at ease with the technology because he had not been able to have the time to understand how they work and he had not been given the training needed to come to grips with anything other than the basic codes and procedures to get on with his job.

The staff would anthropomorphise the screen by talking to it,

McGahan: Oh come on you stupid thing

Mason: You all talk to it as if its human

McGahan: You mean we all talk to it as if its stupid'

Dialogue



or placing stickers on the side of the terminal proclaiming that only with a computer can you really mess up the work that you are supposed to be doing; *"To err is human but to really mess things up needs a computer"*, this is in contradistinction to a remark made by the Control Clerk of The Royal County Hotel, Durham when she stated that, 'the computer is perfect but it won't eliminate human error.' (Carol). Although this was said by a person it sounds more like an internalised feature of a training manual, something that Swallow Hotels would send out to its Financial Control staff.

This was all in the way of a game to diffuse the inhuman and inanimate nature of the system which gave no feedback and seemed to cause them endless trouble. It was not that the use of manual charts, handwritten registration forms, customer bills made out by hand or by an electronic machine was necessarily any more human, but to the staff they were not as potent a force which separated them from their individual association with what they did.

## Chapter 7

### *The “Service” Industry?*

#### Introduction

The term “service” is inherently ambiguous. In pre-capitalist society it was a means of tying people together in a mutual but non-contractual relationship. This was the case until the early 19th century when the word came to mean working for someone, ‘as a paid servant’ (Oxford English Dictionary). Now in this post-industrial society it has been developed through the “service” sector becoming on the one hand professionalised, where labour is paid for, whilst still retaining the element of loyalty to an individual in the form of the personal service. Service is a social relationship sold as a commodity to make a profit.

#### 1 Classifying Services and “Service Occupations”

Urry in the paper, *Services: Some issues of analysis* (1986) sets out six all-embracing criteria with which to classify “services” (pp.26-27). All six were applied to the hotel trade and they are: (1) The extent of private and/or public ownership. (2) Does demand for the service come from a consumer and/or a producer? (3) Whether the product is tangible or a “service”? (4) The degree of commodification that is, is the service sold to make a profit or to satisfy non-material need? (5) What is the function of the process of production? (6) The character of the exchange and the quality of the service delivery.

With respect to the first the Hotel trade in Great Britain is now all privately owned since the sale of the British Transport Hotels by British Rail (WIRS 1984). The 19,782 hotels (Census 1981) are organised through international corporations like Hilton International Hotels (HIH); national groups like Consort Hotels; and regionally established companies like Swallow Hotels, though they are a national group in that they have hotels in England and Scotland. International corporations like HIH can be organised in a number of ways: the units may be wholly owned and managed by the company; leased and/or managed on behalf of a local

entrepreneur; or the company name franchised to a local operator. This policy of franchising a corporate name is not practiced by HIH.

The second is whether the market for products comes from final consumers, producers or a mixture of both. The Hotel trade is in the market to provide a service to final consumers (the 'general public' and specific target markets). Whether this be at the point of sale or as a contractor to another organisation on a one-off, or a regular basis for example, providing the catering for an exhibition or event on behalf of the organising body. The business of hotels is to provide a material product that can only be consumed at the point of production: for example, a meal in the Restaurant, cup of coffee in the Coffee Shop, information on the Hotels facilities, a bed for the night. With the last example the bed can only be occupied for that day on that day. Its availability can not be stored for the future for example, when demand by customers exceeds the supply of all the hotel's rooms or those of a particular type.

Following this the third criterion is to do with the nature of the product. That is whether it is a tangible good or something that can only be consumed at the point of production. The distinction between manufacturing and service production is less than clear cut in the case of food being stored through refrigeration and then transported to say an outside event. Even then the product is consumed only once and its production will include the thawing and regeneration of the item albeit at a point away from the earlier stages in the manufacturing process that is, the hotel's kitchen. When it comes to hotel bedrooms then they are in a fixed position. The Receptionists task being determined by the situation of the hotel and the bedrooms therein. S/he may go out and sell letting bedrooms to potential customers but the customers must come to the hotel for the service to be transacted. The beds do not come to the customer.

To call the jobs particular groups of workers do "service occupations" raises questions centred on the debate about productive and non-productive labour. To be productive is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as,

'That [which] produces or increases wealth or value; engaged in the production of commodities of exchangeable value; especially in productive labour, labourer, classes'

OED

Gough (1972) states that productive labour creates surplus value, whilst un-productive labour depends on such productivity for its existence. This is in con-

tradistinction to that put forward by Adam Smith in the tome, *The Wealth of Nations* when he equated tangibility and durability as criteria of productiveness in economic activity. This allowed him to conclude that the labour of a servant, 'adds value to nothing' (Smith, pp.18 and 314-315, quoted in Greenfield, 1986). Contrast this with the position of the Government which categorises Tourism as a tradeable service, something that adds to the wealth of the nation (FT, 8.4.86, p.21).

The trade of Hotels is to provide a 'consumer service', as opposed to a 'producer service'. Which is to say that what is produced is consumed at the point of production (Greenfield, 1986, p.1). Where "services" are,

'... immaterial, impermanent, made by people for people and consumable only at the instant of production. At the moment of its acquisition by the consumer, a good is a *thing* whereas a service is a *state or activity or sensation*.'

original emphasis Gershuny, 1978, p.55

The fourth criterion Urry uses with which to classify services is the degree of commodification. Here he establishes a spectrum from production for non-material 'need' through to profit maximisation. Hotels are there to trade in order to maximise profit, and the phrase, 'There is no such thing as a free lunch' is a truism in the Hotel trade. The services offered in any hotel are marketed in order to maximise profit and are not provided in relation to non-materially determined 'need'. The degree of such commodification is apparently the central paradox of the Hotel trade.

Whilst the fifth focuses on the processes of production and circulation, of interest here is whether the functions are management, worker or "infomation" oriented. The function of a hotel is set out in the various acts of parliament dating from the first Innkeepers Act 1424, through the updated act of 1878 to the present Hotel Proprietors Act 1956. It is stated that it is the duty of the hotelier to provide food, beverage and accommodation to any that ask providing they appear willing to pay for the service. This is the point of production and sales for such services. It is here that raw materials and partly processed goods/convenience items are processed and collated into the final product for the consumer.

The final classification is the character of the exchange. Here the stress is on the importance of the quality of the service delivery. What is of significance in the process of production and distribution at the point of sale is the quality of the

service delivery. This exchange of the customer's money for the hotel's services is central to the trade whether the encounter is one-off or repeated. The possession is only temporary even if it is often, such as for those people who make the hotel into their home for example, celebrities, members of the aristocracy. Lord Caernarvon lived in The Ritz, London until his death in 1987. Such an example provides a part of the scenery with which to depict the service that is characteristic of hotels and is part of the legacy of domestic servanthood that continues to this day in some homes and in the Hotel trade.

One of the issues at the centre of this research is the dysfunctional relationship between technology, service and profit. Service in its altruistic form is pre-capitalist. However through the application of capital it has been made into a commodity which can be exchanged for money at a profit. As changes in technology have allowed for the increased productivity of labour, first through mechanization and currently automation, this has created the potential for more profit to be made. In the Hotel trade service, as an expression of one's self and at the same time as a saleable item, is in a perpetual state of tension. If service is meant to express something personal between two people how can this be freely given in the context of profit maximisation when all of the individual's personality is directed to the selling of "services" rather than the giving of service?

Service is not ubiquitous. It is a culture bound phenomena. Unlike manufacturing which has made the world into a global production unit and market place the perception of service is parochial that is, cultural. This is to do with the manner in which the customer anticipates others, employed in a "service" type occupation, will treat him/her. The fieldwork for this research was conducted in the UK and the USA, two countries with different sets of expectations when it comes to customer service. Similarly in the Far East for example, Japan the perception of personal service is different again.

In Tokyo someone can book in to a hotel where the "Receptionist" is an image on a visual display unit screen which appears the instant the customer presses the appropriate key. You then type in your personal details and your credit card number and you are issued with a card key which allows you access to a sleeping compartment no larger than an overhead compartment in the aeroplane for which they were designed (*Scientist*, 1984).

In the USA the use of computer based automation in the hotel and motel industry is increasing (AH & MA, 1983). People are more willing and are demanding to stay in hotels which allow for express check-in and check-out. The use of the credit card in a hotel has created a need for haste and indifference over personal contact. This is happening in Britain especially in London hotels where visitors

from North America are getting their demands met through the power of money. Our history of personal service is being eroded by mechanization. The subjective experience of the discourse between people is being formalised and impersonalised through “faceless” machinery.

However in spite of the convergence through new technology of the means by which some of the customer’s facilities are being de-personalised it is still the case that when it comes to the customer-staff relationship the nature of it is different in the UK to that experienced in the USA. The employee in a hotel in the USA is doing a paid job whilst the member of staff in a hotel in the UK is still meant to feel a part of a family atmosphere where everything, including your personal life, is subordinated to the demands of the paying customer. We shall see how this manifests in the manner in which tips are given and received. Suffice to say that in the USA they are a part of the unwritten aspect of the customer-staff discourse whilst in the UK they are given as a gratuity usually in gratitude for an act beyond the terms of the employee’s usual duties.

Another aspect of “service” is the way in which employees in the Hotel trade internalise the pre-capitalist notion of service, as the ultimate manifestation of personal loyalty and mutual benefit, whilst upholding the extrinsic worth of “service” as a commodity. They are trained to sell to those people who will create the most profit for the amount of effort and “personality” spent on them (Mills, 1956, pp.185-186). This is done through the vetting of paying customers. For example, the Head Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel Durham (The Royal County) labels groups of tourists who arrive at the hotel as ‘trippers’, which when used by her is a term of derision. For her and for many of her colleagues throughout the Swallow Hotels that were visited such people are seen in a general way rather than as customers with specific and personal requirements. A group of tourists is of lower status because they produce a lower rate of profit per person and consequently are not worth the Receptionist’s time and effort spent trying to satisfy their requirements. Because there are many people in a group it appears to the Desk Clerk that their requests are infinite. Whilst the individual businessperson is held in esteem because s/he pays more for their accommodation so creating more profit which signals to the Desk Clerk that this is a person whose patronage needs to be cultivated. Another difference is that the person on the bus tour party is using their own money to pay for the hotel’s facilities while the businessperson is on a company expense account. This makes them all the more acceptable to the Receptionist.

Ironically in a card economy there is the suspicion that the person is not credible because they pay by cash rather than on account. The penalty is that the

person will either be refused the goods and/or service or they will have to deposit a sum of money. In Britain this is also becoming standard practice. When a person comes in to a hotel seeking accommodation and paying s/he has to pay for the room in advance. A credit card however is readily accepted. Furthermore, the nature of the credit card will determine how you are perceived by the Receptionist. For example, at the Swallow Hotel Chollerford a customer came in requesting accommodation. There was no possibility of the hotel being full that night so the Head Receptionist was selling the rooms at a reduced rate in order to encourage people to stay. However when she saw the man's Gold American Express card she confidently told him the price of the room. It was the full tariff price. As she pointed out to me, 'If you have a card like that you do not quibble over a few pounds.'

In time, capital will determine the total form of service and the personal will be subordinated to economic criteria. It will be through the use of credit cards, as symbols of discretionary power, that will ultimately produce a universal prescription for "good service" that will be the means to the satisfaction of "personal service". Though as has been noted the cultural traits to "service" will at least ensure a semblance of distinction between hotels for example, in Tokyo, New York, or London even if the letting bedrooms do all look rather similar! The extent to which "personal service" will seem different may, at least apparently, have more to do with the degree to which new technology is or is not utilised as a means of rationalising the administration side of customer services. This will be dealt with in the chapter on the three hotel companies. Though in an industry where the contact between the employee and the paying customer is so highly valued the manner in which personality and individuality are allowed to be expressed in the job of say a Hotel Receptionist or a Front Desk clerk is critical to the uniqueness of the service relationship.

## **2 The Master-Servant Relationship**

Hecht's book, *The Domestic Servant Class in 18th century England* (1956) is important to the study of the Hotel trade for three reasons. First, the structure of the relationships found in such households are the model for the discourse between customer and employee in a hotel. Second, the book charts the development of the nature of the "service" relationship from that of loyalty and mutual need to one of instrumentality centred on a contract, both kinds are still central in the hotel trade. Finally, the domestic hierarchy parallels that found in a hotel and

illustrates the formal authority vested through occupation as well as that derived from the social prestige attached to certain jobs.

The relationship of servant to master was one that embraced the medieval practice of fixed status and ensured both would know their responsibilities. This opposed the, 'flourishing individualism' that was developing between servant and master in the 18th century (p.71).

“Service is a mutual contract; the master hires and pays his servant, the servant is to do his master’s business. . .”

quoted in Hecht, p.72

Hecht states that the employment of persons as servants became synonymous with wealth and as such their popularity grew amongst the middle classes (p.2).

There have always been people able and willing, by virtue of financial based power, to employ other people as servants. Furthermore there have been persons prepared voluntarily, or through force of economic circumstance, to enter into the service of someone else. To this day, in those industries called the “service” industries, there are customers who are able and willing to pay for someone else to do something for them at a particular time of the paying customer’s choosing. This is one of the parallels between the history of Domestic Servanthood and the Hotel trade.

Hotels were, and still are, places of leisure and entertainment for the, horsey, the decadent and the rich (‘Week on Four’, BBC Radio 4). Hotels such as, The Ritz, Claridges, and The Savoy are sites of conspicuous spending by those with the necessary discretionary income. Bedecked in gold velvet, crystal chandeliers and liveried staff these institutions are the vestiges of the more glamorous aspect of domestic servanthood. A glamour which the servants like the hotel workers of today can only stand at the edge of and vicariously take part in. Furthermore, the conditions that staff work under in hotels today resemble those of their contemporaries in service yesterday and today; living-in accommodation, meals included in the wage and unsocial working patterns to suit the master who is now the paying customer.

It is interesting to compare a hotel like The Savoy with a ratio of staff to customers of 1:5 with that of the Swallow London International hotel where the ratio is 1:20. The two hotels are in business for people of different levels of income and wealth. The Savoy is a 5 star establishment whilst the London International



is a 4 star hotel. The difference is reflected in the tariff rates for the rooms. There is an expectation that The Savoy will provide a different level of service, quantity of customer facilities and quality of service provision. It is for this that customers are prepared to pay more than £100 per night for a single room as well as for the level of personal attention that the hotel provides, (Mars and Nicod, 1984, p.28).

Hecht goes onto say that,

'...the medieval dictum that an establishment ought to be no larger than demanded by its master's social status gave way completely to the rule that it should be as extensive as his fortune would permit'

Hecht, 1956, p.2

The motivation behind the size of the household establishment in the 18th century seems to work for hotels. This is not surprising since the commercial drive is based on the economic principle of supply and demand. In this instance both social status and money play their part in deciding how many staff will be employed in any one hotel. The master, that is the customer, will pay according to his/her ability and will stay in a hotel which suits their own perceived social status. It is this combination of money and vanity that is so potentially hurtful to employees in the hotel trade. I talked with the Head Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel Chollerford about this and asked her how customers treated her. She replied,

'On the whole very well: older people treat you as a servant...they treat you as the lowest of the low, they treat you as stupid.'

For many in the hotel trade there is only a thin line between service and servility that is a situation where people treat you with contempt. This is an important distinction and it cropped up repeatedly during my field work. People regularly drawing attention to how they were treated by customers, staff and management. 'Servility', according to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, means, 'Servile condition; the quality or status of being a slave' (1667) In 1573, it meant, 'Servile disposition or conduct; especially mean submissiveness, cringing'. The word is linked to an intention towards instrumentality which requires subservience on the part of the person who is the slave. Through the implicit sense of obedience

it is linked to the status of vassalage endemic in the Feudal era when there were such things as masters and serfs (Roget's Thesaurus, 1982).

The Assistant Personnel Manager at the Swallow Hotel London who had previously worked at the company's hotel in Durham had this to say about the state of servitude,

'I think you can get into servitude [when] people are desperately trying to please a customer, giving the service he wants, when [they] really know [they] can't do it, for whatever reason, for a moral reason or a facility reason for some reason like that maybe. He [the member of staff] provides a service that is obviously not as good as it should be because he knew in the first place that he couldn't provide it. Then you get servitude, when you [are] doing [what] you know you can't do'

Dawson

The example he recalled was when he, as an Assistant Manager in the Swallow Hotel in Durham, was called out at 2 a.m. to serve champagne to a customer. He had to serve it warm because he could not cool it. He said that in future he would say "No" because it could not be correctly prepared.

The following dialogue shows the tension of the ambiguity that resides in the notion of "service". As was noted earlier it is both the commodification of labour and something more than that. It is this that is the basis of the exploitation of the worker and it resides in the fact that "service" requires someone to do more than they are paid for (Mars and Nicod, 1984, pp.75-76). The person could not define why she felt more than a servant working in a hotel where the content of her job could be described in such a way.

**Frith (General Assistant):** ... You've got to think of the customers because really you're doing a service to all these people. It's like a maid in the household.

**Mason:** Do you think that's the kind of service the guests like?

**Frith:** Yes.

**Mason:** Is that the kind of service you try to give?

**Frith:** Not a servant: I make it clear to them that we've got everything on the premises. It's just, I don't know, I'm not a servant to anybody.

**Mason:** So what kind of attitude do you have towards service then if you aren't a servant: how would you describe it to someone?

**Frith:** That I am a servant?

**Mason:** Yes, you know, if somebody said to you, "Well you work in hotels, and hotels is a service industry". How would you go about describing how you would serve a customer?

**Frith:** I've got what they want, I can give them a room, a breakfast, a meal at night time, a nice relaxation in the Sakura Club. I'm not really a servant. I don't know how to describe it.

**Mason:** It's difficult isn't it?

**Frith:** Yes, very difficult: I don't know.'

Dialogue (Swallow - Carlisle)

In the household of the type that Hecht describes in her book there were two levels of servanthood; that of the upper domestic and the lower. The former were delegated executive and supervisory duties by the master of the household and they often possessed special skills which had involved expensive training. The latter, the general servant, carried out the orders of the upper servants which involved undertaking to do jobs which were of a manual and a menial nature. In the Hotel trade this type of worker represents two-thirds of the workforce.

Moreover, upper servants would dine together at the second table, the first table being the master's table, whilst the domestic staff would eat at a third table. The upper servants did this to,

“... imprint the strongest Idea they possibly can of their own Consequence and Authority on the Minds of every menial servant ...”

quoted in Hecht, p.36

This happens in hotels today, sometimes because of the demands of the job which mean that some staff must take their meals whilst working but this is less relevant to the practice cited by one Head Receptionist who claimed that Receptionists, as far as she was aware, did not take their meals with the rest of the staff preferring to eat in the back office of Reception or, if allowed, to eat in one of the bars in the hotel. She went on to say that the heads of department eat in the bar every day, as opposed to the staff dining hall, because it affords them the opportunity to discuss ideas and problems in an informal setting rather than confronting each other at a formal staff meeting. However she readily admitted that Receptionists choosing to eat their meals away from the other members of staff could form an impression to the other staff that they believe they are more superior than them.

Furthermore, the functional differentiation that underlay the major division also created a number of minor ones, the most important being the social position of the employer because his prestige would rub off on to the servants; but this only applied to his closest servants for example, the Valet or House Steward (both male) and it did not apply to the domestic staff for example, the scullery maid who was female (Hecht, 1956, p.37). The clearest indicator of such a structured hierarchical difference was the level of wages paid to holders of positions in the 18th century for example, a Land Steward could expect to receive several hundred pounds per annum for his services and the footboy five pounds five shillings. The House Steward, one step below the Land Steward, could expect to receive about one hundred pounds per annum a sizeable drop from his counterpart on the estate (Hecht, 1956, pp.38-60).

The greatest value that the servant had for the master was as a display of his personal wealth, no matter what else was done in the way of duties, domestic or otherwise, it was in being visible and conspicuous that their use lay.

‘But all were not equally effective in this respect... Livery servants, from the coachmen down to the footboy, were amongst the more effective of the lot. Their routines endowed them with the highest visibility. Moreover, the livery itself emphasized their remoteness from productive labour’

Hecht, 1956, p.53

This is a feature in hotels today where heads of departments may be entitled to work either in morning dress grey striped trousers and black jacket if they are male or something pertaining to such for a female. Other employees are given a more utilitarian styled uniform such as the Hall Porter's uniform with brass buttons, waistcoat and tassles (livery).

Hecht makes the clearest references to male servants but details concerning female servants are vague and imprecise based on the belief that there must have been some. This is not Hecht's fault because she is basing her analysis on the material available which include the personal diaries and correspondence of people living at that time. What this indicates is that men were more visible than the women because they held the more visible positions in the household and on the estate. This was in spite of the guesstimation made by Colquhoun, and quoted in Hecht, that the ratio of maidservants to menservants was in the region of 8:1 at the turn of the 19th century (p.20).

The male members of the servant staff were the steward (Land and House), the male Cook, Butler, Coachmen and Footmen. Whilst the majority of the women were employed as lower domestics in Dairy and Scullery duties such as, cleaning hearths and making beds: jobs they still do today as Chambermaids in hotels where they still part of the invisible workforce who seem to do their work automatically, as far as the paying customer is concerned. Only as the Lady's Maid (waiting-woman or tirewoman) and Housekeeper would any female be visible to guests of the master and as a Cook her work would correspond to that of the Man-Cook,

'But however accomplished female cooks may have been, they were considered inferior in talent and knowledge to men'

Hecht, 1956, p.65

This was illustrated by the fact that females were invited to apply for advertised posts as cook only if they had been previously employed as assistants to men. As we shall see the historical link is still here too. For example, a female junior chef was by-passed in favour of a less experienced male junior chef when it came to the appointment of a more senior position in the Kitchen of the Swallow Hotel in London. More details of male bias in the patriarchal structuring of the industry will be given in the final chapter. Furthermore, the manner in which payments were made and are made to staff in service have close historical links. These will be brought out in the next section.

### 3 Vails-giving, Tipping, and Service charges

In discussing the role of wages, fees, perquisites and allowances in the society of the servant Hecht refers to “vails”, which she sees to be,

‘A survival of an ancient form of largesse, these fees, collected from the guests of a house, constituted a regular part of a servants income’

p.158

There are obvious comparisons with the Hotel trade. The custom of tipping “good service” is at the discretion of the customer and is regarded as a gratuity for exceptional service. The service charge is imposed by professional workers as a part of the ritual of the service relationship between employee and customer (Mars and Nicod, 1984, pp.75-76).

Nailon (1978) describes a tip as being,

‘A gratuity voluntarily paid by a customer directly to staff, in an hotel or restaurant, over and above the price, whether a service charge is included or not, for the service provided.’

p.231

In the introduction to the HCEDC report on Tipping (1969) it is stated that,

‘Tipping as we know it today is the result of a process that originated several hundred years ago. In earlier days the innkeepers around the world had few employees. Individuals were hired by guests on arrival at the inn as temporary servants to run errands, fetch food and do all that the customer ordered to make his stay comfortable’

p.1

Hecht writes that sometimes the Master of the household would guarantee an annual sum for his servants given the amount of entertaining he did. Though some servants were willing to take their chances and line up in order of seniority on the departure of a guest to await the distribution of Vails. The amount was

determined by the nominal rank of the servant, the social status of the Master, and the services rendered. So that for example, in some households the servants would make a charge for every meal eaten for which they were required to make and serve (p.159). Hecht goes on to say that in some instances only the men received any of the fees, or else only those who were visible received Vails with others taking a percentage of the total, in other households the money was pooled and the profit shared. It was not uncommon for Vails to double a person's wages (p.160).

In the USA the basic tip, irrespective of the quality of the service, is 15%: so that the voluntary aspect of a gratuity is replaced by the certainty of a commercial arrangement, albeit unspoken but no less formal for that. The generosity of people in the USA who use hotel and catering facilities is indicated by an example given to me when a Waiter received a \$5 tip on a \$15 bill. In their study on the practice of Tipping in the UK the HCEDC also found that in this country staff are dependent on these remunerations as part of their total 'wages' for the job and that they instinctively include tips when calculating the value of the job to themselves (HCEDC, 1969 a, p.4). This has social consequences for the nature of the relationship between employer-employee-customer which Henderson (1965) and Mars *et al* (1979) identify.

As with the Receptionists in Britain, the Desk Clerks in the USA do not receive tips to the degree that other service workers do. In both countries the Receptionist is viewed as marginal to the sphere of service consumption for which the customer is paying and so he/she is not a member of the personnel for which 'ritual' or 'exceptional' rewarding is considered.

In the United States of America it is the practice of Restaurant owners to pay their staff a minimum wage of, say \$2 per hour, in the knowledge that they could end up with an average hourly income of say, \$10, so multiplying their basic wage by five (see Nailon, 1978, p.233). This indicates the scale of tipping in the USA. The attitude towards tipping in Great Britain is different. Here many people believe that an additional 10% on top of the total bill is more than generous for someone who is doing their job. Often this is only given if the employee has done more than the job requires of them in the service of the customer.

In a study conducted by the Consumers' Association in 1968 for the HCEDC it was found that the most common reasons for tipping someone was to show gratitude as well as being considered the, 'accepted practice' (HCEDC, 1969 a, p.8). This is in part because of the image of the industry as a low pay employer. A view alluded to in the main conclusion of the study. The preference of consumers

was to pay a, 'market price' for the services as long as they knew that the employee was being paid a, 'full market wage' (p.2).

The feeling amongst the management of Swallow Hotels and HIH was that they were offering too low a salary to attract the kind of person they felt would best combine Front Office experience with the requisite social skills. The Personnel Manager of Swallow Hotels contended that a General Manager can pay what ever he feels is necessary to get the calibre of staff he thinks is needed. With one proviso and that is that the labour costs remains within budget limits, which means in practice there would have to be fewer staff. This seems impossible shift staffed by one Receptionist. The desire to reduce costs in order to maximise profit means service is effected through people outside of the industry with suitable experience being discouraged from applying because of low rates of remuneration.

In the London Chronicle of 1767 (Issue number 21) Vails are described as having the following effect,

“This custom has totally destroyed the reciprocal relation between master and servant, instituted by authority no less than divine. On whom does a servant where vails are taken depend, on his master? No, on the guests; as these increase the servant is willing to keep or leave his place. Can a master expect fidelity, love or gratitude, from a servant who is always grumbling when the house is not filled with vails-giving company; and lives with him with such uncertainty, that his staying or going from quarter to quarter depends merely on the number and disposition of the visitants?”

Hecht, 1956, p.163

There is a conflict between the employer of the servant and the way in which service is exploited by the employee for financial gain. The servant receives two incomes one from his employer is his basic wage and the second, which can be more advantageous, s/he earns through the giving of “service”. This creates a tension for the employee who could see him/herself more as someone who is self-employed rather than owing loyalty to an employer. Then there is the example cited earlier where the staff in the Restaurant all received a share of the tips according to their nominal rank. This could lead to relationships of dependence based on money, since promotion determines the amount of money received and this depends on remaining employed. The result will be mutually beneficial. In the following example it can be seen that the hotel management are, through the reduction in staffing levels, imposing a restriction on the opportunity for employees to earn



tips. Customers do not tip if they feel that they are only one in a long queue of people,

'They don't tip us, the service I give them I wouldn't tip me; a guest pays a lot of money for a room and then stands in a queue and receives the service I give them, I'm not surprised we don't get tipped...you must think we're very rude to the customers but we're only sharp with them because we're in a hurry'

Sachs (Swallow - London)

In this particular example more staff would mean less waiting for the customer and more time for the Cashier to spend talking with the customer as a part of the personal service.

Hecht goes on to chart the demise of Vails-giving during the last quarter of the 18th Century because of, '...the conviction that a full purse made a servant too independent'(p.173). In the Hotel trade what has happened is that through formal contracts between hotel companies and tour operators gratuities are included in the overall cost of the accommodation. So that in the 18th century when the servant was receiving both wages and tips there was opposition to the erosion in the bond between master and servant. Now through formal contracts this opportunity for entrepreneurship by the employee is diminished. For example in the Swallow Hotel London there was a written agreement with SAGA Holidays that the Baggage Porters would carry up the tourist's luggage for 20p per item. So when the Porters complained to Shift Leader about the amount of work they had to do the SAGA Courier responded by saying, 'Well they get paid enough!'. The feeling amongst the portering staff was that they did not get paid enough and none of them saw the baggage tip as an item on their monthly salary details. They suspected it was diverted to the hotel's operating profit.

One of the manpower problems that Mars *et al* identify in their study of the Hotel and Catering Industry is that the employee as a recipient of tips is entering into an informal unwritten contract with the consumer directly and is in the position of an entrepreneur, rather than an employee, he is self-employed. Henderson in a study of the American Lodging Industry echoes the findings of the British study: he states that it is the, 'implicit agreement with the consumer' that is more important than the contracted or bargained wage rate (Henderson, 1965, p.61). He goes further by saying that the employer benefits from this situation because of a lower direct labour cost and so the employees take-home pay is, '...contingent upon the whim and caprice of the consumer'(p.62).

What this does do is to make the customer morally responsible to make-up the employees wages, even though they do not have the legal responsibility to do so. Equally the employer is divested of his/her responsibility to provide an adequate remuneration by passing it on to the customer. It has thus removed the image of the payment of tips as the distinguishing mark for service over and above the call duty that is, the job description put into practice (p.63).

The HCEDC in their study of Tipping drew on a variety of sources in their investigation of this custom and what its place should be in the future of this service industry. The main conclusion was this,

‘... the practice of tipping can reduce efficiency and profitability in the industry. It tends to decrease management control, increase recruitment problems, and irritate and embarrass customers’

HCEDC, 1969, p.8

The problem was that tipping was considered to be an unreliable means of being able to guarantee oneself a steady income; it is not an acceptable basis upon which to borrow money for example, to buy a house. Objectively it supports the low wage system in the industry which is reflected in the industry’s labour turnover problem and in all the costs of recruiting. Equally management see tipping as detracting from their control in that they feel it is the job of the staff to serve the customer who will be paying the tip for that very reason, rather than setting a standard for all employees to follow (p.8).

Mars and Nicod (1984) state that basic pay and tips are only a part of the total remuneration that such a service worker can expect to receive and that things like subsidised staff lodging, subsidised or free food must be taken into account. Tipping is not rationally distributed throughout the hotel’s staff which is only compounded by the ‘fiddles’ and ‘knock-offs’ which are available to some and not to others (p.8). However the Hotel Receptionist/Desk Clerk is not in a position to take advantage of these ‘payments’. Mars and Nicod say that it is the ‘core’ workers who have the greatest access to these rewards: Front Office Staff are not to be regarded as ‘core’ workers because they are not considered as producing a tangible product for sale. As “service” has been transformed in to a commodity through the application of capital then this notion of being peripheral rather than an integral aspect of the hotel’s operation is false.

The way in which the work of the Receptionist is organised a lot of the work is done out of sight of the customer. The idea being it is more presentable to

show the clerk handing out room keys at the Front Desk than working away on paperwork behind the scenes. This distinction between the types of work and the context in which it is done means that both colleagues in other departments and customers do not appreciate the extent of the Receptionists job.

'They don't think we do anything but sit on our backsides and hand out keys (she smiled a sickly superficial smile to illustrate her point). They think, "Why should we tip someone who just hands a key to us?" They don't think where's the reservation come from or where's the bill come from?'

Chef de Brigade (Swallow - London)

So powerful is this that when a tip is left for the Reception staff it is often not believed. Another Shift Leader told me of such an occurrence where a male customer left £20 on the Reception counter as a tip. She thought he had merely left the money by mistake never thinking it was for them, 'Well you don't get many tips in Reception so you don't think'. So she gave it to the Restaurant staff believing the customer would come back for it. They were wise to what it all meant and kept the money for themselves.

However the Senior Receptionist at the Swallow Carlisle receives as gifts perfume, sweets, pens, drinks, clothing, birthday cards & presents, tights and so on from salesmen and businessmen. She sees these as equivalent to tips and believes it to be a recognition for the service she gives. It might also be said that, having known many of the givers of these gifts for years, they are more than customers, almost friends. Clearly these gifts are more personal than a money tip which is a reward for service irrespective of whether the server and the customer know each other.

It is not uncommon for only those staff who receive the tip, say in a Restaurant, to keep it all for themselves neither sharing it amongst their colleagues in the dining room let alone with the kitchen staff of the remainder of the hotel personnel including management. In some instances the tips may be shared amongst the Restaurant staff equally and amongst no one else: or they may be shared according to the following system which I was told about in a Scottish hotel in a famous resort. Out of the total trunk (the trunk which held the tips) the Restaurant Manager would take half, of the remaining half the Head Waiter would take half, that is one-quarter of the total. The station Head Waiters (two) would take one-eighth of the total, and the other eighth was divided amongst the many Waiters and Waitresses. The Kitchen staff did not receive a share. In one hotel known

personally to the researcher all tips which resulted from banquets and functions such as, wedding celebrations were put under the supervision of the Staff Committee and the staff funded a party at Christmas. Here everyone benefitted, including the Receptionists. Generally though the Restaurant staff also received tips from customers during the year which were not commonly pooled and shared.

What is evident within the Hotel industry is the continuity in the types of custom practiced. We have seen this in relation to the relationship between the customer/master and the employee/servant; in the bias towards male staff for the positions of authority over female workers; and with respect to the pattern of payments and the place of tipping/vails for the service worker. The next section will continue to highlight the historical links between domestic service and that practiced as the custom in the Hotel industry in the UK and in the USA.

#### 4 The “Front” of Service

The concept of the “front” stage/“back” stage dichotomy was conceived of by Goffman in his book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1969). It was whilst studying the social relationships amongst the workers in a hotel in Scotland that he thought up those terms. He uses them to describe those places where we deliberately expose aspects of our personality to public view and the areas where we consciously do not. Reserving the latter for times when we literally drop the “impression” that we have made like a mask being taken off. In neither situation is the person necessarily being anymore their real self. It is just a space for impression and an area for the deconstruction of self-presentation (p.97).

What is of particular interest is Goffman’s use of the terms “front” and “back” to refer to areas and to stages upon which act and action are performed for presentation. In a hotel the division between those departments whose activities are in view and those where the workers are relatively invisible are referred to as the ‘Front of House’ and the ‘Back of House’ departments. It is this reference that is the departure point for Goffman’s thesis.

‘The concept ‘front’ has a double and somewhat contradictory meaning: on the one hand, that which is ‘at the front’, as in ‘in the front line’ of organisations; on the other hand, that which obscures or even deceives, as in the ‘front region’, obscuring the ‘back region’ of organisations’

Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p.99

The departments within hotels are grouped together by the degree of visibility in relation to the customer. So that the two divisions of Front of House and Back of House correspond to the following departments; Switchboard, Reservations, Front Desk, Cashiering, Housekeeping represent the 'Front' departments. Whilst the Kitchen, Restaurant, Bars, Maintenance and Accounts are considered to be the 'Back' departments.

It is immediately obvious that there is a flaw in the criterion for selection since the Restaurant is a visible workplace and Housekeeping is supposed to be done without the knowledge of the customer. However it could well be argued that the functional division between front and back is not something sorted in the 'front' stage/'back' stage dichotomy as a means of giving formal and organisational validity to the status difference between these two parts of the hotel. This status difference we have previously seen operating as a division between Upper Servants and Lower Domestics both 'Upstairs' and 'Downstairs'.

In 1975 I talked with a Senior Receptionist and she described working in a hotel as being in a fairy tale world. Her experience parallels that of those people who worked as domestic servants. Today there are still vestiges of the kind of servanthood when men were visible and women were invisible. As with all fairy tales there is something inherently unrealistic about this. The rules, necessary for this suspension of the imagination and the critical faculty of reason, are insidious (Howton and Rosenberg, p.278). Service in the Hotel trade is built on a cult of personality as a product which is a commodity rather than centred on the individual as a person (Mills, 1956, p.182). You are therefore not free to act on your own volition but must contain your self within the confines of a profit oriented context which is the immediate hotel as well as the "service" sector which embraces the Hotel trade (Mills, 1956, p.184).

**Richardson:** It's a fairy tale world, it's not a real world, it isn't a real world at all. It's not like outside ... You can't let your attention wander or you've missed the vital bit, you've missed something you would have lost the sale ... but when I'm not here I just switch off and don't listen.

**Mason:** So why do you feel that you're able to be far more tolerant within the hotel yet not

**Richardson:** (interrupts) Because it's play acting, it's not the real world. If you're out there and you don't like somebody you don't need to talk to

them, but you've got to talk to them. Mood doesn't have any effect on you, whether you like somebody or hate them you shouldn't show it. You can have a really nasty person and an evil temper and you smile at him, "And how are you tonight?" - ugghh! - you just ignore people, if you don't like, them out there.

**Mason:** So you think hotels are show places?

**Richardson:** Oh yes of course they are.

**Mason:** So if you couldn't put on the front when you're working

**Richardson:** (interrupts) It's not a front.

**Mason:** It's not a front?

**Richardson:** No.

**Mason:** No?

**Richardson:** No its not a front, it's not a pretend (pause) it's not right, I'm going into work I'm going to be all cool and smooth, it's not like that at all. It isn't a pretend, it isn't a pretend world. It is and it isn't. You can't be any, you can't make yourself something you're not anyway, you can't pretend to be something else. It's just that your attitude's different, isn't it? It's just (pause), I don't know, it's hard to explain it. You're ready for anything, you're waiting for something to happen, it's exciting. It's strange, I can't really (pause), I'm not pretending to be anything else, or anybody else, it's still me as well, it's just a different me.

**Mason:** How can it be a different you...?

**Richardson:** I haven't explained it. Because it's expected, it's a part of your work, it's the job, it's, it's like working on the computer, answering the 'phone, being nice and being tolerant or whatever. It's in with the job, it's

part of the job, it goes with it when you put on the uniform. State of mind, that's it.

**Mason:** Is that what you're paid for?

**Richardson:** Is that what I'm paid for? Yes, you're paid to make people happy. Get them in, make them happy and feed them.'

Dialogue (Swallow Hotel Carlisle)

In Howton and Rosenberg's study of *The Salesman* they found that the satisfaction of success was based on the perception that skill rested on inherent ability rather than the learning of sales techniques (pp.282-283). In the Hotel trade the call is for people to be trained from a base of identifiable "personality" which is developed into a "social skill" (HCIMA, 1984/85, p.1). People like the Senior Receptionist are aware of the aspect of their work which could seem to be an "act". Because she has internalised those qualities associated with having "social skills" they are not seen as something learnt but as natural. It is as if the possession of the necessary personality characteristics develop automatically over time. She has forgotten that she has learnt the craft of selling through other people's teaching. The satisfying of customer expectations being the strongest motivator to learn with profit being the drive for hoteliers to get their staff to be motivated in this direction.

In the Restaurant the service of the customer is immediate and personal. The necessity of the Waiter to leave the room returning with food is all a part of the show. For the Senior Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel Carlisle they are the epitome of service because they are seen to be doing something for one customer at a time. The inference being that Receptionists do not through their working circumstances. The Restaurant Manager believes people pay for, 'impressive' and, 'sincere' service and the majority are paying for, 'convenience'. That does not mean they should pay up-front for "good" service by slipping the Head Waiter a £5 note for a good table. He believes the impact that a member of the staff should make must be, 'distinct, 'unique' enough to be remembered and, 'individual' to that person. It must be both general and specific and the staff must believe in themselves as the most important person there so that the customer entering in to that situation will believe in the integrity of the staff. This does not make them, 'conspirators', willing or otherwise, in some kind of, 'charade or farce'. It

must be real. In spite of the fact that it is an extraordinary context in which to relate to someone as a person because they are being paid to be a servant.

One of the Shift Leaders at the LIH said that she had been, 'knocked back' so often when she had been trying to be sincere in her welcome of customers that she had resorted to the short hand, 'Have a nice day!'. To which one male customer replied, 'Have they paid you to say that?'. As Mills (1956) says,

'People are required by the salesman ethic and convention to pretend interest in others in order to manipulate them. In the course of time, and as this ethic spreads, it is got on to'

p.187

However, in order for the customer to be satisfied s/he must be willing to suspend the reality and pretend that the Receptionist is serving no one else but them (Howton and Rosenberg, pp.285-286). However the customer knows that they are paying for that because service has become a commodity that is sold. You pay for the luxury of individual service not for self-service. The pretence on the part of the customer is critical to the transaction (Goffman, 1969, pp.10-16). Without it service becomes no more than the smiling face and bowing welcome of the image on the screen in the Tokyo hotel. Yet the conspiracy of customer and employee perpetuates the motivation for people to be trained to be personable. To be trained to smile because that is what the customer wants and this is how the greatest profit can be attained (Mills, 1956, pp.186-187).

The customer did not always care to know the reality of the working conditions of the Front Office staff according to those Receptionists I interviewed. They felt the customer was prepared to suspend their critical faculties for the sake of the superficial experience of the comfortable hotel foyer. However the Senior Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel Carlisle believed because the customer could, 'see' the paper and, 'hear' the printer the customer would know they were working rather than just sitting, talking and drinking coffee as other Receptionists I interviewed felt they were perceived as doing. However the members of management that were interviewed said it was their intention that the customer should be unaware of the administrative aspect of the job. Whilst passing off the total responsibility for such a view by stating that in their opinion the *male* customer was not interested in any case.

So one has to keep up appearances because they are an integral part of the make-up of the job, a part of the impression that the Receptionist/Desk Clerk gives



off (Howton and Rosenberg, pp.290-291). However there is a further dilemma that the clerk is perpetually involved in and that is having to deal with *each* customer's requirements. The stereotype impression of a Receptionist/Desk Clerk is a person who cares about the needs of all the customers who come into the hotel. However s/he can only deal with every person individually if there are staff dealing with the clerical work associated with each customer's account. If not then the clerk has to engineer a way in which s/he can tactfully disengage themselves from talking with the customer without giving the impression of not having the time to talk to them (Mills, 1956, p.183). Which they do not. What is important, all the time, is that s/he is given the customer an appearance of wanting to serve them (Mars and Nicod, 1984, pp.34-35).

'You've got to give the impression of caring, but you would go out of your mind if you cared for them all'

Plug - (Hilton Kensington)

The opposite of this would be to give all your time and emotional energy to the customer. In the context where "service" is sold as a commodity this would mean that the Receptionist would be selling their personality for the benefit of the company's profit (Mills, 1956, pp.182-183). As has already been noted the customer does not benefit from the transformation of personality into a profit oriented facility because the capital advantages go to the company.

An example of how employees can deconstruct the notion of sincerity towards customers is when they are using the telephone. A man telephoned the Kensington Hilton hotel enquiring about the hotel's facilities and one of the sales staff answered the 'phone telling the caller that the hotel had all the, 'mod cons'. When he came off the 'phone he called him a, 'pillick'. This is a means of letting off steam without the customer being aware of it and would occur regularly at Consort Hotels. The clerks would be polite and patient with the enquirer but to make up for it they would fling abuse at the telephone receiver pretending, with the safety of being disconnected, that the caller could still hear them. A touch of impatience crept into the tone of most of them, some of the time, and this must have been transmitted to the person at the other end. The mask was slipping.

Many of the Receptionists experiences of customers had been negative. The interviews highlighted the conflict between their treatment as people outside of work and in the hotel where they were perceived to be the servant of the customer. With service being made into a saleable product any notion of common decency

between customer and employee can be ignored. The fact that customers pay the wages of the Receptionists was always in focus when they were being treated with contempt. It was this that made them accept their position.

'... there is a conflict between service-role requirements and values of equality that exist in society outside the service organization. In certain respects, subordinate service roles conserve norms of interpersonal behaviour that no longer exist in other social institutions'

Shamir, 1980, p.744

One Cashier at the Swallow Hotel London told me an Australian male who had been rude, and shouting told her that they do not get hotels like this in Australia. She replied, 'Well you can go back to Australia if you like'(Hodgson). She then went on to tell me what the reaction of the Shift Leader, Ms Wright, had been at the time, ' "You shouldn't be rude to them", she had said, "just be sarcastic. They're being sarcastic to you to make you feel small so be sarcastic back" '. For example, a customer had said a four letter word to Ms Wright under his breath and although she had heard him she ignored it and him. She served those who were with him and then turning to him said, ' "I'm sorry sir I didn't hear what you said before, could you repeat it a little louder?" '(Wright). Apparently he became sheepish.

Another male guest swore at Claire and she said in reply, ' "There's no need to swear sir, I'm sure the other guests could find it offensive", as he walked away a little old lady came up to the desk and said, "It's disgusting, it's disgusting". Claire agreed that the man's behaviour had been disgusting.

'The servant was expected to know his place and under all circumstances to maintain a deferential manner, whatever his private thoughts'

Hecht, 1956, p.73

**Mason:** How do you cope with them being rude?

**Hodgson (Receptionist/Cashier):** Well there's not a lot you can do, you've just got to stand there and listen to it... I feel like telling them to fuck off!, but I mean you don't... But if you know they're going to be rude to you,

you just, "Yes sir, no sir" and that's it... They're paying, they're paying they can be rude to you. I mean it's their holiday, they can be rude and they know you can't be rude back. But if you're outside and they're not paying, I mean I don't take a lot, I lose my temper easily. But it's my job, I'm quick tempered but it's just your job. I've lost my temper a couple of times.

**Mason:** Well what happened?

**Hodgson:** What happened? Well to be stuck there and called a "Judy", I'm not going to take that am I?... I said, "There's no need to be rude sir!", I mean it embarasses them when you answer them back especially in front of all their friends, I mean there's not a lot you can say. And whoevers on with you backs you up in any case. Shrug it off, which annoys most, or laugh at them.'

Dialogue (Swallow Hotel London)

When the Southern Regional Manager was interviewed on the issue he was more complacent on the matter of customers being rude to female Receptionists. As he had not experienced such treatment his contribution was a string of platitudes,

'I don't think anybody has the right to be rude to anybody ... it demeans society, it doesn't build it ... We don't have difficult customers, we have customers with a difficulty and that's our pleasure ... *I'm prepared to understand that they would allow guests to be rude ... I will do something about it'*

Reed, Southern Regional Manager (my emphasis)

A male foreign customer wanted to speak to another customer in the hotel so he asked the Desk Clerk to telephone room 5022. However the room was unoccupied and waiting to be cleaned. So the clerk asked how the name was spelt and this was identified with room number 5002 and not room 5022. When the customer was told his friend was in room 5002 he said that was what he had told the clerk. The clerk said nothing.

However he had plenty to say to me about it. In his view, he must have looked a fool in the eyes of the customer. I asked him if he was paid to look a fool but he replied in the negative so I rephrased the question. He agreed that that, 'You're not paid to look a fool but to accept that you look a fool?'

We have seen a deterioration in the standard of service from one that is giving a show (Mrs Richardson); to an impression of caring (Ms Plug); deception (Clerks at Consort Hotels); superficial smiles (Ms Wright); “polite” civility (Ms Hodgson); sarcasm (Ms Wright); and getting annoyed with the customers (Ms. Hodgson). This final example over the room numbers shows how oppressive the phrase, ‘The customer is always right’ is. Service in the hotel trade has come to mean the subordination of the servants integrity to the transcending motivation of profit and this is becoming more intense as the Hotel trade becomes restructured as an industry.

## 5 Restructuring Services for a Profit

In the first section it was shown that the relationship between profit and service is central to the Hotel industry. Profit is also the reason why goods are manufactured. The difference being the type of “product” being exchanged for money; in the Hotel industry it is “service” whilst in manufacturing tangible goods are made. Urry (1986) after setting out the criteria for classifying “services” goes on to set out eleven means by which the service sector can be reorganised (pp.29-32). The intention being to cut down on unit costs with the aim of increasing profit. The modes he identifies all have implications for the location of the service function and the distribution of occupations within it.

Of the eleven forms nine are applicable to the Hotel trade. The following is a list of all of them. (1) The partial self-provisioning of the service function. (2) Increases in labour productivity (intensification) through changes in the organisational structure but without capital investment. (3) Capital investment couple with new technology resulting in job loss and intensification. (4) The closure of capacity with little investment (rationalisation). (5) Sub-contracting, where parts of the service sector are given over to outside specialists. (6) The substitution of the present workforce with female, part-time, non-white labour. (7) Improvements in the standard of the labour force through recruitment and training. (8) The materialisation of the service function so that it is purchased as a tangible product. This does not readily apply to the Hotel trade. Because “Service” is made into a commodity but it is not made into a tangible product which is then sold. (9) Urry cites spatial relocation as the next form because of the necessity for space there is a move into areas with cheaper rents. (10) Domestication is the partial relocation of the function within the household labour. This is not applicable within the Hotel trade. (11) The final form is the centralisation of services in larger units and the closure of smaller ones.

Urry's first form that of self-service (p.30) can be applied in particular to the Hilton/Vista International Hotels that were visited during the fieldwork. Mini-bars are provided in the bedrooms for the convenience of the customer. These are stocked with refreshments for which the customer is on their honour to say what they have consumed. This also benefits the hotel owners who do not need to invest in monitoring equipment. In The Drake Hotel, Chicago the annual loss of 3-4% of stock does not motivate the need for such capital investment. So the hotel gains by not having to employ people for room service and the customer's honesty saves capital.

Another system used in all Hilton/Vista International Hotels as well as the "honour" system is the room self-service system, the "Bell Captain". It is a more sophisticated form of the tea & coffee making facilities which are standard to the majority of hotels below 3 star level. The facility supplies beverages, cold food and snacks which can be heated using the element in the unit. Although the name of the system implies personal service no one comes to your room to serve you, it is a vending machine. As such it is a profitable means of providing a service without the cost of labour as Room Service staff or the expense of having to cook food in kitchens on each floor of the hotel. Instead such pantrys which would have to be fitted out with capital equipment can be sold as letting bedrooms from which more profit is derived.

When the advantages of this system were being expounded to me by one of the Desk Clerks at the Kensington Hilton she omitted to say that for the system to work it had to be switched on and that this was sometimes overlooked. It was also impossible for a customer to appreciate the facility if the light, that signalled to the Front Desk staff when the system in the room was working, was faulty. In that case it often needed the customer to make a complaint before they could operate the self-service system. The system is due to be interfaced with the Reservation system. This would mean that as soon as the room was allocated to a customer the vending machine would operate. As soon as the customer checked out the system would close down. This was to prevent one customer being charged for items another occupant had consumed. That was not budgetted for in that particular year. It seems that cost cutting measures are seen in capital expenditure terms and the value to the customer of consistency and reliability is given second place.

Furthermore, the customer now has the choice of requesting their hotel bill on the television screen in their room or on a VDU screen along the corridor as is planned for the Swallow Hotel London. The intention on the part of the hotel owners is that s/he will view and then type in the code that will instruct their

credit card account to be debited. A method employed by HIH is called the no-stop checkout. With this the customer does not have to queue at the Cashiers desk in the morning to pay their bill. The bill is delivered to their room during the night and they can check it, sign and post it in the box in the foyer on their way out of the hotel.

This is possible because the Desk Clerk will have in her/his possession a credit card slip which will bear the customer's signature. This will then be processed and sent off to the credit card company. However there are a number of problems associated with the scheme such as, will the correct amount be charged to the customer given the charge slip has already been signed. The fact that the customer must sign a credit card debit slip in advance is a sign of how little trust the hotel owner places in their customers. All are considered untrustworthy.

What it also does is to cut out the customers second mandatory contact with a member of the hotel staff and for those who consider a queue an unnecessary use of time then this will be gladly received. For those who value human contact then this could well mark the demise of the Cashier.

This system operated by Hilton/Vista International Hotels is an example of the second form or restructuring cited by Urry that of intensification (p.30). Such changes in the organisation of the work as using Night Porters to take a customer's bill to their room to save them having to queue requires no additional investment in terms of labour and yet it leads to an increase in the productivity of the present labour force in two ways. Firstly, by spreading the work amongst the staff that is, from the Cashiers to the Night Porter staff by getting the customer to opt for partial self-service in the customer cycle. Secondly, with the reduction in the previous workload for the Cashiers this means that over time one or more of the following will occur; a) a slow down in the employment rate of Cashiering staff; b) the total number of Cashiers is not increased but overtime is increased to cover additional work; c) Cashiers are not replaced and the total number is allowed to fall to a level which the management consider adequate. This latter policy will produce the greatest intensification in the productivity of the workforce.

Customers who visit a Hilton or Vista International Hotel on six occasions are invited to join the Vista Club. These people are treated as VIP's, which means that special gifts await their arrival in pre-assigned rooms. They are treated to rooms with large beds and full-size baths in them. In the evening the continental custom of turning down the top covers of the bed and placing a chocolate on the pillow is done by the Housekeeping staff. (This custom is still practiced in Swiss hotels and is conveyed to all customers irrespective of status). All of this because they are prepared to pay, or their company is, the full tariff rate. For this policy

of trading-up the, 'little bit extra service', as one club member put it, HIH makes a disproportionate amount of profit. (Trading-up is where more is seen to be given for the same price. However with discounting the same is given for less money. In reality the former is more profitable because the cost of the additional items are intended to be less than the reduction in gross profit that would result from a discount to the customer of say 10%).

As the following quote shows this deception of the customer by the hotel owners is apparent to those who work in the trade. The Hotel Receptionists who were interviewed spoke of the poor service they were forced to give because of changes in the number of staff and the additional work that had been put upon them as a result of this and changes in technology which had allowed for the delegation of clerical duties from the control office down to the Front Office. All of this was to the detriment of "personal service". In hotels the business is service, but the trade is profit.

**'Mason:** If someone asked you what you meant by the term service, as it applies to the hotel industry, how would you describe it?

**Management Trainee:**... when I came for my interview Mr Vittel said to me, "What was a hotel's function?", and I said, "To be like a service to people, to help them enjoy their holiday and everything", and he said, "That's the second most important thing, the first one is to make money". So a hotel is a service to the people, but its basically a profit making organisation.

**Mason:** Is it how you see it?

**Mgt. Trainee:** I didn't at first, having now worked in a hotel, when you're at college its always, you know, "It's for the people, you know, you have to be nice to the people and make sure they have a nice time, you know, the whole function of a hotel is so that people will come back and enjoy themselves". Having been here it's not. That's part of it, that does come into it: but the basic point is to get as much money out of them while they're here as you can. When you think about it hotels don't operate just for the people, they're for the people who own them really: the people who come to the hotel are the finance of the hotel itself. In a way service means it is a service to them, because they wouldn't have much to do without it, but it's also a service to

the people who own it. The people who come in are a service to the people who own it'

#### Dialogue (Swallow - London)

Urry's third means of change in the service sector is that which results from the coupling of capital and technology. A clear example is the introduction into the Swallow Hotel London of an automated Telephone Switchboard. As a direct consequence those Telephonists who were not required were transferred to positions in other departments in the hotel. Those who resigned were not replaced and thus falling victims to the policy of "natural wastage" which is a convenient way out of having to explain reductions in staff through changes in technology. Though in an industry with such a low level of unionisation management policies go largely unimpeded.

Consort Hotels and Swallow Hotels have developed a policy of rationalisation. The corporate policy of Swallow Hotels is to have all units with at least 50 letting bedrooms. The others being sold or demoted to Vaux Inns. Whilst Consort Hotels seeks to upgrade the quality of the existing hotels by discriminating against those which do not match the standard of at least 65% of letting bedrooms with adjoining bathrooms. Such policies require no new investment or utilisation of technology and reflect a perception of the most profitable market segment and type of person they seek to serve. As Manley of Hilton International Hotels said, 'We do not preach to those in the slums because they can't afford to come'. The Hotel trade is not in business to satisfy non-material needs it is there to make a profit.

The fifth form of restructuring is that of sub-contracting (p.30). There are some services which are always done in-house, others which are always contracted out to specialised companies, and finally those which have been brought back to be dealt with in-house. It is the norm that cocktail drinks will be made up for the customer on demand rather than brought in ready mixed. In the Kitchen the very least that will be done is the final cooking of the food and garnish of the dish before it is presented to the customer. Though the most common item bought into a hotel is gateaux.

In all of the hotels that were visited outside contractors were used to maintain facilities such as lifts, heating equipment, switchboards, office machinery, and the computer system itself. Both Swallow Hotels and Hilton International had a formal maintenance contract with the computer hardware manufacturers for a 24 hour, 7 days a week immediate action. The printing of menus, headed



notepaper, documents, advertising material has usually been given to an outside firm. However with the advent of word processing and the availability of high quality desk top facilities, especially laser printing, the production of documents and advertising material can be brought into the hotel with savings for marketing budgets and stationery.

It is now more common for such items as Laundry, Table linen, Bed clothes and Uniforms to be sent to a commercial cleaning firm. Though this has not always been the case. The most important factor in determining whether such things are cleaned in-house or sub-contracted is the capital cost of the machinery and the the labour cost. Over time the latter will become the more important as the depreciation of capital machinery can be set off against operating profit for corporation tax purposes. Whilst the unit cost of labour will increase. The Vista International New York has taken advantage of the volume of laundry that results from a business and conference hotel where all the customers may be only staying for one night and clean laundry is required for that evening's arrivals. They have their own laundry and dry cleaning facility. All the other Vista International Hotels used an outside cleaning firm because it was cheaper. Likewise with the Hilton International Kensington.

Urry's sixth form of restructuring is the replacement of the existing labour market with part-time, female, and non-white labour (p.31). It is the policy of the Executive Housekeeper at the Swallow Hotel London to employ Filipino women as Chambermaids because she felt they worked better as a team if they were of the same ethnic origin. The same argument was put forward with respect to the Floor Stewards and the Lounge staff in the Kensington Hilton where blacks were employed. This was also the case with respect to the Coffee Shop in the Swallow Hotel in London. Furthermore, such "positive" discrimination was used in the Laundry of the Vista International New York where blacks washed the white business person's sheets!

A positive move within the labour market is the enhancement in the quality of the service function. Urry presents this as the seventh means by which the service sector is restructured (p.31). This is achieved by developing the social skills of the employees and recruitment to lower the ratio of staff to customers. Both of these involve money especially if more staff are taken on. The problem is how to assess the benefits that can be gained through such expenditure. How can the value of a smile be quantified in terms of profit and loss? One solution was that of the Training Manager of Swallow Hotels who valued a smile at a million pounds. On the surface this appears to be training hype. This also indicates the way in which

“personal service” has been made in to a commodity which can be sold at a profit for the hotel company.

The next form of restructuring used is Urry’s ninth, that of the spatial relocation of the service function to take advantage of cheaper rents (p.32). However of the three hotel companies only HIH, to my knowledge, has considered moving the location of its Headquarters. Swallow Hotels is located near to the Vaux Brewery which has stood on its site from 1806, and Consort Hotels is based in York because of the transport links North and South. HIH considered moving its operations out of New York city and into Connecticut, however they remained on Manhattan moving to a cheaper location because the President lives in New York.

The final form of restructuring that is applied to the Hotel trade is that of the tendency towards centralisation which is Urry’s eleventh item (p.32). All three organisations operate some form of centralisation when it comes to the administrating of the customer’s facilities. Common to them all is the Central Reservations service which in the case of Swallow and Consort Hotels is based at their Head Office. Hilton/Vista International Hotels shares the HILTRON network with Hilton Hotels. The system is located at Dallas, Texas. Significantly, of course, Consort Hotels, as a consortium, is itself an example of centralisation. It is the advantage of bulk purchasing and a shared marketing budget that is the incentive for individual hoteliers to organise themselves.

The most important changes in the pattern of restructuring in the Hotel trade are the plans to reduce staffing costs and levels through the implementation of self-service check-out facilities for the customer. This has the effect of undermining the concept of personalised service which hitherto had been a central concept and which now has been visibly displaced by the drive for increased profit margins facilitated by the introduction of new technology. In addition to this employers are also recruiting people to a mass of low status posts with the prospect of promotion in the future as the only compensation for jobs lacking the requirement for mental aptitude now that new technology has been introduced to increase managerial control at the expense of employee initiative.

The Hotel trade is also a strange, some may say a “funny”, industry. Yet it is also a capitalist industry. Maybe this makes the “fairy tale” image of the industry more inviting of mirth. There is a clear and straightforward relationship between the commodification of “service” away from any semblance of the personal and the unique and towards something that is sold in the form of a product. Associated with this is the restructuring of what is now an industry along rational lines of cost cutting and profit maximisation so that the customer’s needs are matched by the hotel’s facilities. All of this overlays a “fairy tale” world of tradition and

custom around what service means in terms of dressing up and the glamour and the glitter of the customer areas couple with the shabbiness of the behind the scenes area of the staff environment. A case of people working as Cinderallas in rags and riches at the same time yet all the while the drama is unfolding selling the story to the paying customer at a profit to the hotel company and shareholders.

The next two chapters look at in more detail the processes involved in this capitalist drama. What will become clear is that the mass of workers in the Hotel industry although they may seem to be in the limelight are in fact no more than the working hands for an industry run along lines of capitalist logic which is in turn organised by patriarchal forces. The Puppeteer, if you so wish, is Profit.

## Chapter 8

### Jobs, Roles and Regulation

#### Introduction

In the hotel industry appearances matter: but what is visible to the eye is not all that goes on; a great deal of the work in a hotel is done behind walls and doors, and it is only the Front of House that is visible, it is only that which is apparent.

In this chapter, and the next, the intention is to reveal the reasons for the practices which go on behind the scenes, seemingly out of sight. Yet there is a critical interrelationship between the Front and Back of House departments, because what traverses the two halves of the hotel are the workplace social relationships, structured by, and developed through interaction. These discourses have to make sense of the external social pressures which aim to place a value on the different jobs in a hotel: making some into professions and others in to “women’s” work, (Oakley, 1981 b, p.155).

The intention is to consider the meaning of the word “skill” as a term that renders a social value on a good or service manufactured by a process that includes some form of human agency or intervention (Littler, 1982, p.9). Furthermore, that renders a value that is greater than the sum of the cost of the raw materials, and that this use-value is superseded socially by the worth of the product (good or service) in the exchange of products in the market place. It is this process, turning the use of a product into something of greater value in relation to some other product, that is the political framework within which the discussion of the worth of “women’s” work will be considered; a series of points of reference dominated by social prejudice and male power (Wood, 1982, p.11). “Skill” is only a part of the process through which management attempt to regulate and control labour.

The following quote sets the themes for this chapter: that of the technical aspect of “skill” and so of each job in the Hotel trade as well as the nature of the relationship between workers in hotels as a part of the labour process.

'...is it possible to distinguish the technical from the political/social input into skill and, further, to say which in the last instance determines either the fate of a particular group of workers or the evolution of the class structure of capitalism?'

Lee, 1982, p.148

Little (1982, pp.6-9) outlines a number of approaches to the challenge of how "skill" can be defined. The first is that of the technical content of the job and how easily it is for someone to learn how to do the job. This ignores the context in which the work is carried out, especially that of management attempts to degrade jobs in order to both control the workers and to reduce the costs of labour in order that profit margins are widened. This was the apparent motive behind the introduction of computerised systems of financial control in Swallow Hotels and Hilton International Hotels and will be the basis for the use of new technology in Consort Hotels.

The second conception of "skill" includes the recognition that in all jobs no matter how standardised the procedures there can always be an element of discretion on the part of the worker. This can be called 'job autonomy' and links in more realistically with the structure of control which characterises the relationship between management and labour. For example, although the work of the Hotel Receptionist and Clerk is time bound by management policy there is still room for some initiative within the framework of the report deadlines.

Both of these notions of skill, job-learning and job-autonomy have an apparently objective basis. However, the political discourse between management and labour can set a different agenda for the conception of "skill", one where a group of workers or a particular job is given a higher status than another. This subjective conception means that it is possible for skill to be, 'socially constructed through the artificial delimitation of certain work as skilled'(p.9). It is the process of regulation through which this is completed that this chapter is concerned.

In order that this might be accomplished use is made of the factors that Cockburn (1983) uses in her book on the changes in working practices in the printing industry with the introduction of new technology. She identifies four features; conditions, hours, earnings and the division of labour (p.117). These criteria, which are both objective and subjective, will be used to help analyse the internal dynamics of management and labour power and control as well as the social forces which determine the status of one job over another.

## 1 What are the rules of this 'game'?

Apart from the social aspect, the job of the Hotel Receptionist, in the widest sense, is to administer, administration which encompasses clerical and secretarial tasks: these are the objective features of the job (Littler, 1982, p.7). The details of the prescribed aspects of the job can be found in for example, the Front Office Manuals for Swallow Hotels and Hilton International Hotels. What the Receptionist is left to decide upon is the order in which they are to be done (though "guidelines" are also given in such manuals) and the way in which to do them,

'To the extent that machine operations still require certain human actions, these are still dependent upon human volition'

Jones, 1982, p.184

However, it does not involve determining what needs to be done, nor the type of equipment that is available with which to do the work. As the Shift Leader at the Swallow Hotel in Carlisle remarked,

'It's all time, and it's geared to time. You know where you ought to be in the business at a certain time of night and if you're not at that point you know you are going to be late'

Richardson

As Burawoy (1979) points out this is only a "game" (p.82) where the design of the job is constructed to maximise managerial control whilst constraining any operative's initiative within for example, the confines of a standard set of procedures and timetable of reports. The discretion is functional and becomes a daily routine (Littler, 1982, pp.8-9). This contrasts with the view of Alvarez when he asserts that a computer, 'does free men and women to think, and to make those judgments.' (Alvarez, 1983, p.62). However, Burawoy argues that the limits to this thinking are pre-determined, that this grey area of managerial control represents a known finiteness and that it is this which is the constraining factor to any sense of personal fulfillment in a job (Glenn and Feldberg, 1979, p.57). Despite this, Receptionists/Desk Clerks still play the "game" of maximising room occupancy

for paltry bonuses: Davis calls this accepting the situation as 'normal' through making, 'the best of the situation' (1979, p.240).

To do the task in a different order is also sometimes not possible. For example, inputting a customer's registration details into the storage system before a registration form has been completed. (Though the initial reservation request, if confirmed, will have been entered into the Advance Reservation index within the system.) There is a set and predetermined order for everything. What is the point of filing away a customer's registration details if the Cashier will be needing them? So there is a "natural" sequence of events within a given administration framework: it is a man-made structure in which the customer becomes a room number and is passed, from person to person and department to department as such. The customer is packaged as a numbered commodity for example, 'You know that foreign guy, Mr 309'(Anderson, Head Receptionist, Swallow Hotel Durham). As the Shift Leader at the Swallow Hotel in Carlisle stated,

'That must happen everywhere. But until you know who you are talking about he's going to be a number anyway, he's going to be a number for years and years until you know who you are talking about. You've got to be interested in who you are looking after, otherwise there's no point. He'll always be the guy in 119 until you find out who he is. And that's not difficult: not that you have to be forward and leap over the desk at anyone, there are ways. It depends how receptive people are as well'

Richardson

This process can be seen to run counter to the personal idea of service. One of the Shift Leaders at the Swallow Hotel in London expressed this to be the trouble. She explained that being told what to do and not being able to advise customers using her own initiative was not what she expected from a job in a hotel.

'Being allowed no initiative, not being able to give advice and simply being told what to do is not what I saw this job as offering.'

Shift Leader

After gaining experience in the user of the computer system she left the hotel having been employed there for two months.

This has a parallel in manufacturing industries on the production line. Cavendish (1982) tells us about the changes in the assembly process which had occurred for the women workers. Because of the move towards more final assembling of parts rather than making them up from individual components the work had become more monotonous. There was no room for manouvre, the line dictated the speed at which the women worked,

'We just slotted in like cogs in a wheel. Every movement we made and every second of our time was controlled by the line; the chargehands and supervisors didn't even have to tell us when to get on... You couldn't really oppose the organisation of the work because it operated mechanically'

p.107

In as much as the customer is aware of anything that goes on behind the scenes in a hotel then they may well be aware of the way they are treated through remarks such as, 'It's not my job, see them over there' (pointing vaguely towards a porter, or no one in particular).

In all three hotel companies those kinds of decisions were made by the hotel's management on the directive of their seniors at head office. The terms of the job, as expressed in the rubrics of the job description, can become so inflexible merely for the sake of efficiency, centred around the desire to quantify and account for a Receptionist's working day. This is the aim of the policy makers, the men who make the decisions.

In all the hotels I visited the managers, above head of department level, were men. The influence of women on the work that they do is negligible. Yet in all these hotels the work in Reception was done by women. Where there were exceptions these will be shown to reinforce this position of women being relatively disadvantaged in terms of career opportunities and promotion to management positions.

There is more to this job, perhaps to any task, that can be fully laid down in a job specification. This is especially the case with Reception where the social framework of the work highlights the importance of subjectivity, and hence personal initiative, in the work of a Hotel Receptionist. This is referred to as tacit skills (Manwaring and Wood, 1985, p.171). The place of this in the labour process is described in the following way,



'the feel and discretion which form the basis for subjectivity in even non-skilled work are vital to efficient performance in all work situations.'

Manwaring and Wood, 1985, p.177

As Ms McGahan, Head Receptionist of the Swallow Carlisle, stated it would be possible for her to train someone in a few days to input data into the computer: but that it would take a great deal longer, depending on the persons nature, to develop them into a Hotel Receptionist; someone who had the requisite social skills (see also Cockburn, 1983, p.97 for a similar experience of the de-socialising nature of technology). Ms McGahan had been taught how to operate the computer system in 3 days but it had taken experience and luck in order to become a Head Receptionist.

It is apparent that technical change has affected this subjective element within the job of the Hotel Receptionist so squeezing out opportunities to make human contact beyond that of referring to people as room numbers. In an interview I conducted with Mr Mitchell, a lecturer at Oxford Polytechnic, he said that the computerisation of the manual tabular ledger and the filing system has resulted in the Receptionists having no, 'feel' for the job; they do not know how well business is, nor do they have the information at hand which will allow them to make on-the-spot decisions (see also Cockburn 1983, p.105). Matters which could be handled by them as Desk Clerks for example, "Is the hotel full tonight?" or, "Are there bedspaces?" are often now referred up the hierarchy in the organisation. (See Glenn and Feldberg, 1979, pp.71-72; Barker & Downing, 1985, pp.157-159; and Crompton & Reid, 1982, pp.175-176 for similar examples in Clerical work such as could occur in the Central Office of Consort Hotels). As was noted earlier (Chapter 6: Section 1) the flexibility was the rationale behind such changes, without training in the "subjective" aspects of the social role the net effect was to see decisions being deferred to someone with more authority.

It is obvious that a person can be trained to be a "Desk Clerk" within a week. Equally clear is the fact that the subjective features of the role are enormously complex and not easily taught. Even years of experience interviewing candidates has not provided management with any conclusive insights into this, and this feeling is shared by all the Personnel Managers of Hilton/Vista International Hotels. When Mr Malins talked about computerisation reducing costs and securing the longer term employment of the present Front Office staff he was highlighting the only consideration that can be put in to such an economic formula that is, the objective; aspect of the job: that which is tangible and can be seen to have a direct effect.

Things like a “smile” and “pleasantness” are disregarded as peripheral, irrespective of the value the customer could place on such social skills. If they can not be securely packaged and sold at a profit then they are not worth anything. On the other hand management know that they are worth a lot. Certainly they can be used as a marketing and sales tool simply by being behind the desk at Reception. This is apparent by the fact that there is a Receptionist on the front cover of the Swallow Hotel tariff. However intangible they are an integral part of profitable service. Most usually this subjective “feel” for the job is understood by management in terms of stereotyped female characteristics. The morality of this was the subject of a discussion between the Deputy Manager and the Head Receptionist of the Swallow Hotel in Seaburn as she relayed the conversation to me,

‘ He said, “Well what sort of person do you want?” And I said, “Well I want someone who’s capable of doing the job.” And he said, “Oh, we need somebody who’s attractive.” I said, “Well really we don’t,” I said, “She can be as ugly as sin for all I care as long as she’s efficient.”’

Kenny

Needless to say they got someone who was pretty, but also competent. Though it was a matter of setting the order of priority rather than setting up the agenda. There was a basis of agreement concerning efficiency and attractiveness. Chauvenism cuts both ways.

Furthermore, a feature of such tacit skill learning is that the person knows how their job fits into those of others in their section, department as well as in the wider hotel context (Manwaring and Wood, 1985, pp.172-174; Cockburn, 1983, p.113). How can that be measured, unless it is not meant to be? Again reference can be made to the use of the titles of *Hotel Receptionist* and *Front Desk Clerk* as was outlined earlier (Chapter 7). The use of one or the other has implications for what is expected of someone performing that task. Where the Front Desk Clerk is a member of the Front Office, they are being paid to be a clerk who administers the operation of that section of the department. They are not paid to be welcomers but a point of immediate and necessary reference for the customer. The Hotel Receptionist(s) performs those duties and more. Whilst for the consumer they are in a “social role” where the primary duties are as welcomers and receivers of the customer: to them, administrative duties are of secondary importance. They are not paid to be clerks. However in Hilton/Vista International Hotels they are.

This is because the administration and the social tasks have been separated by the appointment of a Guest Relations Manager. Though s/he is employed primarily to care for the customers who pay the highest hotel bedroom rates.

An awareness of the political nature of separating the technical from the social needs to be incorporated into an analysis of skill (Manwaring and Wood, 1985, p.175). This is especially so in the Hotel trade where the making of profit is derived from the satisfaction through service of people's individual needs. This of course is one of the central criticisms of Braverman's deskilling thesis. To ignore the impact which subjective features of the job have for the influence, and even the power, of employees is something common to Marxist writers. Even Burawoy, however useful the game thesis is, is guilty of this (Thompson, 1983, p.178).

The problem would seem to be that it only takes into account the objective features of work which are then scrutinised for marks of specialisation and fragmentation (Thompson, 1983, p.178; Hales, 1980, p.102). When the subjective features of the job and the role of the Hotel Receptionist (smiling, body language, attention to detail, and "service" itself) are incorporated then the analysis will be less deterministic (Thompson, 1983, p.178; Manwaring and Wood, 1985, p.180-181). This framework offers a useful corrective to the determinism of Braverman's objective structures and tendencies. However there is a danger in going too far, believing that herein lies the key to workers wresting back control of the workplace and with such power to re-defining notions of skill in the face of new technology (Manwaring and Wood, 1985, p.184). There are objective structures. It is not that Braverman is correct (by default) in the objective basis of his thesis. More important is the point made by Burawoy (1981):

'One cannot play a game and question the rules at the same time; consent to rules becomes consent to capitalist production.'

p.92

The informal practices that workers develop are a feature of their adaptation to their work environment (Burawoy, 1979, p.94). We have noted some of these previously in relation to the quality of personal service and the constraints that are put onto the staff. For example, the Head Receptionist at the Swallow in Seaburn tries to convey to the customer that if it was up to her she would stay talking with him/her all night and that it is only the paperwork that is getting in the way. What she is doing is smoothing over the transition between two types of work whilst at the same time degrading the personal service in relation to

the administrative tasks. She is consenting to management's rules, she is placing herself into a position of "voluntary servitude" (p.81).

Similarly when the Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel in London was willing the customers to get out of their rooms so that she could get on with her allotted duties she was exercising her choice of working within management's prescribed rules or using the fact that the customers were not out of their rooms as a reason for not having done her job on time. It is obvious that a departure list can only be printed when all the customers have left their rooms.

As Burawoy says it is this, 'parallel tendency toward the expansion of choices within those ever narrower limits.' (p.94) that Braverman did not see in his deterministic relationship between technology and "skill": 'It is the latter tendency that constitutes a basis of consent and allows the degradation of work to pursue its course without continuing crisis.' (p.94).

Other examples relate to the introduction of computers. That computers do not think like humans was something all could agree with, and were living with, when this research was carried out. For some it meant they felt they could never trust the computerised system. The Control Clerk at the Swallow Hotel in Carlisle, even though she depended on its number crunching ability to get her invoicing work done in one and a half days instead of five, did not either,

'I never trust the computer in here... I thought when this computer first came in it would be cleverer than this'

Control Clerk

With the introduction of the automated telephone switchboards many operators felt that their ability to understand what they were doing was lost. This lack of identification made the job more difficult. The Head Telephonist at the Swallow Hotel in London remarked about the old style switchboard with the plugs, leads and bulbs that, 'You could see yourself working'. However under the new system there was the capability for charging a customer for the call they had just made the moment the person put down the receiver. Whereas previously this had been done by the person who was dealing with the customer's request rather than by way of a software programme. This curtailment in involvement of the person in the whole process of connecting with the customer through the plug and lead system and then putting them through to the person they wanted to speak with and then billing the customer by hand for the telephone call makes

the telephonist's job delineable and more specific in terms of initiative and human involvement. The parallel for manufacturing is in the sphere of computer numerically controlled machinery with which the automated switchboard can be compared in nature (see Jones, 1982).

There is no choice with the system. Even to the point of not thinking. Human brain power is programmed out of the system, initiative in the job of the Hotel Receptionist is not a requirement.

'The till analysis just comes on the screen and you just have to put the figures in. The banking analysis does it all for you'

Anderson

Interestingly enough though sometimes the Receptionists have to resort to, 'a miracle'(Anderson) at the end of the financial day in order to overcome the mismatching of the system's account of the day's business and what they have actually done. What this means is that they feel powerless in the face of the unyielding nature of the machine's programme to deal with any problems that arise.

There is also another fundamental conflict, one in which the Receptionist is in the middle like a juggler between the "system" and the "customer". That is when the social nature of the job interferes with the task requirements. It is expressed in this way because that is how it is portrayed by the Hotel Receptionists with whom I talked. One clear example of what this meant was given by the Head Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel in Seaburn,

'Some days Jean spends 10 minutes on the 'phone to someone. Other days I want them on and off in 2 minutes depending on our pressure of business... I give the impression that I would love and stand and talk to you to you but I haven't got the time. There are times when I stand and I'm thinking, "I wish they'd go away I want to get on". We still have work to do and the work really does have to come into it. You can't say, "Oh I was talking to a guest so I didn't do that yesterday". It's still got to be done.'

Kenny

So the system has affected the working practices of the job through the organisation of the tasks and the importance of such duties in relation to the interaction between the Receptionist and the customer. The administration of the Front Office is more important than the service the Receptionist is able to give to the customer. This can reach the ludicrous point where the customer is perceived as an obstacle to the efficient operation of the Front Office. Such feeling was expressed by a Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel in London when she said,

'I wish they would get lost then I could pull off a departure list... I wish they would get out of their rooms'

Alphick

What she most wanted was an empty hotel and the customers coming in and out of the hotel in as orderly a manner as she was expected to do her work. She had, along with her colleagues in other hotels, incorporated the pattern of work imposed by the software programme into her own way of relating to the job and to the customers. She was, like those who used manual charts, wished customers to stop talking and thought the system "slow", becoming efficient in terms of the system. One that is man-made but not person-oriented.

## **2 Hierarchy and Status between Departments and Jobs**

### **2.1 Departmental profitability; Order is established?**

With reference to Table 21 one can ascertain that the major revenue earning area is Accommodation, which is split into Housekeeping and the Front Office. The latter can be in turn sub-divided into Reception, Switchboard, Advance Reservations, Cashiering. All of these sections are headed up by women. In this hotel the Front of House Manager is also responsible for Portering but the Switchboard is a separate department.

The sales revenue figure of over £3 million for 1985 represents a major contribution towards gross profit, whereas the Kitchen and Restaurant departments incur costs of more than 35% against sales for raw material costs, something which the Accommodation department does not. This reduces the contribution the Food

**Table 21 Financial Figures - Inter-departmental**

Department	Kitchen	Restaurant	Housekeeping	Reception	Bars
Head	M	M	F	F	M
Salary	12,212	11,347	10,263	8000	6812
Staff	19 M=18 F=1	7 M=7 F=0	54 M=11 F=43	12 M=2 F=10	10 M=8 F=2
Sales	1.2mill		3.2mill		0.3mill
% Sales	25.6		65.5		5.7
% G.P.	64.3		100		60.8

Source: Swallow Hotels.

& Beverage departments make to final net profit. At this stage the costs reduce the gross profit to 64%: this compares with 100% for the Accommodation departments, and in any case the sales mix, by major revenue departments, is 6% for Liquor, 26% for Food and 66% for Accommodation; the remainder is made up of Miscellaneous sales. Therefore one can appreciate that the revenue and profit earning potential for Accommodation far outweighs Food & Beverage combined.

Although it is not possible to be clear as to the eventual net profit figures attributable to each revenue earning department, because costs are not apportioned, it is generally considered that the net profit figures come out at about 30% for Accommodation and a much narrower margin for error of approximately 10% for Food. The smaller figure for Food reflects the effects of the vagaries of portion size and the level of wastage of raw materials in a Kitchen. It is therefore a much less certain net profit figure than that which accrues from the sale of rooms in the hotel. This makes the contribution that the accommodation department makes to the hotel's profitability important for two reasons; firstly, it is a quantifiable figure when the rooms are sold and secondly, when the rooms are sold there is no cost incurred before labour costs are taken into account.

It needs to be pointed out at this stage that the information is incomplete; certain sections are not included in Table 21 and some, such as the Banqueting, Coffee Shop and Room Service are included in the sales figure for the Food department. However the data in Table 21 does not include staffing levels for those sections and this will have a marked influence on the level of labour costs, hence the narrower net profit margin compared to the Accommodation departments.

## 1.2 Occupation prestige and workplace prejudice.

With reference to Table 21 and with the points raised in Section 1.1. it would seem unreasonable to have to accept that the most profitable sections, which are run by women, are not well paid. The comparison to those sections which are run by men that is, Food & Beverage departments is startling. There is not one female head of section in the Food & Beverage departments, and there is not one male head of section in the Accommodation departments, except Porterage (carrying cases is a "man's" job): the lines of gender division are rather classically drawn up.

As one can see the Head Receptionist/Reception Manager's salary is less than 2/3rds that of the Head Chef's despite being responsible for the administration of sales worth over £3 million and more than 250% greater than that generated within the Food department which includes the Restaurant, Coffee Shop and the Banqueting sections. It is not the profitability of the department or section that determines the level of the salary, rather it is based on the opinion of the Personnel Manager for Swallow Hotels that the "right girl" could be trained to be Head Receptionist within 18 months of her being recruited from college with a qualification in Business Management or a good course in Hotel Reception.

A Chef, on the other hand, is trained at college for several years and will pass through various levels of craft courses whereas the Receptionist need only take one craft skill course. Though both will have passed through the same City and Guild system of courses and examinations it is assumed that a Chef needs more training than a Receptionist: this is very much the basis upon which the hotel industry is based, that Female Receptionists are valued less than Male Chefs. It is this that Ms Nevett, the Reception Manager at the Swallow London hotel, believes is the reason why they are paid so poorly for what they do.

This system of apprenticeship is taken further: in the hotel itself there is a system of on-the-job apprenticeship coupled with restrictive practices. This is visible in Table 22 for the Kitchen. Such that a male will have to ascend 5 levels before he can become a Head Chef. Of all the staff in the kitchen only one was a female and the odds are against them even when they have the experience and the qualifications. This will be discussed later in this sub-section. This can be compared with Reception where there are only three levels. There could be a fourth, that of trainee, but all the Receptionists were considered to be Trained Receptionists, a point of some dispute amongst certain members of the staff.



**Table 22 Department Profile - Kitchen**

Job Title	F	M	F/T	P/T	Salary Range
Head Chef		1	1		12,212
Sous Chef		1	1		8500
2nd Chef		1	1		5460
Kitchen		1	1		7875
de Partie		2	2		5282/6110
Grill		1	1		5441
Snr Commis		1	1		3454
Commis Chef	1	2	3		3333/4754
Jnr Commis		2	2		3333/4633
Steward		2	2		4513
Porter		4	4		4513

Source: Swallow Hotels.

However the effect of splitting the Front Office functions off into separate sections has an influence on the way the hierarchy is constructed.

There is a militaristic feel to the pattern of staff organisation in the Kitchen which is intentional: the architect, Auguste Escoffier, fully intended to impose a regimented order to the way in which jobs were divided up in the Kitchen, the motivation being efficiency and economy of time. Hartmann (1982) argues that the development of hierarchical organisation and control is a consequence of the Patriarchal system which together has meant the the extension of the gender ordered division of labour (p.447): which has been strengthened through such restrictive practices as apprenticeships and on-the-job industrial experience, mitigating against the classic role of the woman as homemaker and child bearer/carer. That such male instituted customs are also there to ensure that any woman aspiring to have a career in the Hotel trade as a Chef has to make a choice which a man does not have to thus making them doubly penalised (p.459).

Task specialisation is a key feature of the kitchen's daily operation. Such terms as Chef de Brigade illustrate what Escoffier desired (for examples of this for the Restaurant see Mars and Nicod, 1984, pp.90-94 and 97). Ironically this term is used in the Reception section of the Swallow London hotel, rather than in the hotel's Kitchen, where the term is associated with the Shift Leader/Supervisor who acts as Deputy Head Receptionist.

Although it is not particularly well developed in any of the group hotels it can be seen in the departments within the London hotel. See Tables 23 and

**Table 23 Department Profile - Reception**

Job Title	F	M	F/T	P/T	Salary Range
Head	1		1		8000
Shift Ldr	3		3		5460/6500
Receptionists	6		6		3740/5040
Ngt. Audit		2	1		

Source: Swallow Hotels.

**Table 24 Department Profile - Housekeeping**

Job Title	F	M	F/T	P/T	Salary Range
Head	1		1		10,263
Senior	1		1		5597
Floor	4		4		3740/5040
Linen	1		1		4633
Chambermaid	20	1	20	1	3333/4633
Room Maid	15	1	16		3333/5040
Porter		8	8		3223/4513
Cleaner	1		1		4513
F&B		1	1		5750

Source: Swallow Hotels.

24. What seems to be common to the pattern of staff management in each of the sections is an inverted mushroom shape: within each of them there appears to be a number of low levels which have to be negotiated before someone can begin to have the opportunity to make or influence decisions. However there is an additional level on top of the Head Receptionist that of the Front of House Manager (male) who is responsible for the following sections: Advance Reservations, Reception, Portage; he is not responsible for the Switchboard. Reception is taken to include Cashiering as well, see Table 22.

In the Housekeeping and Bars sections promotion is directly upwards. Within the Restaurant/Dining Room and in the Kitchen there is task specialisation. It is more simplified in the Restaurant because there is usually only one other parallel path and that is as a Wine Waiter (Sommelier). The Head Wine Waiter is taken to be on a par with the Restaurant Manager though in the Swallow London there was no such specialisation. Task specialisation was most marked in the Kitchen.

Here there was a double ballooning effect. Not only were there a series of *comis chef* levels but there was a level of specialisation below that of *Sous chef* (2nd Head Chef), see Table 23. At this *Chef de Partie* level the worker is responsible for a particular section of the Kitchen: these include the Larder, Pastry, Fish, Vegetables and Grill. One or more of these jobs will be taken before moving upwards as a *Sous Chef*, or assistant second chef, and taking on the responsibility for cooking meat and making sauces. Here the work stops because the Executive Head Chef is paid to do nothing; the idea being if he is working then his Kitchen is being badly managed! Unlike the Head Receptionist/ Manager who is seen to work as well as do the allotted “managerial type” paperwork.

What this results in is an inbuilt prejudice against those who do not go through the ritual and restrictive practices of the Kitchen type arrangement, one which seems to be prejudiced against women in the first place. The one woman in the Kitchen of Swallow’s London hotel was more experienced as a *comis chef* than the man who was recruited and made a Senior *comis chef* over her: they both had the qualifications, and she had more experience, but he was a man and that made a difference, she thought, for the Head Chef.

It is little wonder that when men get to the position of Head Chef they seek to do all they can to maintain the social eclat of their position through derogatory remarks about the masculinity of the male Waiters who are seen as being effeminate because they are not Chefs and because they are seen to be servile to customers. By regarding the female Receptionists as objects of professional scorn and sexual abuse. The Chef holds on to the image of the father-figure, not only for the Kitchen, but also, for the whole hotel. He is the Patriarch with the power to define each person’s place within the workplace only because, as noted previously, he has found social favour with the paying customer, the very people he despises and yet, for that, all the more appreciated.

### **1.3 The Wages of Gender.**

With reference to the salary levels quoted in Table 21 for the Heads of Department and with the points raised in the previous chapter on the notion of “skill”, and its relationship with Patriarchy, one can begin to understand why it is that men are paid more than women: however the difficulty with trying to compare wage levels is that roles are markedly divided along lines of gender, to the extent that cross-analysis is, comparatively speaking, fruitless. In Swallow’s hotels for instance there was only one male Receptionist, and he left the London hotel to

continue his training as a management trainee in another hotel. In the same hotel there was only one female in the Kitchen and she left to join another hotel group. So that left the Kitchen and the Reception filled by men and women respectively.

However the gender division can be more subtle. For example, in the Liquor department of the London hotel the hierarchy was split between men and women, in as much as women were employed either as a Part-Time Waitress or a Pantry Maid whilst the men hold the positions of Barmen and Bar Supervisors. In a department of 10 staff, 1 of which is part-time (female), it is not an overstatement to say that women are discriminated against. It may be that they feel it is not a place they want to be seen serving men because of the association there is with prostitution and because of that it is more a job for a man in a man's social arena, (Spradley and Mann, 1975, p.32).

There is also another way of explaining the reason for wage differentials in the hotel industry, one to do with the physical construction of the hotel and the labelling of departments as being 'Front' or 'Back of House'. These terms are universal in the hotel industry; they are common jargon to describe the location and line of management authority, staff loyalty and responsibility. It is this which will be looked at next in relation to implications for staff-customer contact and staff-staff relations between departments.

#### 1.4 Inferiority; The Irony of Customer Contact.

When asked, as part of a survey amongst Swallow Hotels, how important contact with customers was during the course of a shift the Receptionists replied that it was the most time consuming activity, second only to the time spent inputting into the computer system. On the late shift 75% of them thought it was their most important duty. Taken overall the time spent with the customer is the greatest in terms of quantity, more important than administrative duties, with the exception of inputting customer charges.

It is continually emphasised in the textbooks that the Receptionist is important because of the impression that s/he gives the customers when they arrive and when they leave the hotel and that the administrative 'hub' of the hotel is the Reception Office. There are endless metaphors which can be used to describe the centrality of the Reception Office, and all linked to administration and making money. As is common to society generally the female Secretary is translated into a Social Hostess: and as a female she is presented as someone who is made-up to look

beautiful in the eyes of men, and coupled with the appeal of a mother, appears domesticated, organised and an object of sexual gratification.

It is also as if the fact that the Receptionist deals directly with the customer, like the waiter who serves the diner, is in some way contaminated; that they are engaging in some form of 'dirty work', something that makes them unclean in the eyes of the other staff, especially those whose work does not bring them into contact with the customer (Mars and Nicod, 1984, pp.40-41). This is also reflected in the manner in which the Front Office staff refer to the paying customer; references to people on coach tours as 'trippers' (as happened in the Swallow Durham hotel) is a derogatory remark for customers who are, albeit on a discounted rate, nevertheless adding to the profit of the hotel through volume. Furthermore being arbitrary about who one wants to serve: for example, young people rather than old people; British people rather than 'foreigners'; businessmen as opposed to businesswomen, is indicative of the high handedness which can result from being treated with contempt by other hotel staff.

This is only exacerbated in those hotels which do not have any inter-departmental dependence such as in the city hotels and where information can be obtained from a VDU screen anywhere in the hotel. This was not the case in the provincial hotels where; for example, the Restaurant Manager and the Head Chef would need to get the figure for the number of customers staying in the hotel from the Reception Office so that they could prepare accordingly. This of course put the Reception staff in a position of control because, for example, they were able to confuse the respective departments about numbers by changing the figure as they wished. They controlled the dissemination and accuracy of information; of course this annoyed the male Kitchen and Restaurant staff but that was the intention.

In spite of the need each department has for the other the Front Office staff were still looked down upon. It is ironic that the lowly status granted to Receptionists derives from their relations with the customers. This is especially so given the image of hospitality that Swallow Hotels is trying to convey on the front of its tariff (see Figure 1). It is this that marks off the hotel industry from any of the other "service" industries. Hospitality is the central tenet of the Hotel trade and yet within a hotel, within every hotel, the way it is practised comes under ridicule.

It is ironic that the less visible the job the more prestige is attached to it: to the extent that when arriving at the Reception office by the back door you find the most important marketing tool has been degraded to *only* "women's work", something that they can do in their sleep and for which they are merely tolerated rather than respected.

### 3 Recruiting for the Future: The “Professionalization” of Receptionists.

One of the problems faced by the Personnel Manager of Swallow Hotels is the supposed low career motivation and low perceived promotion opportunity to a level of management Head Receptionist. In a report he conducted of Hotel Reception in Swallow Hotels he concluded,

‘Most of our large hotels have no sense in the hierarchy. A Receptionist with three years experience is paid the same as a Receptionist newly appointed. We do not use a structure which can be seen to make sense such as - Shift Leader etc. . . On the occasions that we have a Head Receptionist vacancy, there are few takers and too often we have to go outside the Company.’

Smith, 1984, p.3

This view however is contradicted in an interesting way in an article in *Hospitality* which stated that Receptionists tend to prefer a career over the prospect of getting married (HCIMA, July 1979). The situation is by no means clear therefore though it seemed for the Personnel Manager of Swallow Hotels that it was. Perhaps more importantly is the stigma attached to working with the customers directly and the relative value placed on other jobs in a hotel, especially those occupied by men.

The Personnel Manager had already instigated a dual recruitment policy the year before I arrived to conduct my research. The aim was to employ women graduates from Business Management diploma courses (or similar) and train them to be Reception Managers and then Front of House Managers. This was anticipated to take less time than developing an 18 year old female from the position of Trainee Receptionist to Reception Manager. Another factor could be that through the construction of a career programme the anomalies of pay that Mr Smith referred to in his internal document could be got rid of. With distinct wage rates for jobs in Reception this could lead to an overall reduction in the cost of labour in that department (Edwards, 1979, p.164). This policy becomes a product of the employer using power to change the character of the internal labour market and affecting the nature of the labour process without opposition from the workforce in any form including that of trade union representation.

Perhaps it would be more honest to think of it as a ploy to market the job of Head Receptionist as something more than a glorified supervisor of daily letting clerks and cashiers - there again perhaps not? Yet the policy was intended to firmly establish the tradition of employing young girls from the local community as Trainee and Junior Receptionists in the often forlorn hope that they would use their supposed knowledge of the local tourist sights and would act as an on-the-site tourist information point. Unfortunately it was more often the case, especially in the London hotel where the majority of the Front Office staff came from out of the area, that the staff did not know their way around. Even when a Receptionist came from the town itself she had to admit that she did not know the "tourist" sights around Alnwick, Northumberland. Still the theory was a part of the dual recruiting policy; that some people would be employed to be trained as Receptionists and some would be trained to be Managers.

Edwards in his book *Contested Terrain* (1979) demarcates the labour market into three groups; secondary, subordinate primary and independent primary. His thesis rests on the premise that,

'segmentation arises not from market forces themselves but rather from the underlying uses of labour power.'

p.165

The secondary labour market consists of people employed without employment security or tenure, with low levels of job-specific training which means promotion or job rotation is inhibited and limited (pp.167 and 170). Examples of such workers would include those Receptionists permanently employed on a part-time basis to stand in as to relieve full-time staff when they are on holiday, days off or ill. The Senior Receptionist is an example of this within Swallow Hotels. As well as the ad hoc part-time employees and seasonal workers used in hotels as "service" workers, which include Receptionists. The "casual" nature of the employment contract means that,

'labour power comes closest to being treated simply as a commodity unfettered by any job structure, union, or other institutional constraints.'

p.167

Clearly this includes all Receptionists who are not classed as having the potential to become a "Reception Manager" in Swallow Hotels, which is very few since the introduction of graduate recruitment by the Personnel Manager: or, in Hilton/Vista International Hotels, of becoming "Key" personnel. Indicators of a job being located within this secondary group will, according to Edwards, include level of wages, job tenure, training/qualifications (pp.167-170). It has been noted previously that wages in Reception, especially for the Head of Department, are less than two-thirds of those for a Head Chef and in some instances the differential is greater. With the introduction of new technology and the consequential rationalisation programme with respect to jobs then tenure for Reception staff, no less in other departments, is negligible. As to the question of training and qualifications it has been pointed out that being able to use a company's specific computer systems is not a generally accepted qualification for working in another hotel company. Furthermore, to be able to use such a system in a 'couple of days' does not constitute training in any kind of skilled sense of the word. Another feature of this type of worker is that with little incentive to seek a career there is a high labour turnover rate. This is a feature of all hotels but in the Swallow Hotel in London it was 100% in 1984 and 1985. Hilton International Hotels consider an annual average labour turnover rate of 60% to be normal according to the Personnel Manager of the hotel in Kensington.

Labour classed as subordinate primary by Edwards would include those graduate recruits in Swallow Hotels and the "Key" personnel in Hilton International Hotels. These are included because they offer,

'job security, relatively stable employment, higher wages, and extensive linkages between successive jobs that the typical worker holds.'

p.170

This has already been clearly established for both types of workers including the structured policy of developing job ladders for particular types of workers which Edwards cites as one of the central criteria which distinguishes the secondary labour market from those in the primary market (p.172). However one criteria, that of unionization, does not apply to workers in the hotel industry especially in this country. Although the hotel industry in Britain is served by two general unions they do not have any influence on company policy. Again this has been detailed previously.



Those employees classed as independent primary labour are those which have all the characteristics of the subordinate primary market as well as possessing general, rather than firm-specific, skills. They may also have career ladders which include movements between firms. The training and qualifications of these employees will be likely to have professional status (p.174). Examples of such employees in the hotel industry will include the Head Receptionist and the Front Office Manager.

The split in paths for female Receptionists merely serves to exacerbate the position of women as workers. It is assumed that women will be attracted to the idea of becoming a manager simply because men are. As Downing (1980) states it is a myth to think that the woman who is being groomed for promotion is being considered on an equal footing with her male colleagues. What she is being promoted for is to put her "feminine" attributes on show, those which she has learnt are the features of a woman as laid down by men (pp.280-281). In spite of everything that the Hotel Receptionists in Swallow Hotels had to endure in the course of their working day they were still largely oblivious of the contempt in which they were held by those with the power to dictate their working conditions and the esteem that they were ascribed. To the question, *On what grounds do you think you secured your present job?*, the majority chose 'Training', 'Experience' and 'Personality'. "Personality" was given by 70% of the respondents as one of the reasons that *they* thought they had got their job, whilst Training and Experience were voted as contributory factors by 56% and 59% of the respondents respectively. The question allowed the respondent to tick more than one box where appropriate.

Only 3% answered that it was in part because of their *Sexual Attractiveness*. So four female Hotel Receptionists recognised themselves as being objects of sexuality in the opinion of the male employers. Even though in a later question 16% of the respondents felt that management in the hotel thought that for the customer the Receptionist was a *pretty face*.

This bias of females being employable as Receptionists but not as managers is highlighted by the Chief Executive of Consort Hotels. Who, when asked by me, why the majority of Receptionists were female answered that it was because of their sexual attractiveness. This ideological complexion is not unique to him. It could well be a part of the reason why, as Smith points out in his informal study, there are only two male Receptionists within Swallow Hotels. It could also be the case that the female Swallow Receptionists who gave "Personality" as the critical employment criterion are missing the point. For the company sexuality is an integral part of personality. On the other hand they may be choosing not

to recognise it as such a powerful force, opting for something that sounds more professionally credible/presentable that is, "Personality". Self-deceit is seen by most people at some stage as a necessary means of presentation of self. It is one of the ingredients for making social masks. As was noted in Chapter 7, the Hotel trade is all about drama and masks.

If, as it is assumed, the role of Reception Manager confers a professional status on to the job, what does that mean? Will the female Heads of Department feel that they will have the attendant status appropriate to that job as well as the support of female colleagues? It might be plausible to say that this will not occur and that the "new" styled Reception Manager will come to have more to do with male management than with their female colleagues in Reception (Glenn and Feldberg, 1979, pp.69 and 71).

There is both a hierarchy based on a division of labour and a process of differentiation being applied to the staff within a hotel. It is believed by Receptionists that they have a special relationship with the hotel's management and that this makes them more ready to identify with them than with the other department's staff. A General Assistant at the 110 bedroom Swallow Hotel in Carlisle thought that the Kitchen staff believed the Hotel Receptionists were, "very well in with the management.". She attributed this, "friendliness" to the fact that the manager's office area and the Hotel Reception department were adjacent.

In the smaller hotels within the Swallow Group, such as those in Alnwick and Chollerford, the same situation applied. The illustration of this was made by the Head Receptionist of the Swallow Hotel in Alnwick when she said,

'Managers don't ask Receptionists why they do what they do. I find it funny that there is someone asking us about our job because no one's done it before'

It would seem the link lies in the fact that the hotel's management wish to identify with the customers. This necessitates them having to go into the Reception office, in the course of which they adopt a friendly attitude with the staff. It is not that this does not happen with other staff in the other departments in a hotel, rather the frequency of visits to the Hotel Reception department suggests more identification with those employees. This impression can only be fostered when a male member of management goes out with a female Receptionist as happened, for example, in the Swallow Hotel in Carlisle.

It is interesting to find that in the survey of attitudes amongst the Hotel Receptionists in Swallow Hotels 64% of the respondents felt that staff in other departments considered them to be *Friendly* and only 23% thought that they projected a *Snooty* persona. Whilst the Receptionists were more inclined to think of themselves as *Easy going* and *Cooperative* in the eyes of staff from other departments than *Unhelpful* and *Very Formal*.

With respect to the Swallow Hotel in London there was little cause for the Receptionists to claim any sort of rapport with management. In this hotel the manager's offices were the furthest away of all the Swallow hotels I visited. The General Manager was prone to favouritism to the point of exclusiveness, especially amongst the administration and Advance Reservation clerks who were all female. On several occasions he would invite staff from the Advance Reservations department, situated opposite his office, to entertain people who could provide the hotel with business. As a part of his contract with Swallow Hotels he had a private room at one of the top London football clubs where he would entertain such people. The female hostesses would get a free meal on the condition they entertained his clients for him. That the female clerks did not enjoy football did not enter into it. It would also have been difficult for them to refuse since this was also the means by which they kept in favour with the General Manager, a necessary requirement if they needed a favour in the form of time off work in order to go to the doctor or the dentist. As one of them put it,

'If you work with him everyday he gets to know you. He doesn't know any of the Reception staff. But all the people in the office along here he gives them the opportunity'

Reservations Clerk

Perhaps his neglect stems from the time he boasted that, 'anyone could do the job of the Hotel Receptionist'. He found out after an hour, with three people behind him mending his mistakes, that the customers were awful people. This naivety was reflected in another flippant remark this time made by the Food & Beverage Manager at the Swallow Hotel in Alnwick when he said that, 'You can learn Reception in a day'(Bent).

Such was the power of the General Manager of the Swallow Hotel in London and the feeling of being left out of this personal reward system was an acute part of the life of the hotel. One of the Receptionists ventured to suggest that if she:

'went to see him in suspender belt and stockings and no knickers and asked,  
"Please Mr Gold can I have a freestay?" do you think he might?'

Hodgson

As employees of Swallow Hotels they are entitled to apply for a complimentary room for the night as a part of their contract. Obviously she did not think that being a Receptionist in the hotel would be sufficient merit in itself. The pattern of power and patronage was made clear when one of the clerks in the Advance Reservations department approached the General Manager lasciviously saying, 'Mr Gold, oh great one'. This received the response; 'Yes my darling you're in favour'(Gold).

Such partiality was also practiced by the Chief Executive of Consort Hotels expressed through chocolates and pats on the bottom. Interestingly his male employees did not receive such attention. His one qualification was that they were not to be given out on a regular basis, in case such acts of encouragement were taken for granted! This behaviour produced a great deal of jealousy amongst the male executives, as well as envy of the influence of some of the female clerks with the Chief Executive. However as Pope was their employer, and made this quite clear enough these were noticeably kept in check. Commenting on business behaviour Tannenbaum points out,

'Many of the interpersonal conflicts in the hierarchy derive from the fact that in the hierarchy persons work together but are rewarded and motivated differently'

Tannenbaum, 1974, p.4

The clearly established hierarchy that is uniform throughout Hilton International Hotels means that this informal discourse is minimised. The only member of management that the Front Office staff have to identify with is the Front Office Manager who is also an Assistant Hotel Manager. It also means that there is also little opportunity for the staff in that department to ameliorate such feelings of isolation and exploitation that they may feel by virtue of working in a department which is the point of entry for many staff in a hotel. Being a department with so many junior staff will ascribe a low status to it something which, as the next example will show, can be by-passed though at the cost of inter-departmental solidarity.

The Head Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel in Seaburn had never mixed with any of the other staff from other departments in all the hotels she had worked in.

'Wherever I've worked its always been Reception and Managment, and the rest of the staff. People do tend to class us as different from them...I've never met a Receptionist yet who eats with the rest of the staff. They go somewhere else to eat. And it is wrong in a way because they aren't any better than a Chef or a Barmaid'

Kenny

In this case it is not so much what she is thinking the other staff believe but more about what she thinks of herself through the eyes of her colleagues in the hotel. It tells us more about her attitude towards them than it does about the way staff in the hotel regard the Hotel Receptionists.

Promotion, and internal hierarchies are also important practices in the Receptionist's work. The women who are recruited straight from college may well come up against the resentment of their own female colleagues. Often these people see any hope of promotion to the position of Head Receptionist being curtailed by the fact that the Personnel Manager of the company recruits people with business qualifications. However this policy is not universal, and resentments are not either. The General Manager at the Swallow Hotel in London for example stated to me that, 'paper qualifications are less important than expereince'. He promptly recruited a female Receptionist who had not been on a college course to the position of Shift Leader ahead of qualified colleagues. As it happens the rancour which did ensue was water off a duck's back to the new Shift Leader, but it did not bode well for a friendly working atmosphere. It also points to the critical tensions that can be produced by internal job ladders. These tensions can be as important as the cohesiveness which Burawoy and others have expressed.

At the Swallow Hotel in Carlisle Ms Frith, the General Assistant, disliked the precocious attitude of the Trainee Reception Manager who had done a Higher National Diploma at a polytechnic. However when the Trainee Manager was away on holiday Ms Frith forced herself to admit she needed her,

'Come back Hazel all is forgiven. I didn't think I would hear myself say that.'

Frith

What annoyed the General Assistant was that this person was acting as if she was already the Reception Manager. The knowledge that the job would eventually be hers meant that she was already acting out the role in spite of the fact that she was still training. What underlay the aggression was the feeling that a person was leapfrogging everyone else. Ms Frith had left school at 16 with just 2 Ordinary Levels which had prevented her from going to college and train to be a Chef. She had joined Swallow Hotels at 17 after being on the YTS programme at the Swallow Hotel in Doncaster working in the Kitchen and the Restaurant. At nineteen, and having worked for Swallow Hotels for three years she was seeing a twenty year old female take advantage of a recruitment policy devised for the interests of the Personnel Manager of Swallow Hotels in which she was excluded. As Mr Smith says himself,

'We do not use a structure which can be seen to make sense such as - Shift Leader etc.'

1974, p.3

Instead of using the established "traditional" structure understood by all staff, he created a dual recruitment policy. Under this system, introduced by management, some of the recruits would be in the "fast stream" of promotion opportunities. Much to the chagrin of colleagues with appropriate experience though not as highly qualified. (See Glenn and Feldberg, 1979, pp.62-63; and Barker and Downing, 1985, p.160 for the case of Clerical workers who see such division as resulting in reduced promotion prospects for the majority and a dead end for those who climb up the hierarchy so quickly).

This personnel policy serves to do two things. In the first place female Reception Managers will be separated from the legacy of women as servants in the Hotel trade, by being trained for the "man's" job of managing. Though as soon as this happens the job will no longer be absolutely a male prerogative. Women have been Head Receptionists because it is seen as an extension of a "natural" woman's role; that of welcoming people into the hotel which becomes, whilst they are there, their home-from-home. They have not been regarded as the person who

can influence the Front of House policy because that is considered to be a man's job. Women are up front but the power resides with the man, as the manager.

There is another aspect to this dilemma. Hotel Receptionists may well consider it possible for a woman to do the job of management, but only as an idea external to their own experience and possibility. Here possibility and reality clash in the arena of chauvinism, this time that of women. In a survey of all the Receptionists in Swallow Hotels 97% of the respondents thought that a woman could do the job of a hotel manager, but only 8% saw Hotel Reception as a path to a career in hotel management, beyond that of Head Receptionist. At the time of my research with Swallow Hotels there was only 1 female General Manager out of 32 hotels in the group. There is a perceived difference in the way a man can have a career path and the way that a woman can. One of the Receptionists at the Swallow London hotel told me of a male student on her course who saw working in Front Office as a path to Hotel Management: and in fact one of the few male Receptionists in Swallow Hotels, who was working in the London hotel at the time, was a Trainee Manager who was transferred to take up a position at another of the group's hotels.

This policy will cause a problem in the mind of the women who are not destined to be managers. They may seek to maintain the rigid sexual demarcation between men and women within the workplace, ignoring the possibilities of challenging this artificial structure (see Glenn and Feldberg, 1979, pp.62-63). The men who are displaced may seek to devalue the role of Reception Manager and Front of House Manager to the bottom of the management hierarchy - if it remains there at all. It is this meaning of skill, as an occupational class, that will be looked at next.

#### **4 Occupational Status: A Male terrain.**

The idea of the hotel as a family is something that has a great appeal for many working in the hotel industry; it makes people feel comfortable and encourages them to be relaxed, both staff and customer alike. The staff are encouraged to make the customer feel that they are in a place that is home-from-home: hence the presence of a woman at the door welcoming them into the "home" (hotel). Hence on the front of the Swallow Hotel tariff (1985) it is the female Hotel Receptionist that is portrayed welcoming the customer into the hotel. It almost could not be any other way.

It is the familiar, comfortable and homely ethos that helps to soften the fact that in hotels the number one rule is to make as much money as possible. The

businessman can afford to forget that, for the time being, as he is served by the female Receptionist who is made available to him on entering the hotel. Yet the woman's place and use ends there. She is nothing more than a softener, a placid and superficial projection of an image, created by men for other men. This marketable aspect of the female is portrayed on the cover of the tariff. At first glance it would seem an everyday posture for a Receptionist but this has been taken to its extreme with the juxtaposition of the computer, the sherry decanter, polished surfaces and the uniform with a hint of male business formality framed by the "feminine" look. The image of the Receptionist becomes an advertisement for all that can be expected, it becomes a commodity itself: "Come to our hotels to buy our product and this is what will await you".

There is also another series of underlying assumptions. That men have business to do, and that it is not the concern, or for that matter the interest of women is a profound one. It is as if there is no alternative and that if there was it would not be preferred, the social tradition is comfortable, known and understood. So it is all the more interesting when one finds this situation directly contradicted. This happens when men are preferred as Hotel Receptionists to women and is an example of gender being used as the determining characteristic to distinguish the status of this job as one befitting a male rather than a female (Hughes, 1945, p.353). Where status refers to hierarchy and social position/rank which infers both rights and limitations on the beholder, in this case the man. The implication being that it is commonly accepted if not "natural" that the Receptionist will be female when the criteria of attractiveness, in the context of male notions of preference, are referred to. This will also be the primary mark when it comes to recruitment with that of efficiency being an auxiliary characteristic. Unless a male is being employed to do the job of a Receptionist and then the assumption will be that he is being employed because of some inbuilt factor that makes him more "efficient" than a female. The resentment that is caused by the confusion between females who are recruited to be Reception Managers and are seen as more on an equal level with male trainee managers and yet suffer for it amongst their female colleagues as we saw earlier.

This would at first sight seemingly contradict, rather than support, the preferred notion of the hotel as a home, but this is not so. On the contrary it merely serves to reinforce and to concentrate the centre of attention away from the hotel as a source of tradition, in its own right, and to direct attention towards the real source of influence, that of societal relations.

What needs to be appreciated is the type of home that is being used as the model of social power relations. It is the household which employed people as



servants and domestics and is one which under certain circumstances is the preferred one. The ability to dictate the framework of relations between men and women in a hotel resides with those who have the money which grants them such discretionary power, that is the self-styled guest or, more accurately the paying customer.

One can find such a preference expressed in the luxury hotels of London where crystal chandeliers, marble floors and velvet drapes are the backdrop for jewel bedecked customers parading their material acquisitions for all the world to see. For them it is their natural setting, natural to have their whims and caprices pampered to by liveried servants. For others it is a world apart segregated from the hum drum existence that constitutes the core of most peoples working days and pleasures (see Mars and Nicod, 1984, p.62).

It is in this setting that one finds a veritable flotilla of staff who are employed as the servants of the customers. Their dress accentuates the hierarchy of social status that is vital for the smooth running of such prestigious establishments, though only for those who can afford such opulence. The gender of the visible servants? - male - the presence of women is remarkable by their relative absence. Even behind the Reception desk, (if there is such a crude object for the customers to register at), the man is the Chef de Brigade and the Head of Department, and the female is the Desk Clerk who holds the pen for the unseeing customer. Though in the more modest city centre hotels the customer is not prepared to pay for male servants so the Front Office staff is more obviously female, (Mars and Nicod, 1984, pp.47-48).

The home that is the model for this type of hotel is the upper class and aristocratic home of the early part of this century and all during the era of domestic servanthood when people could afford to have such households filled with male and female servants. Where such people choose, as a part of their social station/position in life to put themselves forward as domestic servants, in part because there was no other employment considered, or available, that would be suitable to their skills. Also because that type of work had a social distinction about it: in as much as you were a servant there was also a pride to be able to say that. Moreover, there was the added pleasure in being able to say that you were a particular family's servant; the social cachet was potentially immense amongst the servant classes. It is this which forms part of the reason why people continue to put themselves in this position to this day, both in households and in the pleasure parks of the rich, that is hotels. The parallels are striking.

*In the households during the era of such social distinction, between Master and Servant, it was the man who was employed as the visible servant and the*

woman who was seen to be expendable as a part of the scenery. The man-servant was ignored as a social equal but the women were not considered to be in a position to be ignored. The Butler and the Footman, who were visible, were men, the Dairy and Scullery Maids, who were women, were not seen: men were physically upstairs, the women were behind or down the stairs - out of sight, out of mind? They used a separate staircase to move around the house so that they would be out of sight of the guests and the Master (as was portrayed in the television programme 'Upstairs, Downstairs'). Female domestics were considered to be beneath the value placed on the carpet that lined the hallways upstairs, though they were allowed to polish the brass, clean the fire out, wash down the front step, cook the meals (but not serve them, that was for the man of the household to do) and make the beds. Little has changed, either in the home or the hotel.

As we shall see the Patriarchy of the household is mirrored in the hotel. The appearance of the man is seen as more prestigious than that of a woman. Her appearance is reserved for servile duties rather than social duties. The association of the hotel with the drudgery of the home, the banal and the basic, does not endear her to the person who wants to be both home-from-home, and in a place as different from home as possible (Urry, 1986, pp.39-40). It is this which forms the basis of the system of control and regulation of female labour that is pervasive in the hotel industry. It underlies the difference in value that is placed on the same, as well as the different, jobs done by men and women.

The one male Receptionist that I met in the Swallow Hotel group was in the London hotel. He was on their Management Training Scheme devised by the Personnel Manager (Mr Smith), and whilst I was doing my fieldwork in the hotel he moved on to another hotel to take up the position of Trainee Manager. No other Receptionist whom I met was on such a scheme, and no other Receptionist moved into management during my research. There were over 170 Receptionists on Swallow Hotels payroll (1985), all were female bar two, and one of these then was on the Management Training Scheme. One of the Trainee Manager's colleagues at the London International hotel told me that, on her college course, only one student also considered Reception as a pathway into Hotel Management - he was the only male on her course.

The qualification that the Hotel Receptionists had taken, was the City and Guilds 709 Hotel Receptionist Course. The City and Guilds of London Institute is an educational body which produces practical based courses for a number of craft, professional and clerical/administrative jobs including those in the Hotel and Catering Industry for example Hotel Reception. This particular scheme, the

709 Certificate, is classed as a “Specific Vocational Preparation” scheme (City and Guilds, 1981, p.3). The aim of which is to,

‘provide an understanding of the knowledge relevant to the work of a junior hotel receptionist and the skills necessary for the successful provision of reception and allied front office services in hotels, *irrespective of their size and location*’

p.7

The major emphasis is on the technical skill of managing the duties of a Front Office cleric. The emphasis on social skills, initiative and selling techniques is marginal. Moreover, approximately 75% of the syllabus is devoted to the operation of an increasingly outmoded method of storing data, that of using charts as well as continuing to emphasise the manual tabular ledger as the means of calculating customer accounts and financial reports for the hotel. Also the associated clerical tasks do not have any place in the computerised Front Office where customers can check-in and check-out by themselves if they so wish.

Taking Swallow Hotels as an example, the Personnel Manager, Mr Smith, in his internal report on the state of Hotel Reception thought that the syllabus of the 709 Scheme was more than a decade out of date. He saw that there was an economic expedient to highlight the revenue earning potential of social skills and sales techniques. He says,

‘They [the Head Receptionists] believe that they are always short of trained staff. If this is the case and our wage costs are to be controlled, then we have to find ways of increasing *efficiency*.’

my emphasis, Smith, 1984, p.4

Within the City and Guilds course social skills account for only about 25% of the student’s activities whereas in the job profile for a Swallow Hotel Receptionist the “mix” is 30% selling and 30% social skills/customer hospitality and 40% clerical duties (computer administration and control).

The views of the Personnel Manager are not fully backed up by the results of the survey of attitudes amongst the Hotel Receptionists in Swallow Hotels. On the early shift the most time consuming activities were computer administration and customer hospitality. About two-fifths of the respondents chose working with

computers as the task they spent most time doing on the first shift. In descending order of consumption of time came customer contact, telephone reservations, clerical work, contact with other departments and finally staff training (see Table 25).

**Table 25 Receptionist tasks; Time spent per Shift**

Activity	Early Shift		Late Shift	
	Mode	%	Mode	%
Contact with other departments	4	27	4	24
Staff Training	6	53	6	51
Clerical work	3	29	3	31
Telephone Reservations	2	25	4	27
Customer Contact	1	33	1	54
Computer work	1	39	1	35

Notes: Numbers 1 to 6 were used to denote the amount of time spent on each activity during the course of the shift, 1=Most through to 6=Least.

Source: Survey of Swallow Hotel Receptionists.

Things were different on the late shift. Here more than 50% of the respondents to the survey considered customer contact to be the most important activity in terms of time spent. Working on the computer, although important, was considered to be far less important than on the early shift. Thereafter in descending order are clerical work, telephone reservations, contact with other departments and finally, once again, staff training was seen as the activity given the least priority.

Unlike Swallow Hotels, Hilton/Vista International hotels used more males on the Front Desk. In fact their Reception personnel divided equally between males and females. The company's policy is to use potential management personnel (Key Personnel) of both gender, as members of staff in all the departments under the "Cross-exposure Training" scheme. This is one of the components of the Hilton International Hotel Training Programme for use in the training and development of its personnel (Hilton International, 1982 b). The aim is to get a member of staff from one department to understand the operations of other departments either in the hotel they usually work at or another within HIH. Any request that is made on behalf of an employee by the hotel's Personnel and Training Manager and Hotel

Manager must include the benefit that will be derived from such an exercise which will be particularly pertinent if the employee is classed as a "key" employee and thus fitted to promotion to management grade within the corporation (pp.25-26).

These males saw themselves as management potential. Furthermore, the Front of House Manager, at the Kensington Hilton, was one of the hotel's Assistant Managers. He had been with HI for a number of years, and had thus ensured the indoctrination of the company's policy long before taking on the responsibility of a department. For example, he had a summary of the previous day's revenue and occupancy rates on his desk every day should the Deputy Manager ask for the figures.

However, the permanent members of the Front Office department employed specifically to work in that department were female and male. Though amongst the male staff it was understood there were more potential male management trainees. Whether they went on to such a scheme is less important than the fact that they perceived that path as an obvious opportunity for them, which was something the female clerks did not.

In the Advance Reservations section the terminals were staffed in the main by females. The more mobile staff of both genders were resented by the fixed staff because they would have to spend time training them to operate the equipment and then in a few weeks or months they would move on, once they understood the procedures, only to be replaced by new staff that would need to be trained in the use of the equipment. This was a source of frustration for the permanent staff, especially the Reservations Supervisor whose job it was to train staff.

In Consort Hotels the division along lines of gender were stark. All of the executives were male and all of the clerks/supervisors were female. All that a female clerical supervisor could hope for was more status as people were employed and she became a supervisor of a section. The executives did not have the power to make the policy, they were there to carry it out. It was the Chief Executive who had control and he is a man. One of the apparent differences between the female and male employees is that the former were grouped around an octagonal table and the latter either had their own desks or offices. The symbols of status assigned to men in positions of power are highly visible in such a small area as the main office of Consort Hotels.

It seems that a man projects "efficiency" and "potential" in a way that a woman does not. It seems also that it is this that is economically valued and socially required by the customer. The role and position of the man is seen in a totally different light by the customer - and so by colleagues and management

of the hotel. Though it is also the case that company managers, for example within Hilton International determine their own policies independent of customer approval. It is not the case that customer expectations determine the policies developed within the hierarchy of companies like Swallow and Consort. However this social basis to male power and the effect it has on the framework within which other workers must operate will now be looked at.

## **5 Control of the Labour Process: Danger - Men at Work!**

Already reference has been made to the distinctions between working as a Receptionist and as a Chef in the Kitchen. It is a part of the tradition of the Hotel Industry that the work of a Chef is seen as a professional trade; a craft skill. This is not the case with the work of the Reception Office where the work is considered to be monotonous and clerical. There is no creativity in the sense of that word with respect to the making of attractive dishes in the Kitchen. It is therefore a useful guide to measure the extent to which technology will be introduced into the hotel by comparing and contrasting these two different departments. One seemingly vulnerable to standardising, that is, Reception and the other, the Kitchen, apparently invincible to such change.

The social importance of men as say Receptionists, Chefs, Waiters is determined by criteria which are more emotional than rational. Yet the non-rational nature of the social discourse is bounded by a rational system that is geared towards the maximisation of profit. It seems absurd that emotion can be made into a commodity that can be sold for a profit, but that is just what happens. The demands of the customer are expressed in their spending power. They desire to have their requirements satisfied, they become dependent upon the context of the hotel to satisfy their own needs of dependency. In a hotel the person is central to the entire operation, in as much as their pleasure is the business of the hotel industry. This means that any member of staff is secondary and peripheral to the service of the customer, the workers are marginal to the process within which the customer's demands are serviced.

Yet there are certain specific social settings in the hotel where the staff are in control of the working through of the operation, for example in the Kitchen and the Restaurant. There, men erect and maintain the reality, and within this context the customer must wish to suspend personal control and imagination in order to fulfill their own expectations which are constructed as demands.

People have learnt to applaud the mastery of the Chef whose skills are practiced behind closed doors and out of sight. Yet because of that, and the fact that it is a man doing the cooking, the chef's artistry is raised to unprecedented heights in an age where technology and convenience produce is substituting the craft for a mechanistic operation. Yet this has not diminished the power of the Head Chef to the extent that they can dictate their own salary levels. For example, in The Drake, Chicago the Rooms Division Manager had no idea how much the Head Chef would earn because that was a matter for the General Manager and the Head Chef, but he estimated that it would be in excess of \$60,000 per annum.

The professional presentation of the Restaurant Manager is seen as a form of entertainment not usually associated with the serving of food. This is exactly the point. It is the unusual and exotic that is sought after. The mundane and the everyday is reserved for the domestic sphere where women do the cooking and the serving. The "experience" of eating is reserved for the hotel Restaurant, and any other Restaurant, where the occasion warrants the show and the entertainment.

So the Chef and the Restaurant Manager are applauded by a well rehearsed audience who have learnt what it is to associate good cooking with French cuisine and see the Chef as being a French man. And who consider it as the "in thing" to view the manager of the Dining Room as an Italian. Just by chance both are men: but it is not by chance (Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p.82). It is on purpose that it is a man who cooks the food and a man who serves the food. (Examples of situations in other industries where men occupy more powerful, better paid and higher status positions than women can be found in Cavendish, 1982; Cockburn, 1983; Garson, 1982; Pollert, 1981).

There is more cachet associated with a hotel Kitchen and Restaurant than would ever be dreamed of, or sought after in a home setting. The reality may not live up to expectations but that is of lesser importance than recognising the association is there where it is not for the home. As Imray (1983) states, 'men are the locus of cultural value'(p.12). It is not a simple dichotomy between what is termed "women's" and "men's" work as if it is as some social anthropologists would have us to believe a matter of 'nature' v. 'culture'; female v. male roles (p.13). Rather it is a contest between, 'what is valued and what is not valued and its relevance for gender asymmetry'(p.13). This is socially constructed and culture bound rather than universally appropriate. It is men who define value (p.26). Hence, where there is prestige there is a man and where the ordinary happens there can be found a woman (Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p.82). The idea of the hotel being 'home-from-home' rather falls down when men take control and reverse the situation to suit their perception of what is and is not of value.

The degradation of the Receptionist is complete when men take control and make a mockery of the job that she does. This means that women are held by the dominant group into conforming to the model of social living that the men structure (S. Ardener, 1975, p.xii). Though this does not necessarily mean that the totality of the women's social activities are bounded by the dominant models (E. Ardener, 1975, pp.6-8). That area of the women's life that is outside the control of the male is conceived of as a threat to men. Ardener terms this the men's "wild" zone where women are symbolically most female (p.14). This process of self-identification where men and women place each other with respect to the other is pertinent to the Hotel trade and to the role of the Hotel Receptionist. He/she is in a public place doing a job. A male Receptionist is conceived of as having a career programme that will lead him away from this arena and into that of management. The image of an English Female Receptionist is seen as something pleasurable and socially available; they are there to receive, they are not there to be a part of the means of control or to initiate anything, they are passively available, rather than receptive. Or as the social anthropologist would put it women are, 'rendered "inarticulate" by the male structure'(E. Ardener, 1975, p.22). This condition of being "muted" has nothing to do with linguistics but is a question of structured inhibitions which, 'blocks the power of actualization of the other, so that it has no "freedom of action".'(p.25). The "other" in this instance is the female Hotel Receptionist. The customer is in control of their social relationship, and the Receptionist is paid to care and to listen to the customer and do her administrative work correctly and on time - nothing more!

A Receptionist is a Sales tool s/he projects the glitzy image of the hotel, whilst at the same time condemning him/herself to be treated as cardboard cut-outs. The plastic smile, so often believed to be the sincerity of the Hotel Receptionist, personified. The cruel irony is that the glittery and chic image of working in the Hotel trade, that was so enthralling to many of the female Receptionists/Desk Clerks that were interviewed, is the means of their imprisonment. Without they themselves portraying that superficial image it is not there. We saw earlier in Chapter 7 how this "Front" is created, maintained and projected not only for the customers but for themselves. Without them acting it out it is an illusion, just as it was for the women and men who travelled to London seeking employment in Domestic Service in 18th century England (Hecht, 1956, p.13).

What this does tragically, is to leave the woman behind the Front Desk out of the limelight whilst the customers go and explore and experience the glitter of the hotel for themselves. It is not she who eats in the Restaurant or sleeps in the bedrooms. These are areas for those people who can afford to spend the



equivalent of the Receptionists weekly or fortnightly wages in one fell swoop. These are the people who get the privileges bestowed on them. The customers care for themselves, on the whole, and the Receptionist is expected to do likewise. What kind of effect does this have on the Receptionist who is a witness to all this conspicuous consumption? When a Cashier remarked that a customer had paid £100 for a bedroom her colleague said, 'It makes you sick'.

The projection of self to hide the insincerity of the reality, or at best to disguise it, is an intimate part of the creation of atmosphere in a hotel. The male plays the game according to self-styled rules and any woman who plays along merely decreases the role of women in the Reception and other "naturally" female departments; these include the Chambermaids, Cleaners as well as the Waitresses in the less stylish eating houses in the hotel for example, the Coffee Shop; (see Spradley & Mann, 1975, pp.31-35 for an illustration of this with respect to Cocktail Waitresses and Male Barmen for the manifestation of male power as control of resources, symbolising male domination of female labour through access to the means of production).

The women are the invisible workers, just like they were, and still are, in the households of those people who could, and can, afford domestic servants. They remain subordinate to the visible man. The ability to frame another person's job within external criteria is a powerful tool, since it defines the way in which relations between departments are organised and the manner in which they are conducted. It also shapes the social discourse between Hotel Receptionist and customer. The male customer (Master) and the male staff (Butler) as a matter of course hold this power granted to them by the very people they choose to laud it over. It is something over which the Receptionist, as a female, has little or no power to redefine along less personally threatening lines: some do not wish to do so, or consider it necessary to view their position as being dominated by men and their value systems. Such passivity does little to remove the female Hotel Receptionist out of the rut of self-degradation that she can be found in. She is not alone in this situation, but when men find themselves in such a situation they have the opportunity to free themselves through their professional status and career. The Head Receptionist of the Swallow hotel in Carlisle emphasised that she did not believe Hotel Reception was the basis of a future career in management. A change in title from "Head Receptionist" to "Reception Manager" was little more than a, 'front. And that I think was basically why it was done.' (McGahan). There is an inbuilt restriction for females in the hotel trade, they are assigned to departments which are then characterised as dead ends. They observe wryly that when the male management trainees spend time in the Front Office, their initial reaction

is, ' "I never thought Reception was anything like this". But they jolly well forget it when they stop the training period and become managers.' Women do not have the opportunity to, 'forget it so quickly'.

This feeling of despair in the face of structural inequalities is something the Shift Leader at the Swallow Hotel in Carlisle would find it hard to agree with. While the roles are unequal they are never totally limiting. There are always options, of sort! For example, the role can be expanded (Goffman, 1959, pp.155-156). This woman for example sees herself as being more than an employee there to serve the customer: she is also wife and mother to the male businessmen. She tells them off if they are late into the hotel, she makes sure that she always has a few words with them on their first night in the hotel, she has a drink with them (with management permission) and asks about their family. However it takes her on average 6 years before she can bring herself to call them by their first names even though some male customers request this a lot sooner. Apparently contradictory , it signifies the power of the customer in relation to the role. It is the customer by virtue of his/her spending power that can dictate when and how the formal barriers are broken down and how far informality will extend. With a male customer the female employee can be both the maternal influence as well as the object of sexual gratification. So here there is the juxtaposition of the economic and the social, two interdependent factors in the discourse between the female employee and the (male) customer.

The female Hotel Receptionist finds herself in a perpetually defensive position in relation to other workers in the hotel in a way that for example, the Kitchen staff and the Dining Room staff would never be put into. It is obvious that their jobs are considered to have a value and are worthwhile in a way that a Hotel Receptionists job could never be seen to be. This view is fought against by Hotel Receptionists. First, by recognising its existence and then by challenging such stereotypes as do exist with the facts. The Head Receptionists of the Swallow Hotels in Carlisle and Seaburn are continually faced with the assault of the male Kitchen staff who are continually seeking to bolster their own position in the hierarchy of the hotel.

The main defence that both Head Receptionists use is that of the importance of the quality of the "welcome" the customer receives when s/he comes into the hotel. Ms McGahan, the Head Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel in Carlisle had to use this justifiable rejoinder in the face of a young second Chef who was claiming to be the most important person in the hotel, generically speaking. As Ms McGahan went on to state the facts to him she said,

“If they don’t get a decent welcome when they come in then they don’t come in in the first place.” I think they feel it’s just handing out keys and they don’t stop to think there’s a way of doing it. You don’t just sling the key across the desk and say, “You can find your own room, I don’t care.” . . . I mean everybody views their job as important. Everybody feels, “If I weren’t here the place would come to a grinding halt.” I mean everybody feels like that. Me no less than anybody else.’

McGahan

This modest appraisal is a far cry from the Chef who thought he was undeniably the most important person in the hotel, and that it was his cooking which made the business profitable. Though Ms Kenny, the Head Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel in Seaburn, had had better experiences of Kitchen staff. They still projected the impression of indispensability but she knew the Chefs in that hotel valued what the Front Office did because,

‘. . . a lot of them say if it wasn’t for Reception we wouldn’t be busy. ‘Cos they know we take the bookings.’

Kenny

However the sets of impressions that go to make up a malicious stereotype are compounded by the fact that the job is a multi-task one which defies definition - Front Desk or Hotel Receptionist? Everyone seems to know what a Receptionist does, if only this is put down as someone who stands there, “Smiling and handing out room keys” (Shift Leader, Swallow - London). This only serves to weaken the position of the Hotel Receptionist, because through task specialisation the repetition of the job is more obvious: and it is then that the picture of the smiling female handing out keys all day long really sticks fast, no matter how partial a reflection of the true state of affairs it is.

## **6 Division of Space and Conflicting Notions of Skill.**

'The main avenues of mobility for clerical workers are either horizontal or downward'

Glenn and Feldberg, 1979, p.63

Hilton International has a policy of training 'key' personnel to be the management of the future. Swallow Hotels' plan is to remove the stigma of Hotel Reception being considered as a dead end job. This illustrates the development of an internal labour market in modern hotels. This applies to the way in which Hilton/Vista International treats its 'key' personnel and the value that is placed on them in relation to other staff. An annual labour turnover rate of 60%, or 5% per month, is considered acceptable for the majority of the staff in the Kensington Hilton. However, when I talked with the Personnel Director of Hilton International he told me that the annual labour turnover rate for 'key' personnel was 8% in 1986 and that was considered the norm for that group of the workforce.

The lower stratum of staff are relatively expendable in the eyes of the management of HI, whilst the mass of Hotel Receptionists are given less prominent attention when it comes to promotion. There is therefore a creation of core and secondary workers within an internal labour market (Gordon, 1972, pp.43-52). According to Rubery (1980) this will have the effect of increasing the prejudice of the core or 'key' personnel (Hilton/Vista International) such as, potential Reception Managers (Swallow Hotels) against the mass of staff so that they may feel that they have an elevated status which will ensure that those in the higher strata are unlikely to identify with those workers, largely women, who are concentrated in the low paid and menial occupations (p.248). The class interests of the workforce will become diffused as a result of the juxtaposition of Capital and Patriarchy (Beechey, 1977, p.55; and Littler, 1982, p.18).

'The political definition of skill, like class and gender, is always dynamic and relative. For every person or job that is defined as skilled, another must be defined as less skilled. It is not surprising that craft ideology has coexisted in most uneasy tension with socialist ideas.'

Cockburn, 1983, p.132

We have seen that women are disadvantaged in the recruitment policy, in the type of work that they are expected to be able to do 'best', and in the social value placed on the different types of jobs in the hotel. We have noted that

these are rooted in social relations and experienced antagonistically within the workplace. We have seen that working practices are dictated, in part, by the preference of the customer as to what should be seen, and what should not, and why. More important is the driving necessity to make a profit and if that means instigating a customer paying system which by-passes the Cashier through the use of pre-signed credit card vouchers or installing VDU's beside a lift so that the customer can check his/her bill then that is the reality of using technology. It is not a neutral entity, it serves the overarching need of the capitalist entrepreneur - profit. That reasons are given focusing on the time saved by the customer does not detract from the central motivation, that of economic efficiency. If entrepreneurial conscience dictates a superficial gloss of meeting supposed customer needs then that is expedient given the logic of capital. Profit is more important than the truth.

In addition, it is apparent that men dominate the working day in the hotel, that the rationale of gender and sexuality plays a crucial part in the arranging of the hierarchy of interplay between skill, power and received ideas of class differences.

Behind the derisive comments made repeatedly by the male members of a hotel staff to the female workers is a feeling that the kind of work that each group does is appropriate to their sexuality. Anyone crossing over the boundary is immediately under suspicion as not only undermining their own socially perceived construction of sexuality but is also emasculating the entire gender (Cockburn, 1983, pp.102, 104 and 108). In Consort Hotels the Chief Executive, Mr Pope, stated that the female clerks were sexist because they could not accept a man as a secretary. So they questioned, according to Mr Pope, the masculinity of the man. This can be seen, if true, of a case of the dominant group protecting its interests within the workplace. A situation that is often associated with male employment (Walby, 1986). As Ms Kenny, the Head Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel in Seaburn said about the fact that cooking in a hotel is done by a chef,

'It's cooking, but you find very few top female chefs.'

Kenny

The feeling is two-way but that is because while males control boundaries, women nevertheless defend the areas of work that they have been forced into (Cooley, 1980, p.43). This is an instance where ideology itself, framed by the reality of Patriarchy, constructs a real world of labour subordination along with

Capital (Walby, 1986, p.81). This hierarchy of Patriarchy divides the workforce vertically within and between departments (Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p.91).

In the case of technology in the office and the workplace however the effect on gender stereotyping is confusing (Cockburn, 1983, p.133). Here the idea of Patriarchy with hegemony is less than clear (Cockburn, 1983, p.94). Where men are associated with what is supposed to be a move towards reducing labour and variable costs with the introduction of a computer-based system, alongside the continued use of low paid female labour, there is a conflict in the minds of the male workforce. On the one hand they need to keep their jobs, whilst not having their job labelled as women's work. Status, as we have noted previously, is all important (Cockburn, 1983, p.102).

Though it is also possible that the introduction of computers into the hotel through the Reception department can be seen as a means of extending management control (Wilkinson, 1983, pp.21-22) to other departments of the hotel, including the "craft area" of the Kitchen so long the domain of the autocratic Chef and the bane of every Accountant. This "soft" route uses the males fear of "women's" work against them; for how can they object when it is being introduced into Reception and other female dominated Administration sections? With the precedent set technology is now being steadily introduced into the Kitchen for example, ovens that can cook food at 275 Centigrade and can hold food at a constant temperature of 150 Centigrade for up to 48 hours. As the Executive Head Chef at the Swallow Hotel in London went on to conclude the subjective skills of "feel" and "touch" become subordinate to the quantifiable element of time. He said,

'In the methods of cooking we have become technicians but we still cook, we are still chefs'

Head Chef

He does not seem to be overly concerned. However "skills" not used disappear. He admitted he used to be able to cut a steak to within 2/5ths of an ounce of its required raw weight. He can not do that now. With practice, of course, he could regain that skill, but he will never get the practice because he is a manager of staff and a person in a position of responsibility for the profitability of the hotel.

Hilton International Hotels also use a software program to test the marketability of each dish on the menu of each their restaurant's around the world. If the

sale of such a dish falls below a prescribed percentage of all dishes sold then it is removed from the menu. Therefore the authority of the Head Chef to decide which dishes will be produced from his Kitchen is supplanted by the empiricism of computerised evaluation. Chefs become cooks as their initiative and discretion is decreased. It is clearly then only a matter of time before the apprenticeship of a Chef is curtailed as technology empties the job of the Chef of all "skill" (Lee, 1982, pp.158-159). It has clearly happened in the minds of Personnel Managers with respect to Hotel Receptionists and Desk Clerks; it will happen for other craft based jobs (Cooley, 1980, pp.42-43).

Two points can be made from this. The first is that "skills" can be lost and re-learned. For example, when the Head Receptionist came back from being on holiday she had "forgotten" the procedures involved in filing away a piece of information, though she also "remembered" after thinking about it and then she could not forget. The second point is that new demands can be made on staff in positions of authority when technology is introduced. The Head Chef for example, in the Swallow hotel in London is a manager affected by the economic advantages of technology.

Male Receptionists do not have this to contend with. Being a man amongst women gives them an automatic social status. Though in the context of what is becoming increasingly an office-type job there lies a dilemma. The only technical/objective skill that is needed is the one most associated with a trade they have always been in a position to treat with contempt - typing! That typing is a skill is undeniable to the extent that for the General Manager of the Swallow Hotel in London it will be the only one that a person will need to secure a job as a trainee Receptionist (Barker and Downing, 1985, p.159). Though when it comes to inputting data into the computer systems of Swallow and Hilton International the hardest thing to learn and remember are the short hand codes which indicate for example, what kind of room, type of customer, and paying method is being used. Therefore typing, in terms of how many words per minute can a person accomplish, is not a factor when it comes to staff recruitment. Unless the intention is to use females as secretaries for the hotel's management?

And as typing, in the sense of sitting at a machine producing letters and so on, has been treated with contempt this notion of merely inputting words and letters may mean that it is not such a threat to self-constructed notions of masculinity as was the experience of the male workers in the printing industry which was the focus of the study made by Cockburn (1983). This does not deny the presence of ideological notions as to what is, and is not appropriate work for men to do. Or,

moreover, for them to dictate what women can and can not do (Cockburn, 1983, p.108).

The determining characteristic status trait of male gender can not operate in what was previously associated with women's work that is, office machinery which is clean, tidy sedentary work (Mars and Nicod, 1984, pp.47-49). It is noted in Chapter 9 what this means in reality for a VDU operator. This does not seem to diminish the stereotype image of the Receptionist. Male Chefs & Waiters, by the comments they have made to Receptionists which have been quoted previously, see their own work as macho, skilled, valuable and interesting. And by default, as well as by perception, that of the Receptionist as soft, unskilled, clean, and boring.

'The most obvious distinction is between skilled and unskilled work. The other main ones are: heavy/light, dangerous/less dangerous, dirty/clean, interesting/boring, mobile/immobile. The first of each of these pairs is held to be appropriate for men, or men are assumed to be better at it. The second is seen as appropriately 'female'. In the second case, nature is much more frequently invoked: women, 'by nature' are good at boring, fiddly and sedentary work. 'Men's work' does not seem to require the same rationalisation: presumably they have more power to say what they will and will not do.'

Game and Pringle, 1983, pp.28-29

Ironically, although the Chef's job is physically dirty and sweaty, it is not considered unclean in the way that the work of the Reception department is construed. It is tantamount to caste-type segregation.

'Maybe because we work in the front and the girls are always dressed smartly. . . They [the Kitchen staff] do tend to think that all Receptionists are a bit stuck up. . . a lot of the time I do think that when the staff are arranging a night out they do tend to forget about Reception, maybe because they do think we are that little bit better than them. . . The rest of the staff do not do manual jobs but it is in a sense, its manual labour. Where ours isn't. Ours is white collar work, I think that's what it is.'

Kenny



All of this creates spaces that are open and closed to some and not to others. Some have the power to be able to choose the degree of access they have; to decide where they want to be and to dictate where others must operate (Whyte, 1948, p.34). These “others” do not have such an opportunity to express initiative; they must receive their social instructions from others. Access and closure are two of the features of the divide between the Front and Back of House departments (Mars and Nicod, 1984, pp.53-57). This standardisation process alligned to changes in technology means a convergence of work place experience for different types of workers including the Reception and Kitchen staff. As Glenn and Feldberg (1979) point out,

‘Clericals have become similar to blue-collar workers, and unlike professionals, in that the skills they develop on the job rarely qualify them for better positions in new settings’

p.63

When it came to the issue of the nature of the job as a Hotel Receptionist only 4 people replied that they considered it to be that of an ‘Unskilled Clerk’, the majority preferring to continue to believe that theirs was a route to Hotel Management. The area where they could be said to have initiative is in Advance Reservations, and as was shown to be the case in Chapter 6 this is without foundation. With respect to the handling of customer complaints this was something that management were seen to be only too willing to delegate to them in the full knowledge that any recompense could only be made on the authority of the hotel’s management. In Hilton/Vista International the Desk Clerks have the authority to deduct up to \$10 off any customer’s bill if in their opinion the complaint is justifiable.

On the question of working with the computerised system for Reservations and Customer Billing 80% of the respondents thought that working with a computer made the job easier; allowed the Receptionist to serve the customer more effectively; and made the job more skilled. Moreover, 83% thought that working with a computer did not reduce the initiative required to do the job: and furthermore, 98% disagreed with the statement, *That with a computer you only need Hotel Receptionists to be a smiling host/hostess*. We have seen how all but one of these is not true in reality; as for the question of superficial qualities that will be refuted in Chapter 9.

However what is more important is that the answers that the Hotel Receptionists gave in the survey were contradicted by the reality of their working experiences, not only those observed by me but those that were related by the Receptionist themselves during the course of one-to-one interviews. Maybe the responses to the questions were simply wishful thinking on their part, or maybe well disguised fear, so well hidden that they had not begun to acknowledge the degrading position that they were in as employees on the front line of the Hotel trade?

The use of such terms presupposes that something happens which is visible and that the converse is also true, that things happen which are less obvious either by accident or, more usually in the Hotel trade, by intent. Mars and Nicod (1984) in their book, *The World of Waiters* emphasise the social discourse which is characteristic of the service relationship. Although the 'back region' is a necessary aspect of the construction of the reality of their role it does not play as integral a part as in the Reception department where there is a back office area specifically designed to allow the administrative duties to be carried out. This is quite literally where the 'dirty work' is done (Hughes, 1958, pp.49-53) and in the concealment of the work lies a part of the reason why their work is treated with contempt. Like the Waiter there is an implied shame associated with such a cover-up which, although imposed by the management supposedly on behalf of the feelings of the customer, leads to ignorance on their part as to what actually does go on behind the scenes.

'[The back region is] a place relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course.'

Goffman, 1959, p.97

What is interesting is that the concealment is not total because the division is not as complete as for a Waiter, the customer does have the opportunity, at least in Swallow Hotels, of seeing something of this back stage area. This serves to disillusion the customer and to devalue the work of the Receptionist; if you can see where the "magic" is created it ceases to be spectacular: that is how the Chef retains his hold on the imagination of the customer despite what he does being associated with everyday life (Mars and Nicod, 1984, pp.102-104).

For instance, in the Durham hotel the two parts of the department are separated by a one-way mirror panel which allows a clear view of the desk for the

clerks but an occluded one for the customer - they may well feel that they are being watched and possibly avoided? In the Swallow hotel in Carlisle the situation was different, here there was an semi-restricted view into the back area through an open doorway which allowed both staff and customer to honestly see each other, though the staff could hide from the customer, and did, if they so chose. This also prevented the customers from seeing the chaos and the mess that was a part of the daily life of the staff. As the Head Receptionist put it it looks, 'like a bomb has exploded in here'(McGahan).

In the London hotel there was a solid screen separating the 'back' from the 'front'. This had been ceiling height but had been cut down on the orders of the male management so that, according to one Receptionist, 'the staff could see any customers standing at the desk'. The reality was the reverse, 'no one could see what we were doing and the Receptionists were hiding behind it to have a smoke' (Wright) or a cup of coffee or putting their tired feet up for a few minutes: with the lower screen their activities were more visible unless they hid behind the wall to recuperate from, for example, a particularly obnoxious customer.

In the Alnwick hotel there was no such division so the staff were always on show much to their annoyance, because they were then forced to stand all during their 8 hour shift. Unlike the supposed popular portrayal of Receptionists sitting down handing out keys they are expected in the rubrics of their (informal) job descriptions to remain standing at all times - to be ready and waiting! As the Head Receptionist of the Swallow hotel in Chollerford complained to me, 'you're on show all the time'.

An interesting contrast is with the policy of Hilton/Vista International Hotels where there is a solid wall and door between the Front Desk and the back office area. It is here that telephone calls are taken by Advance Reservations and the associated paper work so necessary in the age of the computer. The insistence of the Front Office Manager at the Kensington Hilton that the connecting door should remain shut at all times indicates the necessity on the part of HI management to maintain a clear and decisive demarcation between the clean and efficient image of the Front Desk area whilst allowing, through necessity, that the back office area remains as 'dirty' as the work justifies or the staff are prepared to tolerate.

There is a consensus that administrative jobs (clerical and secretarial) are best done out of sight: this is so in the hotel industry; the wheels of the hotel's operation are as invisible as possible. It makes it look less like an office and a business, and fits in with the idea that a hotel can be something more friendly than that, that it can be a home-from-home - with a lot of imagination!

Yet this is to a large degree a false way of conceiving of the work of a Receptionist. A secretary in an office also plays the part of hostess (as well as nurse maid to the 'Boss'). She is the gatekeeper who dictates the access rights of all those who come into the office because she knows the mind of the 'Boss': it is she who links man to man in the office; she is the mediator, the human contact. She becomes useful to men because of the supposed "natural" role that a woman has, but is not necessarily respected for because it is taken for granted rather than appreciated. Her value is as a facilitator, rather than as a person.

Whereas in a hotel's Reception area all that is important is that the customer is welcomed correctly, received by a social hostess who makes herself available to the extent that all the other duties are taken as secondary, though time must still be made for them at some point of the working day or else it is literally never ending. In the Kensington Hilton there was a Guest Relations Manager (Female Assistant Manager) who was responsible for welcoming the VIP's into the hotel: further divorcing the social aspect of the jobs from the administrative tasks. And in so doing reducing even further the incidence of customer awareness about the extent of the work of the Hotel Receptionist/Desk Clerk as it becomes more of a back room job.

One side of the job of the Hotel Receptionist is seen because men want it to be seen, and the other is not because that is what men have decided. It is even misleading to talk in terms of sides as if there was an equality about them, the administrative work takes up the most time according to the Swallow Hotel Receptionists in the survey that was conducted throughout the group of hotels (see Table 25). Although they put customer contact as equally important, it was acknowledged that one could spend all one's time with customers and still have to do the paperwork. Yet the social work is classed as primary and so squeezes out the clerical and secretarial duties. They are caught between competing uses of their allotted time. The Front and Back jobs collide in the mind of the Receptionist and they are helpless to change this situation.

## **7 Worlds Apart? - The Case for Proletarianization.**

There are a number of paradoxes in the above treatment of prescribed gender role stereotyping. The first, is that clerical work is associated with women even though it was earlier a male occupation (Lockwood, 1958, p.91) and that working with paper is attributed to work of an intellectual nature (Cockburn, 1983, p.108). So here there is a contradiction, that of women being associated with an area of

work once a male domain - white collar work and intellectual. Now it is conceived of as "women's work" and blue-collar work. Walby (1986) attributes this and the increase in the numbers of women employed as clerks to changes in the structure of Capital. These are the need to administer the increasingly larger hierarchical organisations, the separation out of clerical duties from the mass of manual tasks, and finally the growth in service industries which has required a greater proportion of mental to manual labour than traditional manufacturing industry had needed (p.144).

The **second** paradox is that although the craft-type job in the Hotel trade such as, being a Chef is considered to be a profession it does not make it a skilled manual job of the type normally associated with occupations such as those in the printing or engineering industries or the ship yards. In fact it can be said that working as a Chef in the Hotel trade, along with professions such as Nursing, Airline Stewarding, Hairdressing, has been seen as a job for men with suspect constructions of masculinity (Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p.82). So it may be more to do with the fear of emasculation that make men in the Hotel trade make derisory remarks about the productivity of female Receptionists/Desk Clerks (see Willis, 1979 p.196). The contradiction comes about when the Receptionist is male. Here though the other male staff often see his working in that department as instrumental and temporary.

The **third** is the effect the introduction of technology has had on average and specific levels of skill in the Hotel trade. Jones (1982) warns against the appropriateness of such homogeneity theses (as proposed by for example, the Frankfurt School) for the case of numerically controlled machinery. Which, as has been pointed out previously, has as its parallel the instance of computer based Telephone systems in the Hotel trade. One of the central theses of this school of thought is that work in this stage of Capitalism is becoming increasingly one-dimensional in nature and consequently more alienating through task fragmentation (Marcuse, 1964, p.1).

It can be seen in the Hotel trade that with the introduction of technology into the administration based departments that skill requirements are being reduced to the lowest common denominator which will polarise them from the skilled workers in the Restaurant and Kitchen. Though if technology is applied in these areas, (further than the tasks of stock controlling, point-of-sale terminals, temperature monitoring and methods of preserving food through chilling and freezing) to the point where the "Chef" is doing no more than garnishing and putting the finishing touches on to a dish then it can be seen that technology has gone further than doing the repetitive jobs more efficiently and has eroded the skill content of the job

by taking away the acquired years of knowledge and experience of the artist in the hotel. Meal plans have been made up using a computer which has had the effect of reducing the error between budget and operational performance from within 10% to 20% of budget down to 1-2%. The Sunday Times (14.2.88) This process will produce, as it has done in the printing industry, 'a cluster of semi-skilled, semi-responsible linked occupations' (Cockburn, 1983, p.119).

It is tempting perhaps to suggest that there is a conspiracy on the part of management in the Hotel trade to exploit the lack of solidarity amongst the staff so as to drive a wedge between the manual and the mental labour, using the sexual division of labour as a means of securing the support of the male staff. However it is giving such people too much credit to suppose that there was this much forethought. The reaction of management to the impact of new technology on the job of the Hotel Receptionist shows that they had either not wanted to consider the limitations of the software programmes or were too preoccupied with the advantages of control to be concerned with the effect the changes in work organisation would have on staff morale and confidence in the system. Mr Inniss, the Rooms Division Manager at The Drake, Chicago (Vista Hotel) said that the system slowed down the work of the Front Desk clerks. He sees them being more concerned with the response time for transmitting information than with the time the next busload of customers is due to arrive at the hotel. This for him is dysfunctional though for the Control Office this is of little significance. The only advantage to them in their work came through the facility to deal with group reservations and billing as one total bill rather than having to organise separate bills which were then collated.

Likewise with the management at the Swallow Hotel in Durham there the Deputy Manager felt that the modifications that were still being made were making the staff increasingly distrustful of the system. As he said it was, 'put in with the minimum of staff involvement and information'(Stephenson). As the Head Receptionist said, 'They don't tell us if there are any new options in the computer. And when you tell them [you know there is a new option] they say, "Oh, didn't you know?" They expect it to get round by word of mouth'(Anderson).

What is more likely is that in the continued attempts to reduce production costs, of which labour is the greatest proportion, measures have been brought in, under the disguise of job enrichment and efficiency, which have resulted in tighter management control. Though how far this is able to be achieved where human volition is concerned is questionable (Jones, 1982, p.184). The link between Capital and Patriarchy has been instrumental, rather than conspiratorial, for

management in the Hotel trade in the drive for increased profits at the expense of staff morale and customer service (Wilkinson, 1983, pp.20-22).

In which case why do the workers in the Hotel trade remain solidly individual in their workplace politics? Because they do not see any common bond, they are too busy fighting their own corner of the Hotel to see the common threat to their employability, let alone what skill content they still have left in an age of creeping automation (see Cockburn, 1983, pp.113-115 and 129). The fear is that they will descend, 'to the common *man*' let alone to what they see as only "women's work!" (Cockburn 1983, p.118). What separates the Chefs from the Receptionists, the "men" from the "women" is technology. The Executive Head Chef at the Swallow Hotel in London inferred this when he said,

'Their efficiency can be far more paralleled to the efficiency of them machines than us.'

He later admitted that technology, as it was being applied to the cooking of food and its storage, was turning them from a Chef into a Cook. Something anyone can learn more quickly than the years of training and apprenticeship that it takes to be a Chef. In pretending that the differentials would continue to be in place simply because they always had been was neglecting the motivation of using technology in the area of craft skill as well as in other areas of hotel work including administration. The drive to reduce costs in order to increase profit margins is of primary concern. Especially in the Food operation where wastage is one of the major factors contributing towards small margins of profit. Capital will apply cost cutting measures in any sphere regardless of custom and practice especially if there is no trade union presence to mitigate against it. No such manifestation of solidarity will happen until all employees identify with each other in the face of job losses and reduction of status as a direct result of technology. As one Shift Leader at the Swallow Hotel in London put it,

'The departments don't talk to each other'

Doherty

And if they don't during the course of the working day then there is little hope that they will come together to oppose the continual reduction in staff levels and skill requirements.

Glenn and Feldberg (1979) identify a shift in the objective conditions of clerical work to which they ascribe the term Proletarianisation. Although their definition includes attributes which constitute consumption it also takes into account access to the means of production. It is this relationship to the means of production and to what extent this grants the owner control over the workplace and social lives of others which constitutes a description of class which is more appropriate to the construction of Capital as a means of exploitation of waged labour (Cockburn, 1983, pp.141-142; and Walby, 1986, p.47). Glenn and Feldberg (1979) argue that clerical work has undergone this process of change with respect to its relationship to Capital and that it is,

'... organised around manual rather than mental activities, as tasks become externally structured and controlled, and as relationships become depersonalised'

p.52

While these objective forces are under way, still, or so it seems, people subjectively create compartments and divisions for themselves. That is life, both in the Hotel Industry and generally.



## Chapter 9

### Sex and Sexuality at Work

#### Introduction

An aspect of the research was to document the occurrences of sexual harassment in terms of past experiences and present incidents. The reason for doing this was to highlight the way in which females in the Hotel trade are subject to male power within a space which as the male they control. The survey indicated the general occurrence of sexual harassment whilst the in-depth interviews brought these into the open illustrating what the statistic means for the Receptionist at work.

This chapter will consider some of the ways in which men exercise power over women in the Hotel trade. Power which is used by men when they feel their privileges and status are threatened as was shown to be the case in Cockburn's (1983) research into the printing industry cited in Chapter 8. And also when females are in positions of subservience in relation to men as is the reality of the labour process in the Hotel trade.

In order to impose a structure on the multiplicity of examples of sexual politics that came to light during the course of the research use has been made of the categories found in Hearn and Parkin's (1987) book entitled, *'Sex' at 'Work'*. In this book the authors link sexuality with political power and not only in the extraordinary sexism of rape, pornography, violence in heterosexual relationships (pp.58-59).

#### 1 'The Visibility of Sexuality: Visible Sexuality'

One of the major challenges in trying to research into sexuality and harassment against the staff of the three hotel companies was one of communication that is, what each understood by the term sexual harassment. It is at once a personal issue as well as one of structural power relations since it is an intrinsic aspect of Patriarchy. As Walby (1986) states,

'Patriarchy [is] a system of interrelated social structures through which men exploit women'

p.51

In the Hotel industry the possibilities for female sexual harassment by men are organised through the demarcation of jobs by gender. So that with Hotel Receptionists who are on the whole female this issue of the nature of the discourse with, in particular, the male customer is to do with sex and sexual relations. The form that such a situation can take within which the sexuality of the female worker and the male customer or member of staff/management is tested can range from fantasy through to serious assault and rape. What is obvious is that only the apparent aspects of the contest of sexuality are most easily talked about, if at all. The less visible forms of sexuality such as day dreams and fantasies are only realisable through words and action, unless the female perceives such infringements of her personal state. This allows for such statements as the following by the Head Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel in Durham,

'I've never heard of anyone being exploited'

Anderson, Head Receptionist (Swallow - Durham)

However, as Hearn and Parkin (1987) point out,

'Sexuality is always political; it entails action and activity with power. This is visible most obviously in the overlap with violence - in harassment, assault, rape, pornography and so on, but also throughout the 'ordinary', conduct of inter-person, inter-body relations - body politics'

pp.58-59

In a survey of Swallow Hotel Receptionists 29% of those who answered the question stated that they had personally experienced sexual harassment whilst working in hotels. That means that 30 Swallow Hotel Receptionists had been sexually harassed by guests, the hotel's management and by other members of the hotel staff, in that order of likelihood, according to the respondents.

This percentage figure would rank amongst the highest recorded in the surveys cited in the booklet, *Sexual Harassment at Work*, published by the National

Council for Civil Liberties. The authors Sedley and Benn (1982) cite incidents of Sexual Harassment at Work. They quote the results of several research studies from the USA. In one of these conducted by the Working Women's United Institute 17% of the 115 women respondents said that they had experienced sexual harassment. Of these the vast majority ignored it whilst those who did complain informally were penalised by superiors. Those who did not complain believed that nothing would be done or that they would be ridiculed. The action taken by superiors to the complaints of the women bears this suspicion out (p.10).

Larger studies cited by Sedley and Benn reveal that in some instances all 481 working women interviewed had suffered some form of sexual harassment. And in a survey conducted by the US Merit Systems Protections Board on 23,000 men and women 25% of all the respondents said that they had been sexually harassed and for some this had meant rape and serious assault. The vast majority of the women saw sexual innuendo as a form of sexual harassment whilst less than half the men thought this was so (p.10).

What of the 70% who replied in the Swallow Hotel Receptionist survey that they had not experienced unwanted sexual attention? It could be that as Sedley and Benn (1982, p.9) say, they do not want to stand up and challenge what is considered 'normal' behaviour for a man to do to a woman (see Collins and Blodgett, 1981, pp.78-79). This came up repeatedly during the fieldwork,

**'Mason:** Do you think there's something about hotels which makes sexual harassment more likely to occur?

**Penney:** When you get young people working together and living together, I think it's a pretty fair basis to build a relationship or relationships to develop. But I don't think you'll get sexual harassment'

Dialogue (Swallow - Durham)

In an interview with one of the Shift Leaders at the Swallow Hotel in Durham I was faced with the problem of understanding what is meant by harassment and what could be termed "normal" male sexist behaviour. The female seemed to think it was a possibility although it had not happened yet, 'No, not yet'(Nicholls). She went on to say that she would hope that it would not be something that she would have to endure, 'Hope not'. This of course reinforces Wise and Stanley's point. All women are aware of the possibility of harassment. This woman

was clearly aware of what it must be like to be harassed through other people's experiences because she was so emphatic in being able to say that she had not experienced sexual harassment, 'No, I haven't no, no'. However she makes no direct link between this and the clear fact that her sexuality is a major reason why she has been employed in Reception. She was certain that she had not encountered harassment up until then, 'No, not yet'(Nicholls). Yet it was clear from my observations that dealing with harassment was a part of her job everyday for example, male customers making sexual innuendo and propositions. As Wise and Stanley (1984) point out it is the extraordinary that stands out and it is the everyday experiences of male sexism that are more difficult to isolate and identify especially if this is amongst so familiar a group of people as male customers (pp.1-2).

### 1.1 'Dress and Appearance'

One of the clearest ways in which men define the way in which females are to present themselves sexually in the Hotel industry is through the clothes and the uniform that they are to wear. Whether these be written or informal rules of gender demarcation it is the case that it is men either in the form of hierarchical superiors or authors, and female writers, of textbooks on the subject that hold females and males to patterns of presentation of the sexual self in the Hotel industry.

One day in early January when there was snow on the ground outside Sue, the secretary to the Chief Executive (Mr Pope), came to work wearing boots even though she knew that her boss did not like the females wearing trousers or boots to work. She agreed with me that it was a case of sexual demarcation and that if he was questioned on it he would not have any justification for his directive, though he would not necessarily think he would need one. The male executives on the other hand wear trousers in the office at all times! Moreover the Chairman of Consort Hotels was seen more than once walking around in his stocking feet, the men make the rules and they decide when to stick to them. It is the women that are on show, as Pope put it to the secretary to the Purchasing Manager, implying that the men have a more important function to perform than being the Consort "models".

Within Swallow Hotels there is a multiplicity of uniform styles, colours and materials. The predominant colour and fabric is blue polyester, sometimes with a wool jacket. Though in the Swallow Hotel at Chollerford they have grey tartan skirts. Whilst at the Swallow Hotel in London the uniform is orange skirts and

jackets. Compare this to the front cover of the Swallow Hotels' tariff where the Receptionist wears a white wing collar shirt, something that none of the Receptionists I met wore. In Hilton International the colours are blue and grey, as jackets and trousers/skirts respectively. It resembles the uniformity of colour in the Kitchen where all the staff wear a white cotton jacket and blue check trousers, the universal uniform for the Chef/Kitchen worker.

This notion of how a female employee should look, at least in the Hotel trade, is made abundantly clear in the textbooks on the Hotel Receptionist (Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p.82-83). In them, although there is an attempt to appear non-specific, references to stockings, make-up, poise and deportment without placing them in a particular gender context betray the fact that a Hotel Receptionist is still thought of as female,

'The receptionist need not be a fashion model, in fact this might be discouraged, but she should be a well-groomed person presenting a neat appearance to the customer. Her hair should be well cared for and her make-up unobtrusive while her uniform should be clean and well pressed. An important facet where the receptionist is concerned, as she is helping the guest to complete a registration form and handing out key cards, is that she is well manicured. . . Above all the dress selected for reception staff should not be startling as this may sometimes cause offence to customers. . . a large number of bracelets will be most impractical if using a touch-sensitive keyboard on a computer terminal. Needless to say, tights will be required to be worn in reception and usually stipulated colours will be laid down in managerial policy. They should, of course, not be laddered'

Braham, 1985, pp.24 & 29

Such directions are also to be found in the Staff Manuals of hotel companies such as Swallow Hotels and Hilton International Hotels. On the cover of the Swallow Hotels' tariff the female Receptionist has her shoulder length hair in ringlets, she is wearing a wedding ring, make-up and a smile which displays her white teeth. With her wing collar shirt and puffed sleeves and her hand on the computer terminal she is both feminine, modern and efficient (see Figure 1). Presumably what every male businessman desires in a Front Desk clerk. Consort Hotels policy, like so many of its rules, is an example of an informal policy which acted as strongly as any written policy because of the power of the male Chief Executive.

FIGURE 1.



Moreover that these attributes are laid down as important in the presentation of the employee at the Front Desk is indicative of the fact that the writers are in agreement with the view of the Chief Executive of Consort Hotels that the best person to do the job is that which the customer wants to see which is a female (see Braham, 1985, p.25 for a supposed, 'tongue-in-cheek'! memorandum that he quotes to support his views on the selection and training of Hotel Reception staff).

The uniform that women wear in hotels is designed by men to reflect what they know other men will want to see in the woman that is serving them: so that the female Desk Clerk will wear a jacket and skirt which could bear a resemblance to the suit the man standing before her is wearing, or as the cocktail lounge hostess/waitress she wears a brightly coloured long dress with a slit up the side from the floor to the waist. Both of these examples were to be seen in the Vista International Pittsburgh and both reflected what the man was supposed to want to see in the woman standing before him - the efficient and the exotic - the businessman's dream?

Such arrogance on the part of men can be seen in such things as the choice of colour. So for example, the Assistant to the Group Reservations Clerk at Consort Hotels is accused of not having any taste when she disagreed with the Chief Executive over the colour for the female staff's uniform. Whilst on the cover of Swallow Hotel's tariff the image of the Hotel Receptionist is meant to convey both the efficient and the caring; in that all is clean and tidy, her hand on the computer screen projects control, and the decanter suggests that a warm welcome awaits the businessman in his home from home!

**'Mason:** Do you think computers are a good thing for the hotel industry?

**Frith (General Assistant):** It looks impressive when you walk into a Hotel Reception and you see a computer there.

**Mason:** Do you think that's one of the good things about computers?

**Frith:** Yes it gives the impression to the customers that it's not just a hotel but that it's a plush modern hotel which is willing to pay all this money for computers: *and she can't be all that thick and blonde and dumb because she's working a computer.'*

My emphasis, Dialogue (Swallow - Carlisle)

That may be a true assumption or it may just be wishful thinking because if one turns to the ways in which the computer companies themselves market their products it is on the back of female sexuality coupled with male heterosexuality. Slogans such as, *She looks like the type of woman who sleeps with her micro-computer*, and *Things are better since my husband started sleeping with his micro-computer* can hardly boast impartiality when it comes to sexuality: one is referring to something which makes a woman less desirable as a woman but acceptable as an employee that is ambition (Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p.93; Glenn and Feldberg, 1979, p.70). Whilst the second slogan is proposing adultery, at the expense of the woman, and to the gain of the man because it is seen as a desirable manifestation of masculinity. (The computer advertisement slogans were taken from the Financial Times and are for Triumph Adler computer hardware).

In an interview that I had with a male lecturer in Front Office Management at the Manchester Polytechnic, I was told that what a businessman wants is a, 'pleasant and attractive young lady to pamper to his every needs'(Hobson): he went on to say that, 'males on the whole prefer to be served by female Receptionists, and vice versa.'. In another interview with a male lecturer, this time at the Middlesex Polytechnic, this view of the generalised male customer was supported and extended. Pullen saw that with reference to the social skills of the female Hotel Receptionist it is their, 'persuasiveness, charm and sex appeal' that is encouraged and, 'exploited' in the workplace. Or as the Chief Executive of Consort Hotels puts it,

'Something about hotel's is sex, and women are sex: and women are the ideal people to have sex with.'

Pope

They would all find themselves agreeing with the assumptions underlying the advertisements rather than with the hopes of such employees as Ms. Frith.

But this impression of the Receptionist, the one projected on the front cover of Swallow Hotels' Tariff, is not one shared by the staff of that department. In the survey of attitudes sent to all the hotels in the Swallow Group 84% of the respondents said that they thought that management thought that they were *friendly* in relation to customers. Whilst 74% thought that they were perceived as being *efficient*, and 57% thought themselves as being seen as *hardworking*. The respondents were allowed to choose more than one term to describe how they



thought themselves perceived by management. Only 16% saw themselves as being no more than a *pretty face*.

When asked what were the ideal characteristics of a Hotel Receptionist the Deputy Manager of the Swallow Hotel in Durham said that *she* must be 'reasonably attractive' whilst at the bottom of the list he said 'to some extent the ability to do administrative work and figures'(Stephenson). The General Manager of the Swallow Hotel in Carlisle agreed with the last point in that he thought that the customer was not at all interested in whether a Receptionist could do the administrative work preferring a 'warm friendly welcome from a bright cheery Receptionist'(Sagar). The Deputy General Manager at the Swallow Hotel in London considered 'appearance' to be the most important criterion. Although he qualifies that by saying, 'and by that I don't mean she's beautiful but that she takes care of herself' and then he added, 'and he takes care of himself'(Harvey). He had a very clear link in his mind that a beautiful appearance was primarily associated with the female and that that was what he would project on the front desk of the Reception.

At the senior levels of management in Swallow Hotels the emphasis is on the numeracy and the accuracy of the Reception staff. A point of view shared by the two Regional Managers, Messrs. Carrigan and Reed and the Managing Director Mr Catesby. Though Mr Smith, the Personnel Manager of Swallow Hotels, made a verbal slip of the tongue when he apologised for using the female gender or as he put it, 'I keep saying girl because we don't have any fellas'(Smith). Of course what he did not realise is that is using the word girl to describe women he was being patronising and in describing men in the comradeley term of fellow he was being sexist towards the female staff. So although the other senior members of management were trying to be more objective Mr Smith was exhibiting his power to define the nature of the relationship between employer and employee.

For the Rooms Division Manager at The Drake in Chicago the eyes of the Front Desk Clerk should, 'sparkle'(Inniss) whether it is a male or a female serving the customer. The Front Office Manager at the Vista International in Pittsburgh believes that the female Desk Clerk should appeal to the male customer and in a hotel with a cocktail bar with female hostesses wearing dresses with hip length slits up the side then this gives an indication of what he means in practical terms. Maybe Mr Agnew wants the eyes of the females who work on the Front Desk to sparkle. His counterpart at the Hilton International in Kensington emphasises that the job is, 'not just about writing things down, it's about using your brain.'(Ryan). Which might, in all fairness, be difficult if you are holding the male customers eyes with your own pair of "sparklers".

## 1.2 'Display, Harassment and other Explicit Sexual Behaviour'

**'Mason:** How would you define the concept of service as it applies to hotels?

**Harvey (Deputy Manager):** (pause) That's a very broad subject, umm (pause) Simply that a customer who arrives at our front door is provided with what he expects and whatever he asks for if it's possible for us to achieve it we will provide it for him'

Dialogue, Swallow - London

Note the gender of the customer - male.

'Giving whatever the guest needs or wants to the best of our ability. Anything possible that we can do to give him whatever is in our grasp (pause) to be polite and hospitable as much as we can ... They are paying for you to be polite to them. He can do anything he wants to you within reason'

Hirsch, Desk Clerk (Vista - Kansas)

Again the gender of the customer is male: there are no female customers?

**'Male customer:** You've given me a lovely room now all I need is a young nubile bride.

**Anderson (Head Receptionist):** We'll see what we can do.

**Male customer:** She can be any colour'

Dialogue (Swallow - Durham)

The male customer was "just joking". Enough for him to be surprised perhaps even embarrassed if it happened. But he was still prepared to get involved in such sexual banter, and in such a blatantly public manner. He obviously felt

that it was appropriate behaviour for a customer in a hotel: and although the Head Receptionist did not provide him with what he purported to want she did enter into the situation which he had chosen to create and in so doing reaffirmed the position of the Receptionist as a provider/enabler of a customer's requests, apparently without limitation. The insinuation, all the time, was that if she wanted to make herself available, then she could satisfy his needs: in this light her reaction was the result of the wisdom that such experiences have provided her with in the decade that she has been working in hotels.

We shall see how such "joking" between the "boss" and his secretary operates in the next section. But at present it is valuable to dissect how such "jokes" operate within the sphere of sexuality and the dominant ideology of Patriarchy. In both incidents, the one above and the later example from Consort Hotels, it is the male who initiates the "joking relationship" (Bradney, 1957, pp.182-183). This can be seen in the context of both an extension and an affirmation of the power that the male has over the female. "Jokes" are a vehicle, in this instance, for drawing a female into the sex games of the male. He uses them to confirm his own sexuality in relation to the female through bluff and counterbluff. Whilst in doing so the female is conforming to the rules of attraction that the male is constructing and re-constructing through their "joking" discourse. The male laughs first and last and certainly the loudest and the longest because the female has compromised her initiative to the values of the male. It is his ideology that matters, because in confronting Patriarchy the female is denying her social role and constructing one for herself outside the norm of sexual discourse between "males and females". This can result in the female who chooses to do this being ridiculed by having her femininity called into question by males using words such as "frigid" and lesbian to marginalise the effect of such opposition to Patriarchy (Hearn and Parkin, 1986, p.107).

The juxtaposition of the "everyday" sexism and the structural nature of Patriarchy creates a culture of "normality" which in time transforms the obvious sexism between the male superior and the female junior into an integral part of the working relationship (Hearn and Parkin, 1986, p.93). This sexuality moves from the seen, felt and visible to the elusive and the "forgotten". Then jokes can be more easily used by men to trivialise the issue of sexism which is built-in to the relations between men and women (p.125). We noted that in the research cited by Sedley and Benn (1982) that one of the major reasons why women would not complain about sexual harassment was precisely because of this (p.10).

The Head Receptionist of the Swallow hotel at Carlisle told me over lunch of a male customer at a resort hotel on the Northumberland coast who had grabbed

hold of her by the lapels from the other side of the counter. Her reaction was to swipe him across the face: he then said he would go and tell her boss what she had done, so she said, 'Good go and do so' and then she would tell her boss why she had done it.

The customer obviously felt that the female behind the counter was a possession that he could literally take hold of: he was so certain of his proprietorial rights that he was shocked by her aggressive reaction. Presumably he expected the General Manager to arbitrate in his favour!

The Control Clerk of the Swallow hotel in Carlisle is regularly asked by a male customer for Brandy and Chocolates in his room, to be accompanied by her. Her reply has always been that she will do it later because she can not leave her work at the particular time that he wants her to. She does not go up and she knows there are never any Brandy and Chocolates in the room. And when he 'complains' to her that she did not come up she always says that she knocked but that he must have been asleep. The clerk considers all of this to be a 'running joke'! But this affirms the power relations between men and women by assigning such an instance of patriarchy to the "its only a bit of a laugh really" category (Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p.5).

There was a feeling amongst some of the Receptionists that the male flirt was a normal part of the daily routine of work and that with experience, like that of Ms McGahan in the incident above, one could learn to handle it with charm and still leave the customer thinking that he had not done anything serious to offend the female Receptionist. The learning to accept the vulnerability of one's position is something that we will see is not without pain as we will see later with the example that Ms Stephens gave (see Section 1.5).

**'Mason:** Have you ever had problems (pause) err...behind Reception in terms of, shall we say, sexual harassment by being a female?

**Kenny (Head Receptionist):** To a certain extent yes; you get the men who pester you, "I want to take you out for a drink" - this, that, and the other. And I must admit that is one time when I can get quite rude with customers and I think every manager would always back you up on it... My standard line, if someone asks me out, "I've heard it all before", it soon puts them off 'cos they all come out with the same patter and, "What is the wife going to say about that one then?" I don't know whether they are married or not but you can soon tell the ones that are and off they go. *I think to a certain extent*

*you have to expect it*, the girls in the Restaurant get it, the girls in the bar get it as well... the majority of managers would support you in anything like that.

**Mason:** Has it ever got anymore pressurised than just sort of saying the odd remark to you?

**Kenny:** No: not in my personal experience anyway... I look after myself... I did actually have one experience when an assistant manager gave my home telephone number to a resident which I wasn't too pleased about... That is the only time... the first thing I tell Receptionists don't ever give staff 'phone numbers without checking with the staff first... it's my personal life they can speak to me when I'm at work... some of them I mix socially with and there's others I would never socialise with'

(My emphasis) Dialogue (Swallow - Seaburn)

The following remarks are made by someone who also believes that it is in the nature of the Hotel trade that females will be subjected to gender abuse by males. But what is more poignant is that she believes that it is the female staff themselves which put themselves into that situation by being friendly to the male customers. However the unfortunate thing about this is that meaning and intention get juxtaposed in the mind of the male customer and what he believes is not necessarily that which was intended. The problem comes when boundaries are breached and the female Receptionist can not handle the situation herself in the way described by Ms Kenny. It is as if the Receptionist must learn to be flirtatious in a way that is appealing to the customer and a part of that appeal is that nothing comes of it; however the greater part still is the possibility of a liason without the responsibility for the emotional consequences (Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p.107). As will be seen later the Manager likens the customer's attitude to that of a sailor - one female in every port.

'**Mason:** Have you ever experienced sexual harassment whilst working in hotels?

**Frith (General Assistant):** Yes

**Mason:** Would you care to tell me about it?

**Frith:** Anybody does. This hotel is friendly but sometimes it goes over too friendly. I think it's the fact that there's Linda there and Elaine, who was very forward, very forward - do you know what I mean? I think they, the customers, tend to presume that you're all like that. You sort of get them when you're checking them in, and on Tuesday night, that's the worst and a lot of the staff go into Toppers [hotel night club] you see, so you are there, they're sort of saying, you get the fellas saying, "Are you coming up to bed with me tonight?". I mean that's just a big joke to me, but I haven't really had anyone harass me all the time, no I haven't. I've had odd people who've asked me to dance and I've danced with them and they've asked me if I want to come back to their room for coffee. That's all the sexual harassment I've had.

**Mason:** And how do you cope with it?

**Frith:** I say, "No!" .

**Mason:** And they take it?

**Frith:** Well they say, "Why not, why not?". I say, "Well listen, I work here and you're a resident". You've got to draw the line sometime, haven't you really. That's where I draw it, very much so'

Dialogue (Swallow - Carlisle)

As one respondent in the *Harvard Business Review* survey advised, 'Develop the look' that will ensure that the male aggressor gets the idea that you want him to keep his hands to himself (Collins and Blodgett, 1981, p.93).

### 1.3 'Open Sexual Acts'

'We believe that sexual behaviour of all kinds... is indeed a "charged micro-cosm" of sexual politics, because within it the dichotomized themes of power and dominance, activity and passivity, ascendancy and subservience, which are a key feature of all sexist constructions of "reality", are a particular and remarkable feature of its construction of "sexual reality"'

Wise and Stanley argue that this is both familiar and they argue more complex because of that. The distinction between harassment and normal sexism is then more difficult to gauge. Though Wise and Stanley would argue that this is an irrelevant distinction. For them, all men are categorised as either 'men who do' or 'the men who might'(Stanley, 1984, p.54). For them, therefore, ' "the sexual" is a *social* construction' in that men are socialised into being or becoming creatures of sexist behaviour. It is not something hereditary or inbuilt but a feature of inter-person relationships that is learnt (p.3). The difficulty in getting at this kind of data is made plain in the use of examples drawn from fieldwork carried out over a 4 month period at the central office of Consort Hotels in York. In all of the sites of data collection the time period was much less ranging from a few hours in which interviews were conducted to being in one hotel for six weeks. This was the longest period at a hotel; the mode was two weeks.

**'Sue (Secretary to Chief Executive):** You've got me sitting next to those people from the Barbican and the Henry VIIIth. I hate those people!

**Pope (Chief Executive):** You aren't sitting next to them, you have others all round you.

**Sue:** I am sitting next to them and I don't want to!

**Pope:** Come in I want to talk to you. I'm going to smack your bottom.

**Sue:** If you smack my bottom I'll resign.

**Pope:** Then I'd better really smack it hard.

**Sue:** If you want my resignation Mr Pope?

**Pope:** Can I have it in writing before you join in the Pension Scheme?'

Dialogue (Consort Hotels)

The subject of the discussion was the seating arrangement for the forthcoming Consort Hotel conference dinner. The dialogue focused upon the female secretary and her ability to choose whom she would sit next to, coupled with the Chief Executive's power to dictate where the female members of his staff would be placed in relation to the members of the organisation who are predominantly male. Here it is clear that the role of "escort" to the members and as a representative of the organisation suits both sets of men. They are available to be 'chatted' to by whoever is around them rather than the voiced preferences of the female staff themselves to be seated all together: however their job is not to talk amongst themselves but to be talked to by the male members.

The threat of resignation was not taken seriously. Perhaps because it was not meant by the Secretary, but also because it would suit the financial interests of the Chief Executive to have her resign, if it came to that. But the most telling indication of the relationship between these two people is that of smacking and being smacked. It is for them a form of "in joking" in that it affirms the balance of power in a "friendly" way. In this lies the source and the means of expressing power in a most intimate way; that of physical assault, where the perceived stronger of the two, the 'Male Executive', would force the assumed weaker of the two, the 'Female Secretary', to submit to his authority through aggression.

Verbal assault is another form of male aggression which is threatening and frightening to many kinds of people. This is especially the case when the person is trapped in a particular space such as in the workplace. This happened for example at the Swallow Hotel in Durham on two separate occasions whilst I was there. On the first the General Manger, Mr Hawley, lost his temper and shouted at a Receptionist in public. As the Head Hall Porter at the hotel said to me,

'... everyone's his personal servant... it's not a pleasurable experience working here... he wants things done now, always now and nine times out of ten he gets it done because he flusters so much'

Webb

And on another occasion the Deputy Manager, Mr Stephenson, raised his voice to a male trainee manager who had handled his telephone call badly. Although this can be accurately observed to construe a case of sexual harassment especially as he was highly embarrassed it was evident at the interview he had with me that he did not think this to be the case since he declared that he had not experienced any form of sexual harassment. Similarly at the Hilton International in Kensington



the Front Office Manager told off one of the female clerks for being 5 minutes late for work in front of other members of staff.

At the Swallow Hotel in London the Front Office Manager took it very badly when a female Cashier spoke back to him. He had threatened her with having her wages reduced by the amount she had been short in her cash. On a previous occasion this had happened to a male Cashier and he walked out of the hotel. The female Cashier threatened to do the same but the Front Office Manager called her bluff and she did not leave. The female lost out because she did not go through with her threat and so this meant in future the male Front Office Manager would know that she was vulnerable when it came to defending herself through her job.

#### 1.4 'Open Sexual Liasons'

Quinn in a study on relationships in organisations, quoted in Hearn and Parkin (1987, p.101), pointed out a number of indicators which were evidence of romantic relationships. The following example is illustrative of what this means in reality, though in this case it is doubtful whether the act is romantic. It is an example of how the "boss" can take advantage of the subordinate position of a clerk and how he can exploit her feelings towards him as a man whilst having to cope with the fact that he is also her employer. In demonstrating how this can be abused - the "boss"/man figure - it will be shown that the implicit sexuality of a situation can seem to outsiders to constitute a case of sexual harassment irrespective of what the parties involved may or may not feel about such questions of abuse of personal integrity.

One afternoon I was sitting near to the telex machine in the main office at Consort Hotels looking through past correspondence. I (and everyone else who cared to observe what was happening) was made aware that the Chief Executive was talking with the Central Reservations Clerk. He was seated at the telex and she was standing beside him. At one point he put his hand on the back of her left leg and ran his fingers upwards whilst smirking and stating that,

'... possession is nine-tenths of the law'

Pope

Hadjifotiou (1981) gives men some benefit for ignorance when she asserts that when they manhandle a woman's body they are claiming that they are available

to them (p.16). It is obvious that Pope had long been aware of his presumed territorial rights as a male even if such behaviour would be considered as assault in the street.

It was obvious that she was most embarrassed but did not do anything to dissuade him. It was rumoured that they were seeing each other, even though he was married and his wife worked for Greenfield holdings which operated out of the next office along the main corridor of the building.

The first interview that was conducted with Swallow Hotels was with a Hotel Receptionist who had worked at The Bellahouston Hotel in Glasgow. She told me of the time when the newly appointed Deputy Manager arrived at the hotel and the first thing that he said to her was that they were going to have an 'affair'. Whilst he was continuously pestering her she became 'fond' of him and in time she became pregnant by him. When she told her General Manager the situation, and how it had come about, he told her that it was for her to deal with and that he would not become involved. She left the hotel because of this incident and moved to England and the father of the child, the Deputy Manager, remained in the Glasgow hotel. She now wants to leave the industry altogether.

### 1.5 'Implicit Sexual Behaviour'

One of the things that is striking about an office is that the conversation between colleagues is less about work and more about things that they have in common outside of work. This prompted Pope on more than one occasion to remark caustically that the female clerks do more talking than working: what he means is that they do not talk about the things he and his male colleagues talk about such as football and rugby internationals but boyfriends, weddings and their houses. He is deciding what is a relevant topic of conversation that is, all those things that the men talk about as opposed to those issues which are of interest to the women. This is the same thing as the General Manager at the Swallow Hotel in London is doing to the female Advance Reservation clerks and the office staff when he entices them to have a free meal at a top London football club in return for entertaining business clients of his and the hotels such as Tour Agency Representatives. The female staff if they do not enjoy football have to endure it otherwise they would lose the meal. Mr Gold benefits by not having to entertain them himself whilst using employees to do this work during their time off.

In seeing their conversation as irrelevant, in terms of work, and as topics in themselves, Pope is exercising power as a male, and as their employer (Barker

and Downing, 1985, pp.147-148). He is reacting to the defensive posture of the female clerks who are retreating into their informal work culture which can not be intruded upon by male work standards (Downing, 1980, p.282; Barker and Downing, 1985, p.149).

Pope's intolerance does not merely end with the female clerks. If the fiancée or wife of one of his male colleagues telephones he dismisses it as being unimportant. He also decides to surround what he considers to be important in a context of surreptitiousness: to the extent that when he wants to talk to someone he takes them into his office, so that they are on a one to one basis, and then persuades them round to his way of thinking. This is clear in the example of the seating arrangement for the conference dinner when Sue, his Secretary, refused to sit next to those people that he wanted her to be beside,

'Keith's won again, I hate him when he wins'

Sue

He simply would not take no for an answer, perhaps because, as Sue had remarked to me earlier that day,

'He doesn't do it flirtatiously, he does it to get them round to do some work for him... Have you asked them if they don't like it?'

Sue

Men don't flirt but women do? - is that what she is implying?

It is always possible that she enjoyed his attention, that he knew it, and was prepared to exploit that in the workplace with the safety of a wife only a few feet down the corridor to use as a reason for not being responsible for any emotional effect that he might be having on his female staff.

This did not prevent those female members of staff who knew that he liked them from using their sexuality to their own ends. For example, one day an ex-member of staff came into the main office to do some telephone sales work for Consort Hotels. This aroused the suspicions of the Group Reservations Clerk because it was her predecessor: so she wondered if this meant that the Chief Executive was indirectly calling into question the quality of her work and her dispensability. One of her colleagues, the Central Reservations Clerk whose leg

Pope caressed at the telex machine, went in to see him for a few private words. On her return she was able to reassure her colleague, and friend, that her fears were unfounded and that she could be trusted to be telling the truth because she had been told by the Chief Executive himself. This is the special channel of communication which Quinn stated, in a study of romantic relationships, was one of the most obvious ways of indicating such a relationship (quoted in Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p.102). However, a parallel example cited in Pollert, *Girls, Wives, and Factory Lives* highlights that such incidents are only momentary victory's won through colluding with male power and attitudes of females as sex objects which later lay them open to sexist advances whether they like it or not (p.144).

This also isolates the Central Reservations Clerk from her colleagues who, seeing her influence, could possibly resent it for the obligation that it imposes upon them. As could be the case with the above incident, and it would seem to confirm that there is a relationship between the single female clerk and the married male Chief Executive.

What can be plain about the specific use of words in dialogue is the way in which they are used to maintain the necessarily heterosexual basis upon which Patriarchy is conceived and acted upon (Walby, 1986, p.66). So that Hodgson's anger at being called a, 'Judy', by a male Australian customer, reaffirms the fact that it was the customer who, by virtue of that social situation, was able to treat her with contempt, whilst as a man put her into the position where she felt her sexuality was being degraded. However she was perpetuating the heterosexual basis of Patriarchy by attacking the male customer on the question of her being a 'Judy' rather than defending her choice of sexuality. Use of such words as 'chicken' imply a relationship of protection and caring but used in the context of the workplace, as the Chairman of Consort Hotels did, adds a more insidious aspect to its usage. It has racist associations in that it was used by white masters as a term of derision towards their black slaves. It is also something the man manager makes into a term of power and control. Not only was this the case with the serfs to their masters and the domestic staff after them but it is pertinent to the Hotel trade. Racism is another of the modes of oppression in society which Walby isolates along with Patriarchy and Capitalism (Walby, 1986, p.52). Miller was therefore exercising power in all three spheres of relations.

Here is a further example concerning the ambiguity of words: in the two examples Mrs Richardson highlights the way in which the same phrase, said by two people, can have different intentions even if the motive is the same, that of getting a female to do what a male wants her to do; which in these cases is to scrub his back.

**Mason:** During your eight years working in hotels have you ever felt that any moment you've been sexually harassed?

**Richardson (Shift Leader):** (pause) No, I don't think so. I might have been and haven't noticed. No, no it doesn't mean anything, it doesn't mean anything to the chaps that are staying here anyway. It's just talk, it's just fun: if you believe it that's when it goes wrong, that's why the rules are there, nobody means anything on the whole. The ones that do you hide from. You can tell. There is one in particular that I really don't like, there is one man that I don't like.

**Mason:** What is he, what is he like?

**Richardson:** He's an elderly man and I really don't like him at all.

**Mason:** What does he do?

**Richardson:** He doesn't actually do anything or say anything, it's just in him, it's just there, there's something about him.

**Mason:** Does he leer?

**Richardson:** Yes he does he's quite, he's a dirty old man actually. Just by the look of him you can see it.

**Mason:** Do you feel uncomfortable?

**Richardson:** Yes! That is the only person I ever have done. He still comes, he comes once every two or three weeks, "Hello are you going to wash my back tonight?" But he means it! He's not kidding. We had a man in and he said, "Are you going to wash my back?" and we sent the porter up with the yard brush and he thought it was hilarious. But he means everything he says: and the other girls pick it up as well. It's the one man that I just don't like'

Dialogue (Swallow - Carlisle)

A similar occurrence was cited in Sedley and Benn (1982) this time referring to a Waitress (p.15) and there also examples in Retailing where there is the requirement to smile and joke along with those who are most irksome (Bradney, 1957). Many of the Receptionists with whom I talked would relate to both sets of experiences as would Waiters (Mars and Nicod, 1984, p.56). The remarks based on sexual innuendo were as monotonous in their predictability as the job was repetitive in its daily routine. The same men would crack the same tired and tiring “jokes” and the female Receptionists would be expected to “laugh” at them. The lines were well worn such as the Brandy & Chocolates routine noted earlier.

The following example shows how a Receptionist, who has just started in her job, is expected to cope with the suggestions put to her by male customers. It is obvious that she does have the ability to pretend to like people in the way that a more experienced person in that job would have needed to learn is the way to appease the customer and safeguard yourself. This situation, which Ms Stephens finds herself in, arises from a wanting to be as friendly as her colleagues towards the customers and yet relying too much on the protection of her place behind the Front Desk for her to be able to cope when she is confronted face to face with the same customer on the dance floor. It is obvious that her discomfort is derived from a feeling that the male customer’s intentions are less than honourable, as far as the maintenance of her personal integrity is concerned.

**‘Stephens (Receptionist):** Occasionally in Toppers [hotel night club] a guest will ask you to dance with them, I try not to if I can help it. I don’t think it’s right. I do have a dance with them because I think that’s polite, but I try to avoid it if I can.

**Mason:** Does it make you feel uncomfortable?

**Stephens:** It does in a way, yes, not at the time but next morning when you’re behind the desk and they come to the desk to check-out: I don’t know it just gives me a funny feeling.

**Mason:** Does it?

**Stephens:** I don’t know why.

**Mason:** Can you explain that?

**Stephens:** I don't think I can really, it's just a feeling that really I don't want to know them too much. I want them to pay the bill and say, "Bye bye and have a nice journey" and that's it. I don't know really why it's peculiar but I can't really explain it, I prefer not to know them too much'

Dialogue (Swallow - Carlisle)

Contrast this with a person in a similar situation to her in another Swallow Hotel, this time in London. Her experience of life is different from that of Ms Stephens; she has had to defend herself against a constant barrage of male power and aggression which has taught her to defend herself within their terms of reference. She has perpetuated the basis of the relationship between men and women through indirectly condoning male behaviour towards females,

'**Mason:** Do you get any hassle being a female from other members of staff?

**Carole (Management Trainee):** Not that I can't handle because I've got six brothers; they treat like typical blokes treat you, like typical females, and I'm not like that, so they just have to put up with it. If they come up with a mouthful to me I come out with one twice as bad as them: I tend to get treated as one of the lads really.

**Mason:** Do you get hassled from management or guests?

**Carole:** No not really, not so far no. Not really, they're all sort of, they sort of put their arm round you and all that, but you just sort of stand there and say, "Forget it!"'

Dialogue (Swallow - London)

What she has forgotten is that not all men are as easily handled as her brothers or as "well meaning" as the hotel's management. Experiences of colleagues in other hotels, and in the one that she is working in, will bear witness to that.

## 1.6 'The Written and the Recorded'

At the interview which was conducted with Pope, the Chief Executive of Consort Hotels, he said that he found the female staff were acting in a sexually abusive manner towards the male office junior; that a man as a secretary must be effeminate. In this they were both slandering him and putting themselves into the position of defending the heterosexual basis of Patriarchy, which puts them in to continued subjection to male power. They had created a rule more powerful than any written one because they acted on it by their own volition rather than having it imposed. Though as we can see in Pope's remark about the suitability of females as Hotel Receptionists he is an accomplice and a beneficiary in this conscious conspiracy.

Another way in which an organisation can prohibit an employee's sexuality is by drawing up rules which define what kinds of relationship the members of the living-in staff of a hotel can have. Living-in staff operate in a structure which approximates to the total institution outlined by Goffman (1968), the Head Receptionist at the hotel in Durham called a hotel an, 'environment within an environment': where the anti-social nature of the work of a hotel inhibits social contact with people other than those with whom you work, eat and sleep. To set this in context, three of her Receptionists shared a room and, as one of them complained, once the three beds and the three wardrobes were in there was not much room for them.

Furthermore, when I was in the office of the Personnel Manager of Swallow Hotels earlier that year he had a telephone conversation with the General Manager of the hotel in Durham in which they both agreed that a female member of staff should be dismissed for breaking one of the rules of living-in a hotel that of sleeping with a male member of staff in her room, (the incident was reported to the General Manager by the females room-mate). The reasoning put forward by the Personnel Manager, Mr Smith, was that the hotel's management are acting as guardians of the moral welfare of staff. And that this would be infringed through sexual intercourse with any person of the opposite sex in their own room within the confines of the hotel. Whether a religious position would be put taken about no sexual intercourse before marriage is unclear, but certainly the hotel was sacrosanct. This person was yet another victim of a man-made rule despite the fact that the person in question was over the age of 16, the legal age at which people can have heterosexual intercourse.



## 2 'The Secret of Sexuality: Secret Sexuality'

### 2.1 'Secret Records, Rules and Policies'

On more than one occasion during the course of collecting data and information for the research it was said that such-and-such was being given only for the purposes of the thesis and was not to be published in any other form. Examples of this included the Personnel and Salary Roll details of all the employees in Swallow Hotels, Personnel policies on Staff Development as well as copies of Personnel Management Manuals. All of these have been invaluable sources of background and quotable material, and they all bear testimony to the fact that an organisation has secrets which it does not want another organisation to know about, whether this be a trade union or a rival hotel group.

Another clear indication of an organization's subversive activities is the way in which employees handle the presence of an 'outsider' such as a researcher. Two instances will serve as examples. The first occurred in the hotel in Durham where, because the Head Receptionist and the Personnel Manager of Swallow Hotels did not get on particularly well with each other, the Reception staff thought that he had sent me to provide him with evidence which would be detrimental to the further employment of the Head Receptionist. The second example, again in a Swallow Hotel but this time in London, is more explicit than the previous one. As soon as the Reception staff encountered this 'outsider' it was clear by their behaviour that they had not been expecting me and that this secret was not going to help me get to know them: the silence was broken by one of the Shift Leaders asking Mr Hogg, the Front Office Manager, if I was a work study man sent by Head Office to check on their quality and speed of work.

**'Mason:** Do you have a problem with male chauvinism Angela?

**Nevett (Reception Manager):** Yes.

**Mason:** Do you think it's a problem for females, not for females themselves but the males who have to deal with them?

**Nevett:** I think it's a problem for females you know in management: not just by other colleagues but by guests as well. People want to see a man.'

Dialogue (Swallow - London)

**'Winskall (Office Junior):** Call for you Jackie - Oops! - Bernard Welcome.

**Taylor:** Jackie here I'm his assistant.'

Dialogue (Consort Hotels)

Both of these people are identifying and highlighting the Patriarchal nature of the relationship between employee and customer whilst, as far as the second example is concerned, simultaneously perpetuating this social structure to their continued disadvantage. In the first Ms Nevett is telling of her experience of the time when a customer wanted to see a member of management in order to make a complaint and who, when she said that she was the Duty Manager for that shift, told her that he wanted to see a man. Such blatant gender abuse reflects what was said earlier about the appropriateness of females for the job of Hotel Receptionist, at least as far as the writers of textbooks on the subject, staff manuals, and Chief Executives of hotel consortiums are concerned.

With reference to the second Mrs Taylor is 'Bernard Welcome'; as far as there is such a person behind the marketing concept. It is she who deals with all the correspondence and administers the Consort Club Membership: so for her to deny firstly, that she is this fictitious person is to continue the lifespan of this mythical character, and to then claim that she is his assistant is to voluntarily take on her own subjection to the basic fact of Patriarchy, that of the male being dominant and in control. This is further manifested when Pope claims that he is really 'Bernard Welcome', a claim made only on the grounds that he is her boss and not because he does any of the work for which 'Bernard' is credited.

## 2.2 'Secret Sexual Relationships'

One illustration of this from Swallow Hotels is the relationship between the Receptionist and the member of management at the Swallow Hotel in Glasgow.

At first it would have been secret and then as the decision was made by the woman to leave her job then the subject may have become more open.

Another example of a supposed secret relationship was told to me in a manner of incredulity that I did not know. When it was still a rumour that one of the Receptionist/Cashiers at the Swallow Hotel in London was to be promoted to Chef de Brigade one of the other Shift Leaders told me that it did not surprise her that it was that person who had been chosen since she knew that the girl and the Front Office Manager had slept together. It was obvious to her that the girl had traded her sexuality for promotion.

However obvious the relationship between the Chief Executive of Consort Hotel and the Central Reservations Clerk was as soon as you 'knew' about it, the 'knowing' was acquired, in the first place, through rumour and gossip; which is how, Hearn and Parkin say, is the means by which such secret relationships are uncovered in the first place (p.116). Pope remarked to me that she was 'worth running round for', and on another occasion when she said that she was thoroughly exhausted, due to her work, he pushed her back into the telex chair, with both hands on her shoulders, and said, 'Let me see if you're through'. Later he put his arms round her shoulders and said in her left ear, away from the other clerks, that he would give her a telephone call and that he was, 'really proud' of her and that she was doing a great job. No one else got this kind of attention or personal praise.

### **3 'The Unseenness of Sexuality: Unseen Sexuality'**

#### **3.1 'Sexual States'**

In recent years it has been found that working in front of a Visual Display Unit (VDU) can cause physical illness of a short and long term nature. Though still to be proven the fact that the management of the hotel groups that I visited were disinclined to consider this when deciding how to use new technology in the workplace is a gross example of personal negligence on their part towards the staff that have to use it: and as the problem seems to be potentially worse for females because of the possible effects that such emissions of radiation may have on their ability to have children is inadmissible. That it is women and not men

that have to work in front of such screens seems to be the only reason for such wilful indifference.

As a part of her job the Assistant to the Group Reservations Clerk would use the wordprocessor/computer. When the machine was first introduced into the office it was she who had to sit in front of the VDU for many hours typing in information. She had found that over the time her eyes and her back would ache with having to look at the screen and sitting in one position all of the time. There has been much research undertaken on the physiological effects of sitting in front of a VDU and although all remains largely unproven many people are of the impression that there are effects and these include those which were experienced by the Junior Clerk (APEX, 1985; articles from the Financial Times, 1985; Guy, 1984; Rice, 1985; Craig, 1981; Barker and Downing, 1985, p.161).

She had told Pope of her feelings and soon after she was transferred on to Group Reservations, only working with the wordprocessor on a part-time basis. However, he remembered her feelings and her worries. (Which may also be connected to the fears that such VDU's emit radiation that may be of harm to a female's reproductive organs. As a measure of the seriousness with which some trade unions have taken this potential hazard members are instructed to work for only 2 hours in front of a VDU during each working day and then in two parts with a 15 minute period of rest in between).

**Pope (Chief Executive):** I'm going to finish the budget then I'm going on to Reservations, I like Reservations and Sales (and with his arm around Clare) don't you like Reservations and Sales?

**Fisher (Junior Clerk):** No I don't!

**Pope:** Would you like to go on the wordprocessor full-time?

**Fisher:** No!

Dialogue (Consort Hotels)

His maliciousness was most acute when he had his victim at the mercy of his whim and caprice. And although nothing was mentioned about the effects that the VDU had, and has on, Clare it was a part of the ingredients of the conversation. In this instance Pope is making Clare's femininity subject to his power. Moreover

this incident could be said to be an explicit condition in retaining ones present job and an implicit condition in continuing to be employed (Collins and Blodgett, 1981, p.79). And in any case a female's intimate sexual state tends to be by-passed by men too embarrassed to make comments on it (Sedley and Benn 1982, p.9 and Barker and Downing 1985, p.149). However if this is only alluded to in this situation it is made more clear with reference to when Gillian went to visit the 'birth control clinic' as Pope informed the entire staff at Consort Hotels when she had returned. I came across no other incidents of such gross indifference to peoples' feelings as those displayed within the confines of Consort Hotels. The examples drawn from Swallow Hotels and Hilton International Hotels are amongst the most explicit.

### 3.2 'Sexual Perceptions and Desires'

As was noted earlier a female can use her own sexuality and the perception of the desires of the male she is relating to in order to gain for example a material advantage. A Receptionist at the Swallow Hotel in London thought that if she went to the General Manager in a suspender belt and stockings she might get what she is already entitled to as an employee of Swallow Hotels that is free accommodation. Although she was trying to get it for the hotel she was working in which has an annual average letting bedroom occupancy of over 95%. But even if it did work what she in effect would be doing is confirming male perceptions of female sexuality and condoning future harassment.

These are not to be neglected merely because they are difficult to distinguish from their manifestations in more explicit ways and because they can blur with sexual fantasy. What is most significant about the operation of desire is the influence it has on the individual's perception of others in relation to the desire of that person (Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p.120).

Pope himself has a hierarchy of those whom he prefers which he makes clear through references to Clare's 'nice little bum' and calling her on several occasions, 'my little sweet' and, 'my blue-eyed girl'. He has also been more demonstrative such as when he put his arms around her shoulders and said, for everyone to hear,

'Hello gorgeous it's lovely to see you. All these are miserable, you're the only one who makes me laugh'

Pope

She in turn knows the effect that she has on him making it clear, at the same time, the way in which all understand how the ranking has placed them in relation to her,

'I am his blue-eyed girl. Some of them don't like it but I say stuff 'em: I know, if I asked him for whatever I wanted I would get it, but I don't'

Fisher

And to those that Pope is not that fond of he says that he will give them 'rackings': these people include the Office Junior and the Consort Club Administrator and to a lesser extent the Group Reservations Clerk. With these people he enjoys making them embarrassed because he knows the sexual innuendo is for all intents and purposes lost on them there is little or no mutual attraction. We have already seen that Pope's ultimate preference is for the Central Reservations Clerk, which is reaffirmed, even during these periods of obvious remarks concerning Clare; organising a house warming party for Gillian is something which even his 'little sweet' does not warrant, though he is not averse to whispering things into her ear illustrative of something more personal than these demonstrations of affection.

### 3.3 'Sexual Fantasies'

As was said at the beginning of the previous sub-section these two are closely linked not least because the former is the first indication of the fantasy even though it is not the most obvious occurrence of sexuality. In fact it can be assumed that if all the incidents that have happened before are true then there must be such a fantasy stage because the mind and the body are intimately linked when it comes to sexuality. As invisible as they necessarily are, the person can indeed act as if they exist through allusion and innuendo which will be discussed in Section 4 (Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p.121).

Pope makes reference to the fact that he has nicknames for all the female staff when questioned by Clare as to why he calls her his 'little one': what is clear is that the sexual overtones of words such as 'big' and 'small' as terms he uses to describe the female staff indicates the manner in which he thinks of them, at least whilst he is at work.

Lockwood (1958, *The Blackcoated Worker*) was of the opinion that the relationship between the male clerk and employer was of a strongly paternalistic nature and that this has been translated into a close personal relationship between clerk and boss for example, boss/secretary. However relations between men and women have more to do with domination and subordination than with altruism (Downing, 1980, p.280). Hearn and Parkin (1987) point out that the stereotype fantasy relationship is between the Boss and the Secretary (p.121). References to 'my boss's office' and she cleaning his coffee cup in her dishwasher in addition to the references she makes as to how he likes his coffee strong and black clearly indicate how she thinks he constructs his hierarchy of (ethnic) sexual preference. Plus the following comment she made to me perhaps reveals how much she enjoys the way in which he treats her?

'Have you asked them if they don't like it?'

Sue

That is, have you asked me if I do not like it?

#### 4 'The Elusiveness of Sexuality: Elusive Sexuality'

'Sexual harassment... is not easy to define. It depends very much on how a woman perceives it.'

Sedley and Benn, 1982, p.6

But that is not the same as saying that there is not the intent to harass or even the opportunity to do so and in a particular context the act or thought itself (Collins and Blodgett, 1981, p.92). The ideology that is in operation here is Patriarchy with the qualification that it is heterosexual, at least in all the instances cited in this chapter, though Patriarchy can be also about relations between men (Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p.137). It is clear from the remark made by Pope (Section 1.1) that the norm, at least for him, is heterosexuality: he is therefore making no distinction between what his sexual preferences are and the context of his sexism and this has been true for all the statements on sexual harassment

there is no place for bi-sexual or homosexual practices in the Hotel trade (Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p.139).

The following are cases of innuendo. The first is more blatant than the second, but no less threatening in the manner in which people are made into objects of fantasy construction. Both can be denied as meaning anything other than what is referred to by the words that are used. But it is the intonation and the timing of the words as phrases that gives them a level of meaning which is externally recognisable as being illustrative of some kind of relationship between the two parties. However the quality of that discourse is only fully known to the people involved since by its very nature allusion and innuendo can not be quantified in a hard research sense.

'That's a big one (pause) what a big mouth'

Pope to female clerk

'Pope (Chief Executive): How are you doing? Are you printing?

Winskall (Office Junior): Yes

Pope: Then you'll be stuffing'

Dialogue (Consort Hotels)

At this remark Alison blushed and Pope smiled at me in a way which attempted to solicit me as an accomplice. So confirming that the incident was all about male control.

The second example comes from an order made to all the female staff that they were to go through the drawers of their desks and clear out all the leaflets and brochures which were out of date. A perfectly reasonable request which seems on the surface to be innocent except in the minds of the following two people. There is an obvious mutual attraction between the two people but it is she who is making the suggestion and it is he who has the power to respond in the way that he chooses: she gives him control of her sexuality.



**'Sue (Chief Secretary):** Are you going through my drawers?

**Barwick (Purchasing Director):** I've finished with your drawers'

Dialogue (Consort Hotels)

It was obvious to anyone that was listening that he had intended there to be innuendo but in case there was anyone who did not understand he made it explicit,

'I told her the other day that she was to take more care and time. I gave her a racking. I like giving people rackings now it's Jackie's turn to get a racking. Come on I'm going to give you five minutes (looks at Jackie) I'm getting worried about Jackie, everything I say to Jackie she takes wrongly; she came into my office the other day and said, "I want a man"'

Dialogue (Consort Hotels)

Both are joking, but who is laughing more? And who has the most opportunity to make remarks at other peoples' expense?

When Jackie made a remark full of innuendo and Pope did not hear it when she repeated it, but all the allusion had gone out of it with the loss of spontaneity even though he was listening to her. She did not have the courage to repeat herself because the innuendo would have been explicit rather than implicit and the power of innuendo lies with the ambiguity and uncertainty (Hearn and Parkin, 1987, p.125).

'So the next time Keith [Pope] looks in my drawers they'll be all nice and tidy (pause because she has not been heard) The next time you look in my drawer it'll be tidy'

Consort Club Secretary

For her innuendo can be considered as a game, but for him it is to do with power and he repeats himself until the person is made to realise what it is he is alluding to: the blush of embarrassment marks his victory.

## Chapter 10

### Conclusions

It is clear in Chapter 2, and subsequently in the thesis, that an ethnographic study of a workplace like a hotel is a useful methodological tool for analysis of social relationships. In conjunction with company documentation and background secondary material it can become the means of highlighting the tensions that managerial policy can cause when (new) technology is applied onto traditional patterns of work. The in-depth interviewing of management and staff and the survey of Receptionists in Swallow Hotels added detail about attitudes and opinions which otherwise may not have been expressed so openly and frankly.

One of the most fundamental challenges for the collection of statistics for the thesis was the extent of the variation in reliability of published statistics especially those produced by government departments or agencies. This is illustrated in Chapter's 3 and 5. However the statistics that were available could be used to assess the economic importance of the Tourism Industry as a source of foreign revenue as well as an employer in Britain. Both indicators fluctuated widely and were seen to be a consistently unreliable basis upon which to place hopes of social and economic salvation through the "service" industries of Tourism and Hotels.

Several chapters were devoted to the main theme of the thesis that of the relationship between "service", technology and profit. They were found to be compatible within the Hotel Industry where there is structured a specific capitalist logic; that of profit maximisation through restructuring and rationalisation of services and labour. Conflict was seen to arise in the social relationships between management and labour as jobs were increasingly regulated and roles economically downgraded in the face of (new) technology. Detailed accounts of the labour and industrial relations policies of the three hotel companies highlighted these tensions in specific contexts.

Within two capitalist economies, Britain and the USA, the practice of personal service was analysed in close detail. The juxtaposition of labour commodification with the restructuring of customer services around profit was shown to be at fundamental odds with any sort of traditional concept of personal service for the Hotel Industry. That technology has changed what it means for a person to serve

a customer in the Hotel Industry over the last thirty years is irrefutable. Service is strictly for sale rather than personally offered and given.

Overlying all of this and in association with capital is the way in which gender is used in the labour process in a hotel. That sex and sexuality are at work in the Hotel Industry in Britain and the USA is undeniable. They are a part of the so called “mystique” of personal service and the squalid informal work contracts that females are subjected to. It has been shown that the entire range of forms of sexual harassment are present in the working day of a Hotel Receptionist especially if you are female.

## APPENDIX - QUESTIONNAIRE

SURVEY OF SWALLOW HOTEL RECEPTIONISTS

EMPLOYEE DETAILS

NAME:

HOTEL:

JOB TITLE:

PREVIOUS POSITIONS IN SWALLOW HOTELS WITH DATES OF EMPLOYMENT.

PREVIOUS POSITIONS	DATES	LIVED-IN

If you lived in  
please tick the  
box.

DETAILS OF PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT (INCLUDING PART-TIME JOBS)

PREVIOUS JOBS	DATES	LIVED-IN

If you lived in  
please tick the  
box.

ANY PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH COMPUTERS (INCLUDING SCHOOL). PLEASE  
A BRIEF DESCRIPTION.



WORKING CONDITIONS

Do you live in the Hotel? YES      NO

Which of the following are available for live in staff and which would you want to see made available?

	Available	Would like made Available
Television Room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff Laundry Facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff Rooms Cleaned	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Games Room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choice of Staff Meals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Own Room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Please tick boxes)

Could you afford to live out if you wanted to? YES      NO

	Dissatisfied	Satisfied
Style of Uniform	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meal Breaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rates of Pay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff Accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hours of Work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff Rota	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are you a member of a Trade Union? YES      NO

Do You think that Trade Unions do a good job in protecting their members interests? YES      NO      DON'T KNOW

WORKING CONDITIONS (CONTINUED)

YES NO

Where do you eat your staff meals?  
(Please tick)

- Staff Canteen
- Reception Office
- Both

How far in advance is the staff rota usually made out for  
Hotel Reception?

- Less than 4 days
- Less than 1 week
- 1 week in advance
- 2 weeks in advance
- More than 2 weeks in advance

(Please tick one box  
only)

Do you feel this is sufficient advance notice?  
(Please tick)

YES NO

During the last 28 days how many times have you?

- Worked on split shifts
- Worked on your day off

(Please write the number  
in the box)

Do you feel staff in other departments consider  
Receptionists in relation to them as:

- Friendly
- Snooty
- Unhelpful
- Co-operative
- Easy going
- Very formal

(Please tick box or  
boxes as appropriate)



WORKING CONDITIONS (CONTINUED)

YES NO

Have you personally experienced sexual harassment whilst working in hotels? (Please tick)

If yes, then by whom have you been sexually harassed?

Guests	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Please tick box or boxes as appropriate)
Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	

On what grounds do you think you secured your present job?

Training	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Please tick boxes as appropriate)
Experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Personality	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sexual Attractiveness	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Prepared to Live in	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other (Please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	

MANAGEMENT ATTITUDES

In the area of authority and decision making do you have the authority to deal with: (Please tick)

	YES	NO
Negotiating Room Rates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Handling guest complaints	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advance reservations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conference Enquiries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you feel the management in your hotel consider Receptionists in relation to the guests as:

A pretty face	<input type="checkbox"/>	(please tick box or boxes as appropriate)
An unskilled clerk	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Very formal	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Efficient	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Friendly	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Hardworking	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Easy Going	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Lazy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Snooty	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Co-Operative	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Unhelpful	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Who can you rely on to help when you are busy?

General Manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	(please tick box or boxes as appropriate)
Duty Manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Food & Beverage Manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Front of House Manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Personnel Manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Control Clerk	<input type="checkbox"/>	

MANAGEMENT ATTITUDES (CONTINUED)

Do you feel the management in your hotel are:

Positively in favour of trade unions

Indifferent towards them

Positively against trade unions

(Tick one  
box only)

Do you think a woman could do the job of a Hotel Manager?  
(Please tick)

YES

NO

CAREER ATTITUDES

YES NO

Do you have children: Before the age of five  
(Please tick)  
Older than five

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If yes, has this affected the number of hours you work.  
Please explain.

If no and you had children in the future, which of the following do you think you would do?

- 1. Continue working as you are
- 2. Stop working altogether
- 3. Work part-time only during the day
- 4. Work part-time at any time
- 5. Don't know

(Please tick one box)

During the course of a working week, do you:

- 1. Work no more than 39 hours
- 2. Work more than 39 hours and get paid overtime or time off in lieu
- 3. Work more than 39 hours without getting paid overtime or time off in lieu.

(Please tick one box)

Do you dislike any of the following (you can tick more than one if you wish).

- 1. Week-end work
- 2. Shiftwork
- 3. Split Shifts
- 4. I don't dislike any of them

What aspects of the job of an Hotel Receptionist would you like more training in?

- 1. Computer reservation system
- 2. Communication skills
- 3. Selling techniques
- 4. Hotel Law
- 5. Health & Safety
- 6. Sales Ledger & Control

(Please tick box or boxes as appropriate)

CAREER ATTITUDES (CONTINUED)

What other Hotel departments would you like more knowledge of:

- 1. Housekeeping
- 2. Bars
- 3. Porterage
- 4. Kitchen
- 5. Restaurant
- 6. Financial Control
- 7. Administration & Mgnt.

(Please tick box or boxes as appropriate)

Would you be prepared to do courses on these topics?

- College Courses
- Company based courses

(Please tick one or both)

Do you see hotel reception as a path to a career in:

- 1. Head Reception/Reception Manager
- 2. Front Office Management
- 3. Hotel Management
- 4. Hotel Reception is a job not a career.
- 5. None of the above as I don't intend to stay in the hotel industry.

(Please tick one box only)

TRAINING & COMPUTERS

Did your course in Hotel Reception include experience with computers? YES NO

How were you trained as a Hotel Receptionist?

C & G 709 College Course & In-house training programme

In-house training programme only

Did your training as an Hotel Receptionist give you the confidence to do the job of a Trainee Receptionist? YES NO

Do you think working with a computer makes the job easier? YES NO

Do you think that the computer allows you to serve the guests needs more effectively? YES NO

Does working with a computer mean that your job is:

More skilled

Less skilled

I Don't know

Boring & Repetitive

(Please tick one box only)

Do you think the functions a computer can execute reduces the initiative Hotel Receptionists need to do their work? YES NO

Do you think that with a computer you only need Hotel Receptionists to be smiling host/hostess. YES NO

TRAINING & COMPUTERS (CONTINUED)

Rank the following from 1 - 6 according to how much time you spend on each activity during a shift.

	EARLY SHIFT	LATE SHIFT
Contact with other departments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clerical work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Telephone reservations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Customer contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1 = Most

6 = Least

(If equal time is spent on more than one activity then use the same number to show that)

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