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'THE EXPERIENCE OF RETIREMENT'

A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS'

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Ph D

June, 1978

UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

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ABSTRACT

The retirement experience is examined in this thesis via interviews with four groups - residents in an inner city area, miners, car workers and architects. The purpose behind these interviews is to explore the everyday experience of retirement, relating this experience both to the immediate structures surrounding the individual and to broader economic and political forces.

As well as giving detailed descriptions of the retirement experience, this thesis is also concerned with theoretical issues in the field of social gerontology. Here, I have reviewed the main sociological theories and have indicated the outline of an alternative approach.

As a final aim of the thesis, I have tried to integrate some of the arguments advanced, with a discussion about the components of a retirement social policy, relating the necessity for such a policy both to the ending of life-time employment and the movement towards an ageing of the population. Further, I have attempted to illustrate the effect of these changes via the interviews conducted for this study, building the elements of a social policy for retirement both on the latter, and on extrapolations about future social changes.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are numerous people who have helped in the production of this thesis, and I can only list here just a few of the most important

My Supervisor - Bob Roshier - has been a constant source of help and support and his advice, particularly on questions of methodology and sampling, has been absolutely crucial at various stages of the thesis. I am very grateful to him. The Department of Sociology at Durham University provided excellent resources to support the development of this thesis - having access to a room, xeroxing facilities, tape recorder and numerous other services, were all vital to its completion.

Various organisations were helpful in giving access to their records. British Leyland, the Durham Miners' Association, the West Midlands Region of the Royal Institute of British Architects and Benwell Community Development Project, being amongst the most important.

The librarians at Palace Green have been extraordinarily efficient in dealing with my numerous requests and queries. Many thanks to them.

Hugh Beynon and Brian Williams ploughed through my handwriting, commenting and advising on the presentation of the thesis.

Jane Taylor, Louise Webb, Mike Holbrook, Chris Jones and Tony Novack were very good friends. My typist - Connie Dowson - was tremendous.

CHRIS PHILLIPSON

INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

In the early part of 1979 there will be a Government White Paper on the needs of the Elderly (the first one ever) The publication of this White Paper will be an important event, signifying the efforts and activities of a variety of organisations and individuals over the past few years in demanding increased intervention to support a growing elderly population Without question, the publication of this document will stimulate an intense debate on the social and economic reforms necessary for meeting the needs of this population Society, for a period at least, will become more conscious of old age and will subject its institutions to an examination as to their adequacy for supporting such a population

Already, accurate guesses can be made as to what this debate will be mostly concerned with In the main, attention will be focused on the increase in those aged 75 and over - a group for whom problems of isolation, loneliness and ill health are a major concern The key questions arising here concern the type of caring facilities best suited to individuals in this age group, the best range of residential accommodation, the relationship between community care and more specialised services, the role of the voluntary services in the care of the elderly ¹

All of the above questions are undoubtedly worthy of the maximum debate. And the fact that we have had to wait so long for a White Paper to deal with these issues speaks volumes for the slow development of government intervention in this field However, there is a larger issue which may well be neglected in the ensuing debate, namely, the question of the broader role which the retiree

should play in society, e.g. what type of structures are necessary to support his/her active participation within the community? What range of life styles should be encouraged and stimulated in the retirement period? What degree of choice and control over economic and social resources should the retired person have?

In a major survey of the elderly (to be published in February 1978) eight out of ten of those between 65 and 75 say that their general health is good, many report that they do not really consider themselves elderly, half do not even have a minor disability². Of course, there are many in this group for whom these things do not apply, and there are many more in the age groups beyond, also, related to existing facilities, unmet health and welfare needs are present to a massive extent³.

Given the latter it might well be argued that it is the meeting of basic needs that should be the first and most urgent concern. However it is the viewpoint of this study that it is now equally pressing that a debate should be started on the social implications of retirement, and that the adequacy of social institutions should be considered not just from the standpoint of their ability to deliver health and welfare services, but also their ability to provide a framework of activities and institutions (both specialised and non-specialised) for all people beyond working age - a framework which will seek to stimulate and develop the individual when the burden of work has been removed.

The one quite remarkable thing that can be said about retirement is that it has assumed an increasingly important role in society with very little debate about what the implications of this might be. On the contrary, the tenor of the debate has been concerned more to confirm and elaborate a

retirement mythology. This mythology suggests that people die in large numbers because of retirement and the loss of work, and that even if they are not killed off by retirement, the anxiety and tension it brings to people's lives make it a less than worthwhile venture. Evidence for the latter in particular tends to come from Doctors writing to newspapers and medical journals about the numbers of recent retirees coming in for their dose of valium (or its equivalent) to ease the tensions created by retirement. Thus, according to Dr. Vernon Coleman:

There is ample evidence to show that there is nothing more calculated to make a person feel old than an early retirement. I have seen dozens of patients who retired at the age of 55 or 60 and they have all bemoaned their decision later. . . On the other hand, there is a great deal of evidence to show that men and women who continue at work well after the 'official' retirement date live longer.⁴

And, for Dr. Ellis Woolf (an industrial psychologist)

Retirement is a real tragedy for an awful lot of people - usually the more creative and dynamic members of our society. They are the people who have given all to their work and in consequence don't have an acceptable social framework - membership of clubs, absorbing hobbies, a real circle of friends to fall back on.⁵

Both of the above are extracts from recent articles in two national daily newspapers. Both can be regarded as fairly typical as regards the comments made about retirement. Dr. Coleman suggests "ample evidence" in support of his view that early retirement makes people feel old. Possibly it does, but as to there being "ample evidence" this simply is not the case. Few studies have been carried out examining the psychological and sociological effects of early retirement, and, even if there had been, it would still be far too early - given that we are talking about a relatively recent trend - to make any definitive judgement. We are told that there is a "great deal of evidence" that people who work longer also live longer. Maybe there is, but could it not be that the people

who work longer also happen to be that much fitter than those who do not? And might not their fitness - albeit work-related - be quite unrelated to the fact that they had kept on at work? In addition, there is a vast number of people who do retire at or even before the official retiring age, and who still live into their 70s, 80s and beyond. Are these people simply special cases? Statistical abnormalities? Again, the idea of there being a "great deal of evidence" is a remarkable falsification of the true situation. The fact is, that apart from cases of doctors and others reporting on the "dozens of patients" who come to them with problems, there are in this country few detailed studies of the early period of retirement. There is certainly not enough information to talk as though it were established fact that retirement killed people off or that it was a tragedy in people's lives. That it should be a tragedy in particular for the "creative and dynamic members of our society" is, again, a view which has never been put to any real test. Certainly, I know of no study (in this country) which has ever examined the retirement experience of such a group.⁶

The paucity of studies on retirement is a remarkable thing in itself. The early post-war period (as will be documented below) saw a quite intensive debate on the problems of old age and retirement - though the sociological component to this debate was relatively small. Subsequently, work by Townsend (1957) and Tunstall (1966) added important contributions at a sociological level, with a detailed description of family life by Townsend, and a study of the problems of loneliness and isolation by Tunstall. Unfortunately, neither of these very substantial works stimulated any significant attempts to corroborate the findings made or, indeed, to present alternative positions. Rather than stimulating research and debate both works slipped into the niche of minor classics without

any real breakthrough in the development of the study of old age and retirement⁷
 That, of course, is not the fault of the works themselves - they remain two of
 the most impressive contributions from post-war British sociology. Rather,
 it is the fault of an environment which remained (and remains still) desperately
 backward in terms of sociological enquiries into ageing and retirement. A
 backwardness, which, in the face of the steady institutionalisation of retirement,
 allowed powerful mythologies to flourish.

AIMS OF THIS STUDY

It is against such a background that the aims of this study must be viewed,
 one of the general concerns of the author being to provide a sociological
 contribution to a gerontological environment dominated by medically and
 psychologically orientated studies. However, out of this general aim grew a
 number of subsidiary themes, and from its original conception the thesis has
 undergone substantial changes and modifications. Since these changes signify
 important elements in various arguments which are to be put forward, some
 discussion of them should be made.

When the thesis was first started a fairly orthodox approach to retirement
 and old age under-pinned initial thoughts about the project. These ran along
 the lines of old age as a period of alienation, with - for men in particular - an
 extended period of tension and anxiety with the loss of the work role. With the
 assumed primacy of the latter for most men and the absence of any social
 alternatives, retirement was thought likely to be an unwelcome event, with
 reduced self-esteem and social involvement being the inevitable accompaniments.

This was, of course, a more sociological version of retirement mythology,
 with the sociological components under-pinning a series of assumptions about

people's need for work and occupational involvement Retirement was characterised simply as a social vacuum, with a presumed dislike of leisure and/or leisure orientated roles contributing to the lack of purpose in the retirement period.

All of these views and statements will be encountered at various points in this thesis, since a model of this kind has been highly influential in a number of key texts and research projects in social gerontology. These have been evaluated and criticised where necessary and it must simply suffice to say here that such a model does not underpin this thesis (though vestiges of it are undoubtedly apparent) and, indeed, it is now the feeling of this writer that this model is long overdue for rejection and replacement by one more relevant to social, cultural and occupational changes

The orthodox model of retirement was shaped primarily in the early post-war period. During this period there was considerable pressure on pensioners to retain an economic function. Accompanying this pressure there was an ideological emphasis on the importance of work - this being particularly underlined in the case of men (women in this period being persuaded to leave the factories and withdraw from an economically active role, Wilson, 1977).

Much was to change in the intervening years (although the centrality of work has continued to be emphasised by those concerned with apparent tendencies towards work-shyness). Women were to return to the labour market in considerable numbers, and - subsequently - unemployment was to return as well (bringing in its wake a toning down in the cruder post-war evocations of the work ethic); the retired - and the wholly retired in particular - began to expand in number, and eventually it was the working retired who became pushed into the minority

Attitudes towards leisure were also changing, leisure activities coming to play a more important role in people's daily lives (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1975), important changes were occurring in the workplace as well, with the spread of assembly-line methods of production. A study by Le Gros Clark (1960) asked the question: "How will the contemporary revolution in manufacturing methods begin to affect the employment prospects of the older man?" According to Clark:

The conclusion reached is that for some time ahead it will almost certainly diminish his chances of remaining at work, at all events beyond the period of the conventional retiring age or thereabouts. (p. 9)

In the post-war period, then, retirement finally arrived, and with the subsequent development of an economic recession, permanent retirement became an important arm of government and corporate policy.

Having documented these changes the question for this researcher then became: How has all this changed individual attitudes and social evaluations of retirement? With so much evidence about changes in family, leisure and work relations, could retirement still be conceptualised in the same way as in the fifties and sixties? Would it not be feasible to think that the retiree of the seventies had rather different feelings and attitudes toward retirement than, say, Townsend's (op. cit.) retired men in London, in the fifties? Under-pinning this concern to reconsider the orthodox model of retirement was a sense of unease about the way in which the crisis of retirement was so easily accepted. If it was such a well-established phenomenon, one might at least expect a reasonable number of studies demonstrating the difficulties brought about by retirement. Yet, (as the review of the literature in this study makes clear) the British literature on retirement is sparse indeed, and what material there is does not

necessarily support the crisis view. Indeed, many of the studies which do suggest this must themselves be questioned because of substantial methodological flaws (e.g. the use of self-selected samples)⁸. Even if the early literature had been overwhelming in its indications about the crisis of retirement, there would still, however, be a question about the need for some revision given the important changes which have taken place since the early fifties; and, as far as Britain goes, there are simply not enough adequate studies - recent ones that is - which can really guide us here. Certainly, we do have a number of valuable surveys which include the pensionable population (particularly from government sources), there are also a number of impressive studies of the very elderly - in particular the sick (e.g. Isaacs, 1972), and the mentally infirm (e.g. Meacher, 1972). But there are few studies telling us much about the overall experience of retirement - in particular for those in the 65 - 75 age group, the majority of whom are not sick, are not mentally infirm, and who do not, apparently, even consider themselves old.

In this context, the distinction made by American researchers between the "young"-old and the "old"-old (see, for example, Neugarten, 1974) has not had a great deal of impact in this country. Thus, whilst most researchers have been keen to point out the heterogeneity of the retired population, they have been less keen to pursue this in terms of the implications for research design, and for any conclusions from research. The view of this researcher is that such heterogeneity has very substantial implications. For whilst welfare and medically orientated issues may well have key relevance to the over-75s, they have much less relevance to the "young"-old (the 60 - 75s). Here, questions relating to the scope which society allows for maintaining choice over life-styles and the

means to actively participate within society, must be considered central. Yet, it must be noted here that the defining characteristic of British research has been the way in which these broader issues have been ignored and the way in which issues relating to the 'young'-old have been narrowly defined as employment or work issues (with a dominant assumption that the majority of individuals in this group see work as a far more satisfactory way of life than retirement). The argument to be pursued here is that it is far too easy to presume that the retired want to return to work or that retirement is simply a marginal period before death. Many actually want nothing less than a return to work, and of those that do, a large number are probably forced back through lack of money. As for it being just a short period before death, a man of 60 can expect to live a further 15 years, a woman nearly 20 years such periods hardly deserve either to be defined or experienced as marginal. On the contrary, they could become as vital periods for self-development as other periods in the individual's life.

The aims and intentions of this thesis hinge around the development and exploration of precisely the above theme - this being done at four principal levels. Firstly, I have attempted to give an account of the changes in the way retirement is evaluated by society - this, by looking at debates on retirement in periods such as the depression, the post-war boom, and the more recent economic recession. The argument developed here is that rather than see retirement as having fixed and unchanging social definitions, it should be seen as a period open to varying interpretations - in this instance from pressures from the wider economic and political system

I have subsequently gone on, in the second section, to demonstrate different interpretations of retirement amongst individuals themselves - relating

these to familial, occupational and communal factors. Here, there has also been an attempt to describe in as much detail as possible, the everyday experience of retirement: what retirement is like on an ordinary day, what people do with their time how they organise their lives, what sort of difficulties they come up against.

The underlying aim in both of the above elements of the research was to develop an understanding of the retirees social relationship, both to the immediate structures surrounding him, and to broader economic and political structures. Thus, rather than assume retirement to be a crisis regardless of variations in the former and the latter, I have attempted to show people coming into retirement with different levels and types of resources, resources which will be important in structuring both attitudes towards retirement, and the broader contours of the retirement experience. On the latter, I have tried to show the variety of feelings and interpretations bearing upon the retirement experience. Thus, rather than see retirement in overly "black and white" terms, I have attempted to show some of the ambivalence, some of the mixture of relief and regret - at finishing work and becoming retired.

At a third level, the thesis has also attempted to make a contribution to the theoretical debate concerning the type of adjustment which the individual makes to retirement. This debate has been carried on in a fairly low key insofar as British social gerontology is concerned, with most studies opting either for a variant of role theory (e.g. Townsend, *op. cit.*), or disengagement theory, (e.g. Crawford, 1971⁹). There have been few attempts, however, to review the long debate in America on the adequacy of these approaches, and few attempts, either, to assess the relevance of more recent theoretical developments

(e.g. Continuity theory) in relation to the British social and occupational structure. A third concern of this thesis has been, therefore, to review the history of this theoretical debate, and to indicate the most important conclusions which can be drawn from it. I have also sketched the framework for an alternative model for understanding the individual's adjustment to retirement - drawing on positions advanced by both American and British gerontologists

At a final level, I have tried to integrate some of the arguments advanced with a discussion about the framework for a future retirement social policy - relating the necessity for such a policy to specific economic and demographic changes. Further, I have attempted to illustrate the effect of these changes via the medium of the interviews conducted for this study, building the elements of a social policy both on the latter, and on extrapolations about future social changes.

How far these different aims link up to each other I must leave to the judgement of the reader. But in defence of the rather all-encompassing nature of the thesis I would say that there seemed to me a need for a piece of research which integrated the various levels at which the retirement experience could be located. Having done this, having drawn the outline of the area which debates and studies of retirement must cover, it should now be easier to pick out - in a more selective fashion - specific issues for investigation. The difficulty in the past has been that the outline to retirement simply has not been investigated in sufficient detail; partly because of this researchers have been forced to incorporate into their work a number of often quite illegitimate assumptions about the meaning of retirement both for the individual and for society. I have tried, as far as possible, not to let too many such assumptions "crowd" the structure and design of this study, and have attempted to "think-through" and subject to debate my own assumptions

- particularly in the early stages of the project. Further, this has been done not only in discussions with other sociologists, but also via the medium of the interviews with retirees - these, more than anything else, changed many of the assumptions and mythologies I had previously adhered to.

Footnotes

- 1 For a recent discussion of some of these themes see
Bosanquet, N (1978)
- 2 These figures were quoted in November 1977 in a speech by David Ennals
For a report on this see New Society, December 1st, 1977
- 3 For details on the extent of unmet need see Williamson, J (1969),
and Isaacs, B. (1972).
- 4 Daily Telegraph, April 24th, 1976, p. 11.
5. Daily Mail, September 28th, 1977, p. 6
- 6 There is a substantial American Literature on this question, however.
See, for example, Moore, E. H (1951) on Professors in retirement,
and Rowe, A R (1973) on Scientists in retirement
- 7 These remarks are specifically directed at the sociological study of
ageing and retirement, they are not so applicable to the study of
ageing from a health and welfare point of view, where the extent of
research activity has been comparatively prodigious
- 8 On the question of self-selected samples see, for example,
Anderson, W F and Cowan, N (1956), and Snellgrove, D (1965)
- 9 M. Johnson's (1976) biographical approach to ageing is, however, an
important movement away from these theoretical standpoints
Crawford's work (see bibliography) although containing a useful
critique of disengagement theory, draws on both it and role theory
to support and illustrate research findings

SECTION 1

RETIREMENT AND AGEING: THE SOCIOLOGICAL CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1

RETIREMENT AND AGEING: SETTING THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As an area of study three aspects of retirement and ageing should be noted as having central importance. First, there is the increased number of elderly people - especially when considered as a proportion of the total population (see Table 1.1 below). Secondly, there is the trend towards earlier retirement and the reduced economic activity rates in the upper age groups - trends which mean an increased length of time which people can expect to spend as wholly retired. Thirdly, there is the abruptness of the transition from working life to retirement - an abruptness often underlined by the social ambivalence shown towards retirement.

Within this perspective four principal contexts to retirement and ageing may be encountered.

1.2 THE DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

As numerous commentators have pointed out, the elderly population has grown substantially faster than the population of younger ages during the last fifty years (see Table 1.2)¹, the central factors at work here being the fall in the birth rate in the early nineteen twenties, plus improvements in nutrition, health and social conditions. The number of elderly people (i.e. women over 60 and men over 65) has increased this century from 2.9 million in 1911 (three years after the introduction of the 5s. 0d non-contributory pension in this country) to just over 9 million in 1971 (2.8 million men and 6.2 million women). As a percentage of the U.K.'s population this has meant an increase from 6.8 per cent in 1911 to 16.3 per cent in 1971. According to population projections, 1981 should see the

TABLE 1.1 ELDERLY POPULATION 1911-2001. UNITED KINGDOM (Thousands)

	Census enumerated		Mid-year estimates					Projections	
	1911	1931	1951	1971	1973	1974	1981	2001	
	Men aged								
at least 65	364	1,470	2,252	2,821	2,930	2,986	3,218	3,212	
at least 75	248	371	691	833	844	855	1,015	1,176	
at least 85	23	36	70	125	126	127	129	182	
Women aged									
at least 60	1,915	2,950	4,598	6,234	6,361	6,254	6,588	6,282	
at least 65	1,283	1,947	3,231	4,524	4,661	4,730	5,033	4,886	
at least 75	375	586	1,701	1,777	1,837	1,871	2,131	2,378	
at least 85	50	77	157	353	371	380	420	568	
Elderly as a percentage of total population	6.8	9.6	13.6	16.3	16.6	16.4	17.4	15.9	
Men and women aged 75 and over as a percentage of total population	1.5	2.1	4.7	4.8	4.8	4.8	5.6	5.9	
Elderly per thousand population of working age	109	145	214	273	279	275	291	264	

TABLE 1.2 GROWTH RATES OF TOTAL POPULATION COMPARED WITH POPULATION AGED 65 AND OVER 1955-59, 1969-75, 1975-80, ANNUAL AVERAGE RATIOS

	Total population			Population aged 65 and over		
	1955-69	1969-75	1975-80	1955-69	1969-75	1975-80
MAJOR COUNTRIES						
Canada	2.1	1.4	1.5	2.2	2.1	2.6
United States	1.4	1.1	1.3	2.1	1.7	1.8
Japan	1.0	1.2	1.1	2.4	3.6	3.4
France	1.1	0.9	1.1	1.8	1.7	1.2
Germany	1.1	0.5	0.4	2.8	1.8	0.5
Italy	0.8	0.6	0.5	2.4	2.6	2.3
United Kingdom	0.6	0.5	0.5	1.4	1.5	1.1
OTHER NORTHERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES						
Austria	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.9	-	-
Belgium	0.6	0.3	0.1	1.6	1.5	0.8
Denmark	0.7	0.4	0.4	2.2	1.9	1.4
Finland	0.8	0.2	0.1	2.3	2.8	1.8
Iceland	1.8	1.8	1.8	2.8	-	-
Ireland	0.0	1.2	1.2	0.4	1.1	1.2
Luxembourg	0.7	0.6	0.8	2.3	2.3	-
Netherlands	1.3	1.1	1.1	2.6	2.1	1.6
Norway	0.8	0.9	0.9	2.5	1.8	1.5
Sweden	0.7	0.7	0.5	2.2	2.3	1.7
Switzerland	1.6	0.8	0.8	2.6	-	-
OTHER SOUTHERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES						
Greece	0.7	0.7	0.8	2.8	-	-
Portugal	0.8	0.7	0.7	2.0	-	-
Spain	0.9	1.0	0.9	2.1	-	-
Turkey	2.6	2.6	2.6	4.4	2.3	4.1

Source: O E C D (1972), p. 126

peak of this trend, with a subsequent leveling off as the lower annual rate of births between the two world wars takes its effect. However, it is also known that 1991 will see a peak in the numbers aged over 75 (to over 3.5 million) and, given the considerable demands of this group on health and social services (Seagrave, 1978), this second "peak" will be of major importance.

One caveat to the above is that this so-called ageing of the population does not mean that the outer limits of the life span have actually been pushed forward, rather, there is now a greater proportion of elderly people, i.e. more people can now expect to live into their late 60s and 70s (and beyond), and this is primarily the result of the massive decline in infant mortality. As Peter Stearns (1977) has noted, death was omnipresent in the pre-industrial village and it was the death of children that was most characteristic of all.

Infants died at rates of 50 per cent or more, summer, the worst period in terms of infection and malnutrition (note the contrast with the modern cycle, when old people are most likely to die in winter) was a time of death. A mid-nineteenth century Sicilian peasant saw eight of his playmates die when he was six, and only about half of the infants born at his age had even survived to six. Childhood was a time of fear, and few people could think of longevity. In a large Italian village a funeral occurred every three days and more often during the summer. Death had to be accepted as normal, but it was mourned and remembered - and fought, with peasant remedies. For the young adult, the expectation that half one's children would die simply enhanced the disinterest, the disbelief, in ageing. (p. 22)

Now, of course, in our society it is ageing and death in old age which appears "omnipresent". In 1931 there were fewer than 10 people over the normal retirement age for 100 people under the age of 15. Between then and now the population has aged steadily as people born around 1900 have moved into the older age groups. By 1974 there were 70 elderly people for every 100 young people and, because of the present sharp decline in fertility, this ageing of the population is likely to continue well into the 1980s². Without question, therefore,

the demographic and social presence of the elderly within the population is likely to become more and more marked. What sort of social context are they likely to relate to?

1.3 THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

There have been a number of important changes in family structure and family size, changes which will have some influence on the quantity and quality of relationships available to the retired and elderly. First, the number of women without family commitments has declined, decreasing the number available to care for an elderly parent. Secondly, the decline in family size means that old people have fewer sources of help and support to draw upon. Thirdly, the development of the four generation family - the consequence of a reduction in the time gap between generations - may place the son or daughter of an elderly parent in a potential conflict of responsibility between his or her own parents, and, say, a married daughter with children (see Isaacs, 1972, for examples of this).

At present, the changes outlined above do not appear to have had the isolating effect conventional wisdom usually suggests³. A study by Shanas et al of the aged in America, Denmark and Great Britain, found that:

The majority of the aged in all three countries have children, live in the vicinity of one of their children, and maintain regular contact with their families. The normal pattern of family relations in later life is more one of continuing integration than one of isolation. A small minority, however, are in poor health and isolated from their families. The majority of these are women⁴.

The problems should not be minimised, however, especially when it is remembered that over half of the elderly in Britain are single or widowed, and that nearly a quarter have no surviving children⁵. In addition, the flexibility of the family to accommodate ageing relatives must increasingly come into question

as the changes sketched above take hold Rosser and Harris (1965) have shown how a decline in family size affects the number of close relatives available to an elderly relative (in the following example closer than nephews or first cousins) At a time when the average family size was four children this number was as high as 358 If the family size is reduced to three then the number becomes 165, and if just two then the number falls to 56 Thus, as Wilson (1973) has pointed out

this curtailment of family size not only affects the direct access that older people have to their children but even more in proportion curtails the network of close relations and undermines the flexibility which the Shanas/Townsend studies (quoted above, C P) made such a strong point about (p 400)

The importance of this is underlined when related to the population projections discussed earlier (in particular the growth in those over 75) It is known, for example, that as age increases a larger proportion of people live alone Thus, the General Household survey in 1971 found that of persons over 80 more than one-third lived alone Further, in the same age group, there was a decline in the proportion living with another adult and a corresponding increase in the proportion living with either two other adults or in households containing children - this because old people faced by widowhood and a decline in self-sufficiency often return to live with their children and their children's families⁶.

The combination of the above with the changes in family structure referred to earlier suggest that two opposing social movements are now developing On the one hand, there is a family structure which is likely to become over-burdened by demands from different generations, on the other hand, there is a changing fourth generation containing more of the very elderly (recent D H S S projections suggest a 20 per cent increase in the number of people over 75 in the next 10 years⁷) The result of these opposing movements - for both the 'young'-old and the 'old'-old -

means an increased reliance on social resources within the community - the quality of these resources having a considerable impact on the overall experience of retirement and ageing

1.4 THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Amongst the many aspects which could be subsumed under this heading attention will be focused primarily on the changes in economic activity rates for the population approaching and beyond retirement age. In this area there has been a minor revolution in the space of twenty years (Table 1.3 indicates the relevant trends) with a drastic reduction in the number of economically active male pensioners.

Table 1.3 indicates a halving in the male rate for those 65+ in the space of 25 years - the trend for all men above 55 being downward, women, on the other hand, show an opposing trend, the number of economically active women 60+ having tripled in the space of 20 years.

The trend towards a declining male activity rate has been occurring since 1890 - the start of the so-called "scientific revolution" in the capitalist economies - and has been intensified in the post-war period as the most rapidly growing sectors in the economy have drawn upon women as the prime reservoir of labour (their attractiveness stemming from their "flexibility", cheapness, and number - the latter helped by an initially lower rate of participation).

In assessing the reasons for these changes in the labour force (particularly in relation to the elderly), a number of factors may be listed. First, Wedderburn (1975) has noted changes in the industrial and occupational structure reducing the number of semi- and unskilled jobs available for men with lower educational qualifications. Undoubtedly a decline in industries employing a high proportion

TABLE 1 3 ECONOMIC ACTIVITY RATES BY AGE AND SEX

	Great Britain						Percentages		
	Actuals						Projections		
	1951	1961	1971	1975	1976	1977	1981	1986	
Males									
15-19	83.8	74.6	60.9	-	-	-	-	-	
16-19	-	-	-	65.8	64.7	64.0	62.8	62.2	
20-24	94.9	91.9	89.9	88.9	88.5	88.2	88.6	88.4	
25-44	98.3	98.5	97.9	97.7	97.9	97.8	97.7	97.7	
45-64	95.2	96.8	94.5	93.9	94.4	94.3	93.8	93.6	
65+	31.1	25.0	19.4	15.3	15.9	15.2	13.0	11.5	
TOTAL	87.6	86.0	81.4	80.6	80.6	80.2	79.3	79.5	
Married females									
16-19	38.1	41.0	41.6	51.9	51.9	51.9	51.9	51.9	
20-24	36.5	41.3	45.7	54.3	54.6	54.9	55.7	55.7	
25-44	25.1	33.1	46.4	55.1	56.3	57.5	59.3	62.8	
45-59	21.5	32.3	53.4	59.6	61.3	62.6	65.6	70.5	
60+	4.6	7.3	14.2	13.4	13.5	13.7	14.7	16.0	
TOTAL	21.7	29.7	42.2	47.9	49.0	50.0	51.9	54.9	
Non-married females									
15-19	80.7	73.2	57.2	-	-	-	-	-	
16-19	-	-	-	60.2	58.8	57.7	56.6	55.8	
20-24	91.0	89.4	81.2	77.0	76.7	76.7	77.7	77.3	
25-44	81.2	84.8	80.4	79.2	79.0	78.7	77.9	76.9	
45-59	61.2	70.5	73.4	73.1	72.9	72.7	72.4	72.2	
60+	10.7	12.1	11.0	8.9	8.7	8.5	8.0	7.8	
TOTAL	55.0	50.6	43.7	41.8	41.6	41.4	41.6	41.4	

Source: Social Trends (1977), p 82

of elderly people has occurred. However, whether their increasing failure to re-enter the labour force stems solely from fewer low skill jobs is questionable - especially when related to Braverman's (1974) analysis of the reduction in skill content and the simplification of the labour process in capitalist economies (in which case older workers are penalised as much for being over-skilled as under-skilled). Secondly, it might be argued that the institutionalisation of retirement could be seen as part of a "trade-off" with education's role as a stimulant of social mobility. Permanent retirement at a given age helps mask the reality of shrinking employment (and shrinking opportunities) in the capitalist economies, helping to maintain a steady flow of personnel through work institutions (see below for a discussion on this).

Thirdly, one commentator has argued that the increasing size of employing units has resulted in more bureaucratic employment policies⁸, in particular, compulsory retirement with the subsequent reduction in the employment of people over 65. However, this observation tells us very little about the mechanisms at work in this process. On the one hand, it could be argued that the changes in the labour process in capitalist economies have produced a working environment unfavourable for the retention of older workers, i.e. older workers may be more inefficient as regards the maintenance of given rates of profitability - especially under assembly-line conditions (in the American car industry, for example, the percentage of workers retiring before the age of 65 rose from 33 per cent in 1963 to 78 per cent in 1968)⁹. On the other hand, the growth of large corporations and their own need to generate mechanisms of internal control, e.g. maintenance of employee identification with the company, may bring the relationship between retirement and mobility into play. With the latter, permanent retirement at 55,

60 or 65 guarantees a permanent flow of personnel. For the typical corporation with highly centralised management control this has the advantage of

- a) preventing people from growing old in their jobs,
- b) creating a state of insecurity over promotion,
- c) preventing the formation of well-established cliques outside the central area of control

Fourthly, Braverman (op. cit) has suggested that the opposing movement in participation rates between male and female workers represents two sides of the same phenomenon, namely, an increase in the relative mass of the reserve army of labour. Thus, he argues:

Among male workers this takes the form of a sloughing off into the ranks of the so-called non-participants in the labour force, or in other words an increase in the "stagnant" portion. Among female workers it takes the form of a growing body of female labour which is drawn from the mass of women who previously did not work, and hence represents an enlargement of the "floating" and "stagnant" reserve army of labour (pp 391-392)

A final reason for the declining economic activity rates amongst males will of course be the increasing number who may actually choose to retire. This number will increase as income replacement becomes more adequate, and as retirement itself becomes part of the social consciousness and more integrated into political and trade union demands

1 5 THE FINANCIAL CONTEXT

The association of retirement and old age with financial impoverishment is a common one (and an important contributory factor to the low expectations about retirement). Historically, the aged have encountered great ambivalence in respect of social attitudes, with localised famine and distress constantly exposing their position as one of being "an unproductive element" in societies

dependent on human labour power¹⁰ Country labourers feared old age as a time when they would be evicted from their cottages because they were too old to work (Gaudie, 1974) Poverty in the village might lead to the withdrawal of help previously given by relatives and friends (Anderson, 1971), and with inadequate savings and no alternative accommodation the labourer would ultimately be driven to the workhouse For the industrial worker, the picture - until the introduction of pensions - was little different Most older workers would have to depend on their families for financial support - a dependence which, given recurring trade and economic crises, could often be burdensome. Most, as Stearns (1975) notes, laboured until they dropped.

The majority of the elderly now - as we have seen - are wholly retired, and the threat of the workhouse has been removed Yet some enduring features in their economic and social position remain - in particular their relative poverty compared with other age groups Of the 9 million people in the U.K. over the retirement age, the majority - over 60 per cent - live in households which are below, at, or close to the official poverty line. Nearly 10 per cent of pensioners live in households which have an income below the supplementary benefit level (mainly because they are not claiming the benefits to which they are entitled)¹¹

The extent to which pensioners cluster around the poverty line is reflected in studies of ownership of basic amenities and household goods The General Household Survey in 1971 found that the 60+ age group had the highest proportions lacking certain household amenities, e.g. 19 per cent lacked a bath, 2 per cent a flush lavatory, 78 per cent any central heating (the national averages are 9 per cent, 1 per cent and 66 per cent respectively)¹². In addition, for households with the head over 65, nearly 55 per cent of household expenditure goes on food, fuel and housing costs, this compared to 42 per cent for those aged under 65¹³.

Such a large proportion of expenditure going on primary commodities makes the elderly particularly vulnerable to inflation, the inflexibility and low level of their resources making it difficult to cut down on total expenditure without cutting into major items such as food and fuel.

This general picture of the material situation of the elderly should be balanced by a note on the important differences within this population - particularly in respect of household composition. Here, there are important divisions between one person households, two-person households, women and men, etc., with the single person household appearing worse off than any other group. The General Household Survey for 1971 found that more often than any other type of household those containing one person aged 60 or over had very low incomes. Thus, just over 70 per cent had incomes below £10 (the tax threshold at that time)¹⁴. The 1974 survey found that of this type of household only 30 per cent had an income of more than £15 (compared with 57 per cent of those households with a man and woman 60+), and whilst 36 per cent of the latter had an income of £25 or more, this was true of only 12 per cent of the former¹⁵.

These figures indicate the interaction between economic and sexual oppression. It should be remembered that two-thirds of pensioners are women, and whilst a married couple is more likely to live above the poverty level, the greater life expectancy of women means that with the death of a husband the woman finds herself falling back onto or below the poverty line (60 per cent of widows are receiving a supplementary pension). For the single woman, low income at work, plus discrimination in respect of access to occupational pension schemes, combine to produce almost total reliance on the state retirement pension and the supplementary pension. In this context, Hewitt (1974) has summarised

the main divisions in old age as follows:

Single pensioners are more likely to be poor than are married couples, the very old are far more likely to be poor than the recently retired. Women - particularly the very elderly, single, or widowed woman - are most likely to be poor. Indeed poverty in old age in this country is for the most part the poverty of women. (p 12)

This picture of old age demands two additional points. Firstly, poverty is being conceptualised here in a dynamic sense. If a cross section of the elderly is examined at a single moment in time, roughly the proportions and sub-divisions indicated above will emerge. However, if the picture is re-taken at a later stage, the same proportions may emerge, but the individuals will have moved on, fresh cohorts will bring in new and different resources, the older groups will have reached the limit of their resources, finding themselves trapped in an ever diminishing range of income, and an ever increasing cycle of need.

Secondly, poverty is being understood here in a class sense. The divisions encountered during working life do not cease merely because of the absence of work. Both Strumpel (1973) in America, and Westergaard and Resler (1975) in this country, have demonstrated the extent to which class and social inequalities continue into old age - with inequalities in respect of income, property and occupational pension rights, often accentuating the social divisions in the retirement period.

1.6 RE-EVALUATING RETIREMENT

The various dimensions to retirement and old age discussed above form the key to many of the arguments advanced in this study. Indeed, it was a recognition of their likely impact on the social structure which influenced the design of this thesis. First, there is now a movement towards an ageing of

populations - a movement characteristic of Western economies - with populations with 13 - 15 per cent of their total over the age of 65, increasingly common¹⁶ Secondly, these self-same economies are ones where the demand for labour is diminishing, and where the stimulus of technological innovation has functioned to increase the number of unemployed and those making up the industrial reserve army (Braverman, op.cit). Increasingly, therefore, such economies can no longer guarantee life-time employment, and, in the immediate social adjustment to this phenomena, it is the retired and older workers who will be amongst the most affected - the most affected, not simply because of their greater vulnerability to unemployment, but also because of the poverty encountered when work is no longer available or sought after Thus, in the short and medium term it can be safely predicted that the more elderly and retired there are, the more poverty and deprivation there will be in the social structure Overall, there may well be an important economic and social re-settlement of the population, with a dichotomy between young and older workers, and other "unemployable groups", and workers in the age range 25 - 40, a group with much lower rates of unemployment and higher levels of income.

The issues arising from such a re-settlement are clearly immense, and certainly go beyond the type of framework provided in existing provisions for the retired and unemployed. Thus, the vulnerability of both of these groups to poverty and to feelings of marginality (heightened by the assumption that the unemployed/retired male is nothing but an "economic man"¹⁷) demonstrate the need for new social categories for people outside of the work situation. Certainly, judged in relation to the individuals total life span, it is the latter which is likely

to play an increasingly important part in the social landscape - with the resources and ideologies under-pinning such periods becoming crucial in determining the quality of the individual's life

How far off we are from providing such resources can be gauged not only by the massive amount of poverty affecting the elderly, but also by the lack of any framework securing and legitimating an active and healthy retirement. In this context, it is perhaps inevitable (and to some extent just) that the concerns of government have overwhelmingly focused on the hospital and domiciliary needs of the very elderly - with only minimal attention to the broader needs of the retired population. But from a more general policy point of view this gives a misleading picture of retirement and ageing. Thus there are also numerous retired people active and autonomous within the community. Increasingly, retirement is being viewed as both a reward and release from work and labour, and as a period for extending activities in the social, political and cultural spheres. This is a side to retirement which is rarely mentioned, a positive side, a side concerned with developing new life-styles and new interests - sometimes in new communities. There are many people, it is true, who never enjoy or even recognise this aspect of retirement - with pensions for most people still far too low to allow the potential of retirement to be realised. However, at the heart of this thesis is an argument that this situation is now changing, and that amongst some groups and individuals a more ambitious and optimistic concept of retirement is now developing. If this is correct it must be said that this is happening with little help from the wider society, and in particular from governmental policies. Such policies (as we shall see) have avoided any clear commitment to retirement, preferring to

concentrate instead on the "costs" and "drawbacks" of the demographic and economic changes which are now upon us.

Footnotes

- 1 This section draws extensively on the chapters and sections on the elderly in *Social Trends*, numbers 4, 5 and 6 (1973), (1974), and (1975)
- 2 These figures are taken from N Davis (1976).
- 3 Although the numbers in some form of isolation are still considerable According to one of the most recent surveys the insurance man is the only regular visitor for nearly one in four elderly people and, of old persons confined to their houses or beds, a quarter felt unable to call on neighbours for help in an emergency (for a report on this survey see *The Guardian*, 14 February 1978)
- 4 E Shanas, et al (1968) p 221
- 5 According to an Age Concern survey at least 35 percent of the 75 plus age group have no offspring at all, and 16 per cent express that their lives are extremely lonely (*New Age Concern Today*, Winter 1977/78, Vol 1 , p 2)
- 6 General Household Survey 1971 (1973), p. 55
- 7 These figures were quoted in an article in *Community Care*, January 25, 1978, p 22
8. H. J. Wilensky (1961)
9. These figures were quoted by Sheppard (1971).
- 10 This point is made by Hufton (1974) in a study of the poor in nineteenth century France Hufton's study records one dubious privilege which the aged were accorded, namely, the permission to beg respectably Hufton writes

They might, with dignity, beg in the churches, and they had a kind of monopoly of the privilege to sit in the porch or in the steps of churches and make their requests In parishes in the Auvergne, where begging had been reduced to a fine art the

aged beggar was the only one who caught the eye, for he or she alone remained to beg all the year round, whereas the adult males and most of the children had left on their seasonal odysseys (p. 112)

11. A pilot study undertaken by the Department of Economics, University of Essex, found that 1 in 5 of those interviewed (350 pensioners in Ebchester) who were entitled to a supplementary pension was not getting it, and 4 out of 10 entitled to a rent or rate rebate or allowance were not claiming them (quoted by P G Coleman, 1975).
12. General Household Survey, 1971 (1973) p 139
13. Family Expenditure Survey, 1976 (1977) p 86
14. General Household Survey, 1971 (1973). Table 4.10, p 67
15. General Household Survey, 1974 (1977). Table 1 15, p 46.
16. For a discussion on this see Peter Laslett (1977)
17. This point has been made by Wedderburn (1971)

CHAPTER 2

THE EMERGENCE OF RETIREMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

If, as is suggested above, the outline of a more positive concept of retirement is beginning to emerge, then it might be useful to state at the outset its main elements, and to ask how far these are provided for in existing social provision. There are at least two main parts to such a concept.

- (a) an adequate material infrastructure,
- (b) an acceptance that at some point in the life-cycle, prior to the specific problems attached to old age, there should be a period where the individual can explore life free of major work commitments yet with both adequate health and income

The argument pursued below is that our society has traditionally failed to satisfy either of the above constituents. Thus, it has failed to supply an adequate income for the majority of retired people, and it has failed also to provide a consistent and viable concept of retirement. It is argued here that this is because it has been necessary to maintain a flexible ideology as regards the elderly's relationship to the labour market, and this has necessitated an equally flexible concept of retirement. There has been a definite policy throughout the twentieth century of maintaining older people as a reserve of labour to be used in periods of labour shortage, or withdrawn in periods of slump - a policy which has encouraged and sustained ambiguities in attitudes towards retirement, and which has consolidated the separation of the material concerns of old age from a positive concept of retirement.

Historically we find a parallel development of compulsory retirement

on the one hand and, on the other, attempts to circumvent the age of retirement, either in terms of encouraging people to stay on longer at work or encouraging people to retire early. Thus, despite the emergence of a fixed retiring age, there has remained a flexible policy about when it is socially acceptable to retire - the acceptability of retirement shifting according to changing perceptions about the economy, the cost of the elderly population, the priority to be given to that population, etc. This flexible policy and the concomitant variations in the acceptability of retirement, has consolidated the elderly's role as a reserve labour force, leaving them open to be exploited in different ways according to prevailing political and economic conditions.

Older people may function as a reserve of labour in a number of ways. In periods of slump, for example, they may be drawn out of the labour market more quickly than other groups (particularly the unskilled and semi-skilled), and with less threat to social cohesion - high unemployment amongst older people often being legitimated on the basis that they have no family responsibilities. Secondly, in periods of labour shortage, the justification for retiring and becoming a 'non-producing consumer' may be called into question, as part of a campaign to call people back into the labour force.

In essence, what the above suggests is that the possibility of older people acting as a reserve of labour is facilitated to the extent to which a viable concept of retirement is under-developed. What follows attempts to show how this has worked in certain important periods in the twentieth century.

2.2 THE PERIOD UP TO THE SECOND WORLD WAR - OLD AGE AS ENFEEBLEMENT - THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

In the first period under discussion we find two major pieces of legislation in the form of the non-contributory pension (1908), and the contributory

pension (1925)² It is the debates surrounding these and other measures, and the employment problems of the older worker, which are dominant in this period. However, for our purposes, merely to list the evolution of specific pieces of legislation is not sufficient to understand ideas about retirement. The purpose of what follows is to look at the conditions surrounding the development of particular debates about retirement, with the central focus in this period being the high unemployment in the twenties and thirties. The consequence of the latter was to shift discussions away from a concern with developing means for securing employment best suited for the older worker, towards his or her early retirement as a palliative for unemployment.

Overall, what is absent from any of the discussions stemming from the above is any reference to what the period of retirement and old age might mean in a wider social and cultural sense (excepting of course, the many references to the harmful economic consequences of an ageing population). A tacit assumption seems to be that retirement is essentially a period when the individual is no longer fit and capable of work, and when his health is such that relaxing walks and lengthy sessions by the fireside are a fitting conclusion to a hard working life. This may well have been an agreeable arrangement, particularly for those men whose working lives had started from the age of ten or twelve. That such a concept of retirement remained dominant for so long did, however, come to be an impediment, particularly in respect of the development of a concept of retirement such as the one outlined above.

The latter, however, requires certain pre-conditions which this period could hardly be said to have met. The attitude of the Government towards groups such as the elderly and the unemployed rested upon the premiss that³

State aid was to be given only as a supplement towards private savings and that if there were no private savings or other resources the individual recipient would be kept alive only if he permitted himself to be made a pauper

An active concept of retirement requires at the very minimum a material infra-structure which secures freedom from poverty in old age, yet throughout this period it was precisely the latter which exerted the most powerful force shaping the retirement experience. In Edwardian Britain, one in ten of the population aged 65 and over lived in the workhouse. By the age of seventy, one in five would be a pauper, and for those who reached seventy-five, one in three would be reduced to that state.⁴ In most of the social surveys conducted in Britain during the twenties and thirties e.g. the New Survey of London Life and Labour, Rowntree's return visit to York, Herbert Trout's Study of the standard of living in Bristol, old age was identified as one of the major sources of poverty. Stevenson's (1977) recent review of social conditions in the twenties and thirties reported that the London survey

Found that in the east end of London, as in the London area as a whole, poverty was still rife amongst the elderly. As the new survey observed, the pension for a single person was in itself insufficient to place them above the poverty line if they were living alone. The London survey found that in many cases the poverty of the elderly was associated with bad housing conditions. For many the Poor Law Institution with its stigma as the 'workhouse' was the final destination when incapacity and lack of support from relatives prevented them from continuing on their own. (p 108)

In the 1930's Rowntree estimated that in York 33 per cent of old age pensioners were living below even his own stringent poverty line and throughout this decade the numbers of pensioners receiving supplementary relief from the Poor Law continued at well over 200,000 (7,500 in a city the size of Liverpool alone).⁵ By 1931, 63.2 per cent of the population over 65 were receiving Old Age Pensions, with 75.5 per cent of those over 70 in receipt. However, a contemporary observer noted that⁶

The scale of pension is too low for voluntary retirement except in cases where other resources are available. An income of £1 a week is hardly adequate for a married couple who have no other resources, and even this amount is not received unless the wife is over pensionable age.

Certainly, the figure of just over 200,000 applying for Poor Relief massively understated the extent of poverty in old age. Many people were discouraged from applying for relief because of the detailed scrutiny they had to undergo via the Public Assistance Committees. Branson and Heinemann (1971) describe the process as follows:

An application for poor relief meant a visit from the relieving officer who asked a great many personal questions. In many areas the applicants would then have to appear before a relief sub-committee of the Council and answer further questions. If he was granted relief he would line up once a week to draw the money. Some of it might be issued in kind, or in relief tickets which could be exchanged for specific items at local shops. Every fourteen weeks this procedure would be gone through again. (p. 230)

Notwithstanding the rigour of this procedure, throughout the thirties the elderly formed "a continually larger proportion of those forced to apply for public charity"⁷ though it was still a surprise to many officials when in 1940, with the introduction of the Supplementary Pension, the number qualifying for this pension soon topped the million mark, as opposed to the 400,000 that had been expected. A leading article in *The Times* on 19 August 1940 commented:

. . . The proved need for supplementary pensions has been far greater than had been supposed, and when the final figures are ascertained the number of recipients will be about a million. Already with 100,000 applications still to be adjudicated, the total is only 50,000 less than a million. There has therefore been a remarkable discovery of secret need.

The Times concluded:

The surprise of the investigation is that for so many old people the level of existence should have been so low.

In fact, by 1945, out of a total of just under 4 million old-age pensioners, the number receiving the supplementary pension was $1\frac{1}{2}$ million a low level of existence indeed!

We know very little about what all this meant insofar as the relationship of the elderly with other age groups was concerned. Yet the elderly, out of all the age groups, were placed in an increasingly invidious position with the onset of the Depression. On the one hand, existing pension legislation proved manifestly inadequate to provide the elderly "with independence".⁸ On the other hand, the years of mass unemployment brought increased calls for the elderly to retire from remunerative employment. It would be of some importance to know how this economic contradiction expressed itself in social relationships. Certainly, the insecurity of the elderly cannot have been lessened in the period from the Edwardian era through to the thirties. Ellis Smith, M.P. told the House of Commons in November 1938 "Old grandfathers and grandmothers are afraid to eat too much food lest they should be taking the bread out of the mouths of their grandchildren." Another M.P. told of "an old man bent and worn who has worked in the steel industry all his life", and who had said "I only have 10s 0d a week. I am living with my son, but his wife says she can no longer afford to keep me. I don't know what to do. I don't want to go to the workhouse, but there is nothing else to be done."⁹

All this was a far cry from those Oxfordshire villagers whose "tears of gratitude" ran down their cheeks on first receiving the Old Age Pension back in 1909.¹⁰ It was a far cry also from the experience of old age at the upper end of the class structure. Simone de Beauvoir (1972) has noted how the words old age cover two profoundly different kinds of reality according to whether one is referring to the oppressed or the exploiting classes - a point which is as

valid for Britain as elsewhere J B Priestly in his Journey around England in 1933 commented upon the "elderly gentlefolk" on the Isle of Wight, "tucked away in charming old manor houses or converted farms watch(ing) the decay of their incomes and keep(ing) open house for young male relatives on leave from the East"¹¹ But decaying incomes should not be equated with grinding poverty, and whilst "charming manor houses" may have been in short supply, the numbers opting to move to seaside resorts - especially the south coast - for their retirement, accelerated in the thirties To take three Sussex resorts as examples, the proportion of people of pensionable age in Bexhill went up from 11.8 in 1921 to 15.0 in 1931, accelerating to 28.0 by 1951, in Hastings the figures for these years were 13.9, 18.2 and 23.9, for Worthing they were 14.4, 18.7 and 29.7, the figures for England and Wales were 7.8, 9.6 and 13.8¹²

Such are the ironies of the class structure Old age, whilst moving some to the workhouse, moved others to the sea, leaving though, for the majority in between, the "weary monotony"¹³ enforced by life around the "poverty-line".

The economic and social contradictions which the elderly faced were undoubtedly sharpened by the increased vulnerability of the older worker to unemployment Studies of unemployment in Lancashire (Chapman and Hall, 1902), York (Rowntree and Lasker, 1911) and West Yorkshire (Richardson, 1936), all indicated the difficulties faced by the unskilled and semi-skilled in particular from the age of 40 onwards Rowntree and Lasker (op cit.) found that

It is unfortunately indisputable that when an unskilled worker gets past 40 he finds it very difficult to meet with an employer who is willing to give him regular work He may be able to work quite as well as a younger man, but in a labour market where the supply of unskilled labour almost invariably exceeds the demand, an employer having to choose between a younger and an older man not unnaturally chooses the younger (p 53)

It is true that the increase in unemployment between 1927 and 1932 was proportionately much the same for all age groups. But the real effect for the older age groups has to be seen after the slump had passed from its worst point, i.e. when employment had started to pick up. For re-employment works in a selective fashion, with younger men being the first to be taken back to work. This phenomenon was underlined, given the nature of the depression, with the crisis of the traditional industries and the emergence of new ones where the older worker was at an increasing disadvantage. Thus whilst in 1927 one in every eleven insured men aged 18 - 24 was unemployed, with the proportion of those over 55 being one in seven, ten years later the proportion of the former had stayed the same, while that of the latter had worsened to one in five. The problem of long-term unemployment was also heavily concentrated amongst the middle aged and elderly. In September 1929 one in every 1,000 insured men aged 18 - 24, four in every 1,000 aged 25 - 34, and fifteen in every 1,000 aged 55 - 64 had been unemployed for a year or more. In November 1932 the corresponding figures were 25, 32, and 74. By 1939 this contrast was even more marked with seven in every 100 of the 55 - 64's a victim of long term unemployment compared with seven in every 1,000 of the 18 - 24's.¹⁴

The problem of the older worker in relation to the new mass production industries had been noted by a study of social services in Oxford in 1938.¹⁵

The standard work in the motor industry is most suitable for fairly young men, and most of the employees are in fact young. It is feared that as they become elderly, they will have some difficulty in keeping up with the demands of mass production; and if this is the case and they become unemployed, experience suggests that they will find it extremely difficult to find alternative employment.

For those who could not find work the social and material pressures were often considerable. The Birmingham Post in December 1929 reported the following note left by an unemployed man who killed his wife and then committed suicide.

I feel so terribly worried, I am writing this while I am able to do so, for at times I go so strange I hardly know what to do with myself. My inside trembles, my head aches and I go dizzy, often on the verge of collapse, and even when crossing the road I fear I shall get knocked down. Sometimes I cross as in a dream. Therefore, if something happens it will not be the fault of the driver, but my own inability to get out of the way.

The note was signed, "Frank Thornby, aged 62", with the footnote, "Out of employment and can't get a job' The younger men get the jobs "

The effect of the depression was also to accelerate the shift away from employment after the age of 65, a shift which appeared in the early part of the century, consolidated via the introduction of old age pensions, but which was undoubtedly strengthened in the twenties and thirties. Thus the economic activity rate for males over 65 moved from 65.4 in 1891, to 56.8 in 1911, down to 47.9 in 1931¹⁶. Not surprisingly it was the period between 1931 and 1951 which saw the biggest decrease. Table 1 shows how those beyond 65 were affected:

Table 2 1

Percentage of Males at 65 and over occupied (including out of work)

	<u>1931</u>	<u>1951</u>
65 - 69	64.9	48.5
70 - 74	41.7	29.0
75 and over	22.7	14.8

Figures from 1951 Census General Report, p 131

This shift from employment gave added urgency both to the question of pension reform and to the foundation of a social policy for retirement. However, the former, with the introduction of the supplementary pension, came too late to prevent considerable hardship for the elderly in the thirties (caught as they were between the contradiction of inadequate pensions on the one hand, and fewer opportunities for employment on the other). The latter, the question of

a social policy for retirement, hardly emerged at all. The pattern of future debates about retirement pivots, as will be noted, around its implications for the supply of labour, and its possible use for decreasing or increasing that supply. This emergence of the elderly as a reserve of labour was consolidated by the interaction between the increased demographic importance of the upper-age groups and changes in the characteristics of capitalist production. For the movement away from the employment of the elderly, and the employment difficulties of the older worker, were closely tied to a restructuring of labour and capital, with the introduction of new industries and technologies - industries where, as the Oxford survey (op cit) noted, the associated techniques of mass production were unfavourable to the elderly worker. As a general proposition it might be argued that with each successive wave of industrial change, so the associated changes in the labour force have meant fewer and fewer jobs for the upper age groups. Yet, on the other hand, neither in this period, nor in later ones has there been a parallel development of a social policy for retirement. Despite the increase in state intervention towards assisting the elderly, retirement, as a social issue, has remained fixed at the level of a material concern, rather than an issue involving questions of social, cultural and political organisation. Thus there has been a disjunction between the economic consolidation of retirement, and its penetration into social and cultural life - a disjunction which has facilitated the elderly remaining at the level of a reserve labour force, to be expelled, or brought into employment, according to shifts in the economic climate.

This feature has itself drawn upon a historical immaturity in social attitudes towards the elderly. It was not, for example, until the late nineteenth century that old age was singled out as meriting particular attention in social policy. In the workhouse (an institution which figured prominently in the lives of the working class elderly) it was not until mid-way through the nineteenth

century that the aged pauper began to receive less harsh treatment than other inmates, and not until the close of the century that reforms such as not forcing old people to have their meals, not insisting on the wearing of workhouse uniform, and allowing "all but the most untrustworthy old people"¹⁷ out for walks, were finally put through

This historical immaturity in social attitudes towards the elderly, combined with changes in their position in employment, fostered an ambiguity in their political and social position which, together with the volatile nature of labour supply and demand, produced a retardation in the development of an ideology for the retirement period - a feature which has been underlined with the increased demographic importance of the elderly in the last half of the twentieth century. The question we must now ask is: how has this ambiguity expressed itself in key political and economic debates in the present century?

2 3 INTO THE DEPRESSION, THE ELDERLY AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT CRISIS

The above forms the main elements of the environment which the elderly person faced. It was, in addition, an environment which had very definite ideas about what people could expect in their old age. Up until the shift in emphasis in the twenties and thirties (discussed below) it was regarded as axiomatic in policy thinking that most people would want to stay on at work until decline or exhaustion set in. Indeed, over and above any economic need for work the suggestion was that there was a natural inclination on the part of the individual to continue in work until productive powers had waned. This aspect comes out quite clearly in the parliamentary debate on the Old Age Pensions Bill in 1908. Lloyd George, answering suggestions that the age limit should be 65 instead of 70, argued that¹⁸

The expenditure would be too great to begin with and in my own judgement I do not think that it is the best way of dealing with the period between 65 and 70. I am not sure that the German method is not better here it deals with infirmity rather than with age. That is the test under 70 I can well understand a man of 70 saying, 'I am willing to retire, I have earned my pension.' There are many men of 65, 66 and 67 who are much more effective and vigorous and capable of doing good work than many men of 57. I think when we come to deal, as I hope we will in the near future, with the problem of infirmity, that will be the time to consider the question of the broken down old man of 67 and 68 who is left to charity.

In the period when Lloyd George was speaking, 606 out of every 1,000 men over 65 were still working. Hence his argument had a strong foundation in the existing pattern of employment. But the use of the term "broken down old men" is revealing. True, its accuracy for elderly men, after a life-time of labour in a harsh industrial and social environment, and with varying standards of nutrition, cannot be under-estimated. But the fact that the problem is put just in terms of men is significant. Ignoring the point that it is women who live longest, and who are most likely to directly experience old age, and the term itself is important, reflecting as it does a historical tradition of identifying the retired working class elderly as useless, worn-out and unemployable - to be grouped with the infirm and feeble-minded as a category in social policy. The possibility or the potential of old age being experienced some other way is hardly countenanced, for if the elderly are not ready to be included amongst the infirm and the feeble-minded, then it is work which is put forward as the obvious alternative. Seemingly, there is nothing in between.

The limits to state involvement in supporting the elderly were graphically brought out in the second reading of the Conservative's Contributory Pension Bill in 1925. The Bill provided for a pension of 10s. 0d. a week which the Minister (Neville Chamberlain) moving the Bill admitted was "Obviously insufficient by itself to provide a grown man or woman with the necessities for life." Two

reasons were given for this. The first was financial, that a larger pension would inflict an excessive burden both on industry and the state. The second was that by fixing the pension at such a level this would encourage the virtue of thrift, according to Chamberlain.¹⁹

We believe that there are many people who today feel that it is perfectly hopeless for them to try and provide completely for their needs in old age, but that when they see this scheme they will feel they have a foundation upon which it is worth their while to try and build something more. In that way we shall be encouraging those virtues of thrift which have done so much for the country in the past.

The main consequence of this policy was that it still became necessary for many to continue at work after 65 - particularly in the absence of any savings. It also confirmed that for those who were unable to continue to work, and who had little or no savings, poverty became the automatic consequence of retirement and old age.

The perspectives arising out of these acts of intervention by the state were thus to confirm the limited social value accorded to retirement, and to underline the continuing priority of work. The force of the latter was strongest in the early part of the century - up to the passing of the 1925 Act. Thereafter, the provision for retirement at 65, and the increasing rate of unemployment, provided a powerful impetus for expanding the numbers of wholly retired, even though the economic environment as a whole was hardly adequate to sustain those virtues of thrift which were supposed to help provide for old age.

In the early part of the century, however, when the majority of men over 65 were still working, it is the employment problems of the older worker which are dominant, in particular those people from middle age onwards. This led to an interest in various schemes which were designed to help find

work for such people W H Beveridge (1910) had expressed early enthusiasm at the virtues of the German labour exchange "It may be noted that some of the most important German labour exchanges, without forfeiting in any way their character as business organisations, make a special point of finding places for old and enfeebled workmen who are yet capable of doing something"²⁰ I C Ails (1917) expressed equal enthusiasm with the labour exchange system, noting that it would fit older men in positions for which "they are peculiarly fitted"²¹ In a slightly more eccentric vein, Rowntree and Lasker (op.cit) suggested the potential utility of plots of land in the country to which workers - older ones in particular - could go when work was no longer available for them. Idyllic proposals such as these were, however, the exception, and most attention was directed to fitting the older worker into the factory system Beveridge (op.cit), for example, took the view that:

In any large single undertaking, e.g. a Railway Company, there is always a certain number of old men's places - light situations - kept for those who have grown grey or become injured in the Company's service A Labour Exchange backed by sympathetic public opinion might do much to get all the old men's places for the older men and leave the younger generations the task of finding and forcing fresh openings for themselves (p 211)

R C Davidson (1929) had raised a similar theme in his study of the unemployed, bringing in as well the question of a lower wage rate for older men

In the holes and corners of the industrial field, light jobs such as watchmen, messengers, etc (are available to older men) .. suited to their diminished capacities. At present such employment either temporary or permanent, is relatively scarce and the competition is keen, but the numbers of openings might be increased if a lower wage were recognised as admissible (p 254)

Davidson concluded his study on a rousing theme

Could employers throughout the land be rallied to create every possible opening for the slightly decrepit, the elderly or the infirm (p.254)

Apart from "filling in the holes and corners" the other main productive role for the elderly was relieving shortages of labour supply in periods of boom in playing the role of a reserve of labour. This had been noted by Pigou (1913) in his study of unemployment. Pigou had suggested that "old men and women long past their prime cannot, practically speaking, be taught a new industry",²² and that it was "clearly useless to attempt to develop new industrial powers in such persons. Their capacity or lack of it must be taken as something given or unalterable."²³ Given that, according to Pigou such persons would require more or less continuous help, the problem was to find the most "advantageous" form which that help could assume. One solution was to use groups like the elderly as a reserve of labour.

A system, under which these persons are available for the needs of private industry in periods of keen demand, serves to lessen the fluctuations in demand to which normal (Pigou's emphasis C.P.) workpeople are exposed. It follows that the organisation of relief ought to be such that relieved persons are withdrawn from private industry to the least possible extent, and that they immediately return there, whenever the conditions of demand permit. (p. 235)

Pigou's book was published at the end of a period of economic upturn (1910 - 1913) with low rates of unemployment. Davidson's (op. cit.) work on the other hand came at the beginning of the inter-war depression and thus his rallying call to employers to find work for the elderly was ill-timed.

The contraction of the old-established industries, e.g. cotton, ship-building, mining had raised unemployment to crisis levels, and the search for ways of easing the situation was now to dominate political discussion. In this context older workers were an immediate focus of attention. As early as 1924 Philip Snowden, Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer had suggested that in times of unemployment the old should retire, and this theme was to be taken up at party and trade union conferences in the following years. The labour

movement had had a policy of pensions at 60 for some time as well as arguing for higher pensions conditional upon retirement. The reason for this being the tendency of employers to deduct from any wage-earning pensioner the equivalent of his pension. A delegate to the 1928 T. U. C. Congress complained that²⁴

when the old man of 65 who is being thrown into the gutters comes along to seek employment he has a different card from the ordinary man. That is his label. He has to produce this card, and as soon as he shows it, he is offered less wages.

The higher levels of unemployment were now to give renewed emphasis to the question of retirement. A report adopted by the T. U. C. Congress in 1929 on industrial re-organisation and industrial relations suggested that²⁵

If by some more liberal retiring allowance than the present o. a. p. affords, a greater inducement could be given to those above the age of 65 to take a well earned rest from their work to allow the younger men, who are waiting for a job, to come in to their place, then a step forward would be taken in both industrial efficiency and in diminishing the numbers of those who today are on the Unemployment Register.

At the Transport and General Workers Union Biennial Delegate Conference in 1929 a resolution was carried stating²⁶

That in view of the superannuation schemes being taken up throughout the country, our parliamentary representatives be instructed to raise the question of keeping pensioners out of competitive employment.

The same conference also passed a resolution calling for increased pensions (one pound a week for men over 65 plus a further pound for their wives) which would enable men to retire from work, though at the same time the resolution insisted that this would be "only a palliative and (is) not meant as a solution to unemployment."²⁷ The year prior to this the Labour Party's annual conference also recorded support for more generous provision "for the veterans of industry" to help reduce the number of workers competing for jobs.²⁸ Skidelsky (1975) goes as far as saying that removing the old from

industry was "Labour's one distinctive cure for unemployment",²⁹ and without doubt there was considerable activity directed towards examining the feasibility of an emergency retirement plan. On 29 June 1929 the minister concerned with employment, J. H. Thomas, had appointed a sub-committee to look at the possibility of introducing retirement pensions for industrial workers. The sub-committee was composed of George Lansbury (First Commissioner of Works), Oswald Mosley (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster) and Thomas Johnston (Under-Secretary of State for Scotland), plus civil servants and a government actuary. Skidelsky (op cit) in his biography of Mosley describes the various plans considered as follows:

The first plan considered by Lansbury, Mosley and Johnston was to increase old age pensions from the existing level of 10s a week (under the 1925 Act) to 30s a week for married couples over 65. This, it proved, would cost the exchequer £60M a year, a prohibitive amount. On 24 July, therefore, Mosley proposed a 'temporary' scheme offering pensions at 60 to those in employment in certain depressed industries, conditional upon their retirement from work. The industries suggested were coal mining, iron and steel manufacture and shipbuilding. On 17 September, after the summer holidays, it was decided to drop this temporary scheme as 'insuperable difficulties' of definition would arise and only a 'comparatively small number of vacancies would likely be created'. Instead, the committee decided to offer all insured workers (plus railwaymen) who had reached the age of sixty by a certain date a pension of £1 a week for a married man on condition that they retired from work within six months. This turned out to be the final proposal. (p 184)

The sub-committee actually presented two reports. One drawn up by the non-ministerial members of the committee outlining the total of four schemes which had been considered, and evaluating their respective merits. Then the ministers involved themselves presented a separate report urging acceptance of one of the schemes (see above). This division reflected the civil servants' lack of enthusiasm for the schemes being proposed. Certainly, there were major difficulties in implementing any such plan. The benefit, in terms of

reducing the numbers unemployed (and the consequent saving on unemployment insurance) was problematic. Mosley had predicted as many as 200,000 job vacancies being created with such a scheme, but other estimates were more conservative than this and it clearly depended on the extent to which younger people could or would be given the opportunity to fill the vacancies created. There were questions about the cost of the scheme (£22M in the first year) and there was also the question of equity for other pensioners who had retired on a smaller amount. There were some 80,000 workers over 65 who had retired in 1928 on 10s a week under the Conservatives' Contributory Pensions Act. The civil servants complained "Are these persons to see their neighbours who remained a little longer in industry now pensioned off with 30s a week?"³⁰

With the Retirement Plan attracting further adverse comment from the Treasury, and failing to get the support of the minister concerned with employment, the Cabinet Committee decided against its implementation. Interest in such a scheme continued on the part of some Labour leaders however. Mosley, for example continued to stress the moral as well as economic advantages of such a plan. Old men, he argued, who have spent most of their lives in hard work could be released to make way for the young and energetic.³¹

A man of 60 who has worked all his life will not suffer much demoralisation through living in idleness, but a man of 20 may suffer irreparable harm. By keeping the young in idleness we destroy the human material upon which the future of reconstructed industry must be built. Idleness may be a boon to the old, but it is a damnation to the young. By this measure we are obeying both the dictates of nature and of economics.

A national association was formed in 1930 to campaign for early retirement pensions.³² This had Mosley as one of its vice-presidents and a past-president of the National Union of Railwaymen. W. Dobbie is president. That same year

Mosley was to include his emergency retirement plan in his memorandum on unemployment sent to the Prime Minister, Ramsey MacDonald

Ernest Bevin (see Bullock, 1960) had also been an early advocate of giving better pensions as an inducement to older workers to leave their jobs. He had suggested a single consolidated insurance scheme, amalgamating the unemployment and health insurance schemes together with the old age pension fund. According to Bullock, Bevin argued that it was ³³

Far better to spend money on retiring older men whose efficiency was already failing than in paying unemployment benefit to younger and more active men

Bevin pursued this line throughout the early part of the thirties and in a series of articles in the *New Clarion* in 1933 argued, amongst other things, for an optional pension at the age of 60 (with a retirement condition). He calculated that this, plus a state pension of £1 a week (35s a week for a married couple) at the age of 65 to everyone earning up to £1,000 per annum (again with a retirement condition) plus invalidity pensions to various groups would release 600,000 jobs for "younger and niter men". ³⁴ Some of these proposals were to form the basis for the comprehensive pension plan which was Bevin's contribution to the Labour Party programme in 1937

Despite undoubted support for the reasoning of Bevin, Mosley et al that it was better to secure jobs for the young and energetic than for the old, many were dubious as to how far, even if the latter were pensioned off, younger workers would step into their jobs. Rhys Davis, a Labour M.P. writing in the *Daily Herald*, argued ³⁵

Let us by all means pension the old warriors of industry as we do the heroes of the battlefields, but do not deceive ourselves by thinking that pensions or payments of any kind outside wages, either for the young or old can have any substantial effect on the disease known as unemployment

Eventually, in 1934, Parliament did come to discuss a motion, put forward by Labour M.P. John Banfield, calling for optional retirement pensions at 60. It was Banfield's belief that³⁶

Millions of pounds now spent in unemployment pay would be better spent in pensions for the aged. . . We are spending the money in many instances, at the wrong end. . . it should be possible to pension men and women at 60 and take them out of industry and to bring in the young people to do the work of the community, the work of commerce, and the work of the nation during those years when they are most fit and able to do it.

Attractive as this idea sounded, it was inevitably riddled with all the administrative difficulties which the ministerial sub-committee had come across in 1929. . . How, for example, was one to ensure that those retiring really did stay out of the labour market? Would the vacancies created be so easily filled by young people? How was the scheme to be financed? None of these questions were satisfactorily answered in the ensuing debate. As a result it was resolved that the administrative problems plus the potential burden of such a scheme, both on the taxpayer and on industry, militated against its possible value for easing the employment situation.

Two main themes emerge from this period. In the early part, up to the mid-twenties, we find a distinction between older workers and others being elaborated, both in respect of wages and different types of work. Thus in the work of Beveridge and Mills quoted above, the notion of "old men's jobs" appears, such jobs being "light", "simple" and low paid - these attributes reflecting what are seen as declining capacities with age-related changes. These changing capacities are seen to signify that in the case of a group such as the elderly there are problems of employment which require special treatment. In the later period however, from the mid-twenties onward, it is precisely

these particular attributes, e.g. declining strength which are used as a *raison d'être* to discriminate against the older worker in a situation of high unemployment (and if the legislative proposals failed, the high unemployment rate for older workers, and the increase in the number of wholly retired indicated that in practice many were being forced out of industry)³⁷ Far from the characteristics of the older worker justifying special treatment in his search for a job, his actual right to one was called into question in this later period. Enfeeblement in a context of high unemployment thus provided a convenient rationale to justify the older worker's removal from the labour market. This was buttressed by a moral argument that the old would suffer less from unemployment than the young. This was not restricted to the employment question. The severe housing problem existing in most cities led to suggestions that some form of discrimination might be practised in this sector as well. In a study entitled "Housing and Slum Clearance in London", Quigley and Golde argued³⁸

Old people can well be left in the slums longer than those with young families. They are settled in their habits and common use has made them negligent or tolerant of their surroundings, their scrap of back yard with its dejected hens and scratching dogs are dearer to them than any new flat, possibly three storeys high. They have lived in worse conditions and will take no great harm from spending the last of their days there.

The parallel between this suggestion and the debate about retirement pensions is that both argue that it is the young who are most affected by the crisis. The very young suffer worst of all from the bad housing conditions, "which breed disease and encourage vice and are peculiarly mischievous and dysgenic to child life."³⁹ It is the young who according to Mosley are most affected by idleness and boredom. The elderly, on the other hand, having grown used to bad housing

are more tolerant of this, as well as the idleness encountered through lack of work

It is interesting to note a similar, if more sharply defined debate, also took place in America at this time. At the White House Conference on child health and protection in 1930, it had been suggested that about one quarter of the population aged 65 and over were aged dependants and that their care, particularly where it was done by young married couples with children, could only be carried out by a sacrifice of expenditure essential to the proper growth, development and education of such children.⁴⁰ Murphy (1931) summarised the strain on families on or below the poverty line who had to look after an elderly person in the following way

Every mouthful of food going to an elderly dependent person may be part of that deprivation which will cause the children of these families to be ineffective producers during the years when they should be at their highest efficiency (p 39)

Underlying this more sharply-defined debate was the fact that American capitalist development posed rather earlier the situation of the older worker and his "obsolescence" in an environment typified by large-scale organisations, the introduction of assembly line techniques of production, and scientific management. J. H. Shera (1931 and 1932) in the *Bulletin of Bibliography* documented a considerable American literature (writings drawn mainly from the twenties), on what he termed "The age factor in employment". The titles are illustrative: "What of the Worn Out Worker?", "Is the Salesman over forty a 'Has-been'?", "When a Man wears out", "The Problem of the Obsolescent Employee". It was a combination of this technological environment with the economic depression which gave added urgency to debates on the problem of the "inefficient" older worker.

Managerial approaches to the subject were guided by Henry Ford's dictum that: "The man who has never had any experience at all is the best fellow when it comes to fitting him into a new scheme of production" ⁴¹ R. Howe (1934), for example, writing in the Harvard Business Review, argued that

Due to machinery, there is a decreasing value of the older worker's skill and experience, youth better adapting itself to the constant changes which dynamic industry imposes upon the employer. Retention of older employees often means the retention of direct liabilities that impair efficiency, and the employer's liability regarding accident, sickness, etc. is decreased by the elimination of the older worker. (p. 435)

Both in America and, to a lesser extent, in Britain there was, as a result of the economic and technological pressures described, increased interest in providing pension schemes which would remove some of the liabilities detailed by Howe. The advantages of such schemes were also viewed in respect of their effect on employer-employee relationships. In Britain, D. J. Greig (1934) suggested that:

An organised pension scheme not only offers great advantages to the employer and the employee individually, but also tends to improve their mutual relations. The employee realises that his employer takes a personal interest in his future and closer cooperation and understanding are thus fostered. The employee, by the institution of a pension scheme on a contributory basis, becomes more self-reliant because he realises that he himself is helping to provide a pension for his old age. (p. 50)

One point to note in all the discussions, both in Britain and America, on how the elderly were to be helped to leave industry is that there was no suggestion of any psychological or social problems that might result from an extended period of retirement - a point which was to be emphasised in the fifties. Neither was there much interest shown in what the elderly were to do in their extra years of retirement. This is not surprising: pessimism about the elderly as workers, their inefficiency, their declining strength, their enfeeblement, did not fit

easily into an active concept of retirement. Neither was the economic context conducive for the development of such a concept, beyond for that of a small minority of people. The theme of economies in crisis, of old industries crumbling, and new ones struggling to take their place, fed into a pragmatic and pessimistic social policy for retirement and old age. What, however, of a society in the throes of reconstruction? Would this pragmatism be replaced by a more planned and integrated vision of retirement? A view of retirement as a vital and necessary part of life?

2.4 THE PERIOD AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR UP TO THE MID SIXTIES. THE ELDERLY AS PRODUCERS

The immediate post-war period saw an urgent debate on the economic and social consequences of an ageing population and, following this, a considerable increase in research activity on topics connected with old age. Rowntree's survey on the problems of old age appeared in 1947, Sheldon's "Social Medicine of Old Age", in 1948. Following these there was a prolific discussion, particularly in the medical journals, on a range of issues associated with retirement and the elderly. Later on, Townsend's "The Family Life of Old People", and Shenfield's "Social Policies in Old Age", both published in 1957, provided major contributions to filling in the outline of the debate which had emerged from the early post-war period. This was a period, then, when the hitherto rather sparse amount of research work in this area was filled out, and the first major texts and reference works became available.

This was also the period when the main orientation of social gerontological research in this country was consolidated. This orientation was to stress - as will be illustrated below - the potential problems and dangers connected with an ageing population. The "burden" of the very elderly, the "anxieties" of retirement,

and the "dangers" of an increase in the numbers of the economically inactive became major themes running through research in this period. Such an orientation by social-gerontological research in the process of its foundation was, to say the least, unfortunate. Unwittingly or not, researchers on old age became cast in the role of Jeremiahs, a role which given the tenor of their research, they were to be confirmed in for years to come. It is difficult to see how such researchers could possibly complain, as many of them were apt to do that when on meeting people and describing their occupation the invariable response was 'Why do you study that? It must be so depressing!' Indeed it was - and still is - and post-war British research has done little to cast away this aura. The possibility of retirement being potentially rewarding and enjoyable was remote from the minds of most researchers in this period. Indeed the most powerful image of the elderly which emerged was of large numbers of people dying a slow death in their armchairs, utterly disorientated by an embarrassing surfeit of leisure time.

This perspective on the elderly took place within the legislative context of the National Insurance Act of 1946 - an Act, which for the first time, made retirement a condition for receiving old age pensions. Here was the supreme paradox as regards the development of a social policy for retirement. For in the very process of introducing this condition, the Government launched a major ideological offensive against the idea that it was actually encouraging retirement. On this matter, the Government were to follow Beveridge's views (as expressed in the 1942 report) to the letter. According to Beveridge

Making receipt of pensions conditional on retirement is not intended to encourage or hasten retirement. On the contrary, the conditions governing pensions should be such as to encourage every person who can go on working after pensionable age, to go on working and to postpone the claiming of the pension. (para 295, p 96)

Beveridge went on

The right way of encouraging postponement of retirement is to make it attractive for people who can remain at work after they have reached the minimum pension age to do so, such people should be allowed by continuing to contribute and postponing claim to pension to qualify for an addition to the basic rate which is given if pension is claimed at the minimum age. The object of encouraging continuance at work in later life will not be attained by granting pensions without a retirement condition. If these pensions are adequate for subsistence they will obviously encourage retirement. Even inadequate unconditional pensions will encourage retirement in many cases. There are other superannuation schemes for some of which pensions can be drawn only on retirement. . . Provision of universal unconditional pensions by the state will lead many people to take this with their other superannuation provision and retire (para 245 p 96)

It is the social context which provides the main clue both as to the character of Government legislation and the direction of research on old age. This was after all a post-war society, with a post-war economy where rationing and reconstruction were the dominant themes. In this environment the possibility of an ageing population was greeted with an inevitable chorus of alarm. Beveridge himself had warned in his blueprint for the Welfare State that "it is dangerous to be in any way lavish in old age" until, he went on, "adequate provision has been assured for all other vital needs such as the prevention of disease, and the adequate nutrition of the young"⁴². The importance of this point was underlined with the concern about the changing population structure, and there was as a result, a remarkable volte-face in policies towards older people particularly in relation to the employment question. Whilst the pre-war period stressed all the disadvantages in employing old people, the early post-war period stressed all the advantages. Whilst in the thirties emphasis had been laid on the fact that older workers had more days off through sickness, were inefficient, and were less able to adapt to new production techniques, this later period stressed their reliability, their commitment and their experience. And, finally, whilst the thirties had put forward the virtues of retirement in a context of high unemployment, so it was that

the "dangers of retirement" became the leitmotif of the full-employment era of the fifties. Retirement was no longer so acceptable as it had appeared in the thirties. The theme of an "industrious" as opposed to "idle" old age became dominant, the workshop replacing the armchair in the elderly's new found role of assisting the nation's economic reconstruction.

Walker (1952) noted the rise in the employment of the elderly during the war and the comments from employers that they were "steady and more reliable than many young workers",⁴³ a point which was stressed by the Chief Medical Officer for London Transport at the 1952 conference of the National Old People's Welfare Council.⁴⁴

The great assets which older persons possess are conscientiousness and a stabilizing and steadying effect on the younger members of their work group. Every manager and foreman knows the valuable influence which older workers exercise on the team and I do not think that their importance in this connection is sufficiently felt by the older members themselves, it should be brought home to them that they are needed - desperately needed. It is sometimes said that nowadays people lack the desire to give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, the majority of older workers not only have this desire but they are capable, if encouraged, of inculcating it to some extent in younger workers.

The Ministry of Labour and National Service circulated a Canadian film which, amongst other things, paid "tribute to the reliability of older workers",⁴⁵ as well as producing a special pamphlet and other material on the employment of older men and women. In America as well at this time there was a similar interest in the employment potential of older workers. The Dodge Division of the Chrysler Corporation had an "old man's department", a workshop to which older employers could be transferred to work at their own pace. An American businessman started an "old people's store", the main peculiarity of which was not the goods that it sold but that none of the employees were under the age of 60.

E. L. Breckenridge (1953), in a book entitled "Effective Use of Older Workers", cited the example of a shoe factory which

hires older women (sometimes in their seventies) for its cutting room and welt room, for cementing and lining, for work on splitting machines, and as shoe brushers. The arm muscles of some older women appear to be stronger than those of younger women who have had their household chores reduced by vacuum cleaners and washing machines and electric irons (p 40)

Underlying this enthusiasm for employing older workers three factors can be discerned. First, there was a considerable manpower shortage in the post-war period in many parts of the country, and as the Minister of Labour in 1952 pointed out (at the conference referred to above), "old people are one of our few reserves of labour."⁴⁶ Secondly, there was a renewed sense of pessimism about the demographic balance between the productive and non-productive sectors of the population. This, combined with a third factor, gloomy forecasts about future economic growth, served to increase the pressure to get people to delay their retirement. These concerns underlay Rowntree's (op. cit.) view in his report on old people that

In the probable future situation of the nation it will become increasingly important that everyone should delay as long as possible the time when he or she becomes a non-producing consumer of the goods resulting from the labour of young and middle-aged workers. (p 94)

Rowntree went on to stress the dangers that might arise if people failed to delay their retirement

Unless persons, now regarded as elderly and of pensionable age, can contribute to the volume of wealth produced, by continuing in employment for a few years, the maintenance of the aged will, in the not very distant future, become a crushing burden on the young and middle-aged, thus forcing down the whole standard of living (p 84)

From 1947 onwards the Ministry of Labour's annual reports started appeals to people to stay at work instead of retiring, appeals which became increasingly

strident up to the mid-fifties. The 1950 report emphasised the interaction between the demographic changes and the economic context

The proportion of elderly persons among the population is increasing to such an extent that with the continuing general shortage of labour it is becoming more and more important that they should be employed wherever they are able and willing to work and their services are needed (p 20)

The following year Gaitskell himself in his 1951 Budget speech argued that the corollary of the reduction in hours of work, the increased holidays, and the later ages at which people now entered employment was that "we should work longer and retire later"⁴⁷ Gaitskell went on to suggest an upward revision of the pension age. A few days later Fred Lee, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, made an impassioned appeal to older people thinking of retirement⁴⁸

I ask them to think again. Some of us may have become accustomed to the idea of retiring at a fixed age of 60-65, but a man of 65 can today look forward to a long period of useful life. I have no doubt that many people would have a happier and healthier old age if they continue in their work a little longer rather than give up their routine and sink into a premature old age (My emphasis)

No suggestion of a happy retirement here, indeed the association of retirement from work with premature senescence became an increasing concern in this period. The possibility of withdrawal from work having potentially disastrous effects on the individual had earlier been noted by Sheldon (op. cit.) in his pioneering work "Social Medicine in Old Age". Commenting on the effects of retirement, Sheldon argued:

Bearing in mind what has already been said about the importance of an adequate mental urge for the maintenance of physical health, one need have no surprise at the well known sight of the man who retires, apparently healthy, from a profession or business to which he has devoted his life and then dies for no particular reason in the next few years (p 193)

This argument was to be a constant theme in debates throughout the fifties, with medical evidence being invoked to justify the economic need for workers to delay retirement. Eight years after Sheldon's work, W. Ferguson, Anderson and Nairn Cowan (1956) in what was to be an influential article, argued that the medical literature was "overwhelming in its indications that retirement is detrimental to the health of older men."⁴⁹ Summarising the results of their own study on a group of men aged 65 and over, they argued that those men who were working were "significantly happier" than those who were retired, and that to retire quite contented and mentally adjusted "was the privilege of the few."⁵⁰ Earlier, a relationship between compulsory retirement and suicide had been suggested by Logan (1953) and Batchelor and Napier (1953). According to the former

The suicide rate is high amongst elderly people. It might not be so high if more of them were given the opportunity to be useful, productive members of the community. (p. 1193)

In fact these pessimistic judgements were premature, the literature was certainly not overwhelmed with enough studies of an adequate methodological and sample design to draw any definite conclusions. The men in Anderson and Cowan's study, for example, were drawn from the records of those who had attended a health centre, a factor complicating any inferences which might be extended to the retired population as a whole. In Batchelor and Napier's study, which was based on 40 cases of attempted suicide by people aged 60 and over, over half of the sample had a history of mental illness, with seven having made previous suicide attempts. In addition, only eleven were actually classified as being retired, with nearly half still currently employed. Such a sample hardly constituted an adequate basis for making associations between compulsory retirement and suicide. However, despite the paucity and limitations of available

data in this period, studies and commentaries on retirement took it as largely axiomatic that retirement would lead to some form of premature ageing and an early death. Sheldon (1950) was one of the many writers who spoke of "The well-known sight of the man who retires from a busy occupation to die in a year or two of boredom."⁵¹ A point which had earlier been anticipated by Weir and Gelbaum (1945) in a formulation which was again to become familiar "Medical, psychological, and sociological research indicates that, for those who are eager to work, idleness may result in serious personality disintegration."⁵²

The origins for this "breakdown theory" of retirement can perhaps be found in some of the medical and sociological literature of the thirties which suggested a relationship between unemployment and psychological health. Dr. J. L. Halliday in a paper published in the British Medical Journal in 1935 suggested from the results of a study of 1,000 sick insured people, that there was increased evidence of psychoneurosis among unemployed men varying according to the length of employment. In the paper he gave a number of examples of men who had been apparently normal in work, but who had "gone to pieces"⁵³ after several years of unemployment. This finding was extended into the retirement period itself in the research carried out in the forties and fifties. The main factor again was the centrality of work (in particular for the male worker) and the social and psychological problems resulting when work is no longer available. In the thirties it was of course the sheer absence of work which was important. In this later period, however, this was conceptualised with more sophistication (via the use of role theory) and it was the whole structure of personal and social relations surrounding work and sustaining self-esteem which was implicated. Cavan, in a paper given in 1957 suggests that⁵⁴

at retirement we have a man still motivated by his old self-conception, but separated from his previous roles and many of his previous evaluative groups. He is a true social isolate. Moreover, the faint traces of a new self-image that he sees reflected in old and perhaps new groups is distasteful and unrewarding. His emotional reactions are likely to be distressing.

Later work singled out the blue collar worker in particular as having the most difficult time in adjusting to retirement. Loether's (1967) argument is a good illustration of this.

The blue-collar worker's job is not really very satisfying to him, but it is all he has, it serves to anchor him to society. Since he does not particularly like his job, he looks forward to retirement. But once he retires, his major tie to society is severed and he has trouble adjusting. He has no adequate substitute for a job. (p 92)

Loether's suggestion here that working class people find it difficult to find a satisfactory substitute for work had earlier been echoed by Brooke (1954) in her description of an employment workshop in Finsbury, London (a workshop providing part-time employment for those over pensionable age). This description is quoted at length because it illustrates well this particular argument, and says a lot about social attitudes towards old people in this period.

It is necessary to see the folk at work, to listen to their chatter and to talk to them to appreciate fully the cheer and happiness that the centre brings to them. The few shillings they earn mean a lot when the only income, as in nearly every case, is the pension, perhaps supplemented by the National Assistance Board which provides but for a bare existence. The wage received provides for the purchase of a few extra amenities or luxuries which may add much to the joy of living. This is, however, a very small part of the reason for the satisfaction they experience, and most, if not all, would be glad to come without pay. The congenial company of their fellow workers is another reason which helps them to pass the time quickly and cheerfully which otherwise would hang so heavily on them. They all emphasise this and most of them would like to come for longer hours. In many cases the premises have become the centre of their lives and they say that they miss coming at the weekends when they do not know what to do with themselves. But the payment of the wage gives the feeling that they are doing something really useful and that they still have a place in the human family and a part to play. (p 53)

The equating of work with the maintenance of psychological health and, conversely, retirement with ill-health, combined with pessimism about possible

alternatives in the form of leisure based activities, was all of great assistance to the campaign to persuade people to delay their retirement ⁵⁵ A campaign which was boosted in 1951 with the formation of a national advisory committee on the employment of older men and women

2.5 THE BURDEN OF RETIREMENT

The national advisory committee on the employment of older men and women was set up in 1951, its first report being produced in 1953. The report recommended amongst other things, that "Every effort should be made to remove from the minds of both employers and employees the idea that at any particular age, retirement should be either compulsory or expected,"⁵⁶ On the cost of retirement the report noted that

The growing increase in the proportion of older persons in the population will inevitably mean an increase in the amount of current production required for their maintenance. The cost must not be recognised only in terms of family help towards their support or of the proportion of the pension that comes from public funds, but in terms of their contribution to the community's production and services. (p 11)

The theme of the cost of a larger retired population was to be given a detailed airing the following year with the publication of the Phillips Report (1954). This report makes explicit much of what is implicit in the foregoing, namely that the elderly are a burden on the rest of the community soaking up resources "derived from the exertions of others"⁵⁷ In an economy thirsting for labour and resources the elderly appear as a dependent group whose existence has a negative effect both economically and socially. In this situation any further lowering of the retirement age could, it was argued, have serious consequences. Phillips in fact suggested a pension age of 68 for men and 63 for women, this to be arrived at by increases at "appropriate intervals"⁵⁸ Even more important perhaps than the reference to the burden of old age is Phillips' view of the sort of material resources which the elderly must expect

There may be some danger in particular cases that the national pension and occupational pension may together provide a combined income in retirement approaching that earned during working life, especially when retirement is deferred. This would raise the question of the share of the national output which ought to be appropriated by the unoccupied older members of the community and might encourage retirement sooner than would otherwise be the case. (p. 48)

A revealing statement this, especially when taken together with the comment from the report quoted earlier that retirement "should be neither compulsory or expected". Both these statements indicate the tenuous hold which the idea of retirement still had on policy thinking. The idea of people leaving work still fit and relatively healthy, with an income approaching that of previous earnings is still seen here as a "danger", and there is an air of moral condemnation in the use of terms such as "appropriate" (in relation to the elderly's share of the national income), and "unoccupied", these suggesting perhaps a parasite layer, feeding off the activities of younger members of the community. Little wonder that with retirement attracting these sorts of connotations, retirees had a less than positive attitude towards it, experiencing precisely those traumas and health problems with which the literature was so overwhelmed.

But was it so overwhelmed? Why, it might be asked, if there was such a desire for work was there a need for so much propaganda and so many speeches designed to encourage deferred retirement. Human perversity apart, one would have at least expected a fairly immediate response, and that the drift toward cessation of work at 65 might have been halted. As it happened the latter did not occur, and the evidence increasingly suggested that more prosaic factors were behind the desire to stay at work. In its second report the Advisory Committee referred to findings from a survey carried out on the reasons people gave for retiring or continuing at work.⁵⁹ It noted that

Six men out of every 10 reaching age 65 chose to stay on at work. Nearly half of them said it was a question of money and a similar number said they preferred to work, or that they felt fit enough to continue, many gave both reasons. (p.10)

These findings raised doubts about some of the arguments which hitherto had suggested a close symmetry between the economic need for more labour and the social-psychological need of the elderly for work. This, the report neatly avoided, suggesting that it was certainly not surprised at the finding that a large number of people went on working because of financial need. However,

It does not follow that a person whose main reason for continuing to work is financial need, would give up work if that were financially possible, and the general impression we have obtained from this report is that the great majority prefer to stay at work as long as they have the health and opportunity to do this (p 10)

In fact the "general impression" to be drawn could be interpreted quite differently, namely, that the numbers really wishing to continue working were very small, and that adequate financial provision would remove from the minds of many thoughts about returning to work after retirement. It is true that the survey found that 28.4 per cent of men retiring at 65 were compulsorily discharged or retired, that 80 per cent of these were retired because of an upper-age bar, and that three-quarters of this group said that they would have been willing to go on working with their old employers. But it is questionable how many of these would have carried this out if subsequently given the chance. As the work of Richardson (1957), for example, subsequently showed, enthusiasm for work tends to diminish after a certain period of retirement has elapsed. It is also true that the extent to which financial need really was the main reason for continuing in work was over-stated in the survey, the reasons for voluntary retirement, or for staying on at work, always containing a complex mixture of

motives. Yet, even allowing for such discrepancies Shenfield (1957) was to conclude

Unless some rather unlikely changes are made in production methods (the trend of change is in favour of an increased pace of work and is therefore against the older worker's interests), or unless the physical fitness of older men is markedly improved in the next few years, it is improbable that more than a very limited further addition can be made to the total working population by policies designed to encourage the employment of men and women over pension age. (p 82)

When, in 1958, the advisory committee on the employment of older men and women was folded up, the chairman recalled that "wide publicity had been given to the committee's two reports and there was evidence of considerable success in breaking down the traditional barriers against the employment of older workers."⁶⁰ It was also emphasised that the winding up of the committee did not mean that "the Government had lost interest in the employment of older workers."⁶¹ Perhaps not, but when at the beginning of the following year the Minister of Labour was asked how many men had been forced into retirement as a consequence of the trade depression over the previous twelve months, the reply came, "I regret that statistics giving the information are not available."⁶²

Assessed on a long-term basis, the committee's activities did not have a great impact. Age discrimination in hiring practices probably rose in the fifties - particularly in its application to professional and managerial groups (see Fogarty, 1975). In addition, the extent of occupational down-grading in the run-up to retirement (particularly for skilled workers) also became increasingly significant (see Westergaard and Resler, 1975). These tendencies themselves reflected wider, institutional changes in employment practices and conditions, chief amongst these being: the continued decline in male participation rates in the upper age groups, a reduction in the number of semi and unskilled jobs,

and increased adoption of assembly line techniques of production, all of these changes exerting the maximum impact on older workers (for a discussion on this see in particular, Wedderburn, 1975, also Braverman, 1974) With the gloomy predictions about future population structure and economic growth failing to materialise, coupled with the employment changes referred to above, there was - from the late fifties onwards - a general decline in interest in the employment of the older worker, images of an affluent society replaced those of a population being driven to economic disaster because of an excess of dependants

However, in the short-term, the committee had played its role in concentrating attention on the labour shortage on the one hand, and the growth of the retired population on the other, and many older people did respond by delaying their retirement Between 1943 and 1955 around one million people deferred their retirement with, by the end of 1955, 400,000 receiving increased pensions as a result, and 600,000 currently working for theirs But this short-term benefit has to be measured against the one long-term consequence the consolidation of a negative concept of retirement This was the singular contribution which this period made, with the medical and sociological reports providing a scientific under-pinning to the view of retirement as a period of psychological strain and crisis The contribution this played in causing many people to approach retirement with often needless trepidation is difficult to estimate Sociologically, the depiction of retirement as a "roleless role" (E. W. Burgess, 1960) sums up the pessimistic trend in the literature of the fifties Retirement is seen as a vacuum with few of the rewards and activities upon which the individual had come to depend during his working life The

chances of substituting such activities - even with adequate material resources - are regarded as few, since this runs up against the limited capacity of people to actually organise themselves in their leisure time without the stabilising influence of work. Work, in fact, takes on a therapeutic role in delaying the grosser effects of the ageing process and "transmitting a drab existence into a life not devoid of hope."⁶³ Retirement, on the other hand, is seen as a "ticket to death",⁶⁴ where boredom and idleness undermine the will to live. And of course work, whilst a tonic to the individual, was also a tonic to the nation, faced as it was with a growing number of economically inactive people and predictions of a low rate of economic growth.

Certainly, there was reliable evidence on the acute difficulties some men experienced in retirement (the difficulties of women in retirement were rarely acknowledged in this period) and Peter Townsend's (1957) description of the retirement problems of men in Bethnal Green is perhaps the best known example. But a number of complex questions arise here. How far are (or were) such difficulties related to the material circumstances of pensioners? To negative social and cultural stereotypes surrounding retirement (particularly in the fifties)? To aspects of the male's position in particular working-class households and communities? The point is that such questions were not considered in any depth by social gerontological research in the fifties and sixties - of which in this country there was very little anyway. The assumption was too often made, however, that research had answered such questions, and that the crisis of retirement could be regarded as almost axiomatic. Sociologically orientated research increasingly suggested a more complex picture. In a study by Richardson (op cit) of 244 retired men, only 54 per cent were described as being content with their position,

with one third saying they wanted to resume work. However, not many of these tried to find it and Richardson concluded that

It may well be that at, and soon after the time of retiring, there is a more active interest in opportunities for work, but as time passes the retired man's enthusiasm seems to wane (p 938)

Martin and Doran (1966) found that health was more likely to improve rather than deteriorate upon retirement. The American Gerontologist, Robert Bulter (1975) noted that:

Some groups, holding tedious assembly line or heavy labour jobs, can't retire fast enough. Retirees from these groups, not surprisingly, show some improvement, not decline in health as a result. (p. 74)

On a more negative note, Shanas et al (1968) found that in Britain and Denmark the proportion in all occupational groups saying that they missed nothing about their work was overwhelming, the British working class on the other hand said they liked 'nothing' about retirement either. Bell (1976) has summed up the results of American research in the following way

In essence, the transition to retirement has not reflected the trauma postulated in previous research. The institutionalisation of this experience through governmental and private programmes has led to fairly clear understanding of the role expectations by older workers. As a consequence the social and psychological deficits hypothesised to follow this event have largely not materialised (pp 153-4)

Overall, the sixties saw the legacy of the debate about the "anxieties" and the "trauma" of retirement dwarfed by the "re-discovery" of the economic deprivation experienced by the majority of pensioners. Abel-Smith and Townsend (1965) found that old age accounted for one third of poor households in 1960, with 2¹/₂ million people of pensionable age with incomes inadequate to meet their requirements as defined by National Assistance Board standards. In America, Harrington (1963) spoke of the aged as forming a "culture of poverty" with eight

million inhabitants. The elderly thus emerged from the years of affluence still clinging to their supplementary pensions for survival. Their level of existence had remained low despite the post-war boom, and social attitudes towards retirement were still confused and uncertain. However, important changes had taken place. The return of women to the labour market, and steadily increasing levels of unemployment, were to reduce calls on the elderly to become employed. The number of wholly retired pensioners had increased dramatically, and with changing attitudes towards leisure and social activities, a more positive concept of retirement was being articulated amongst some groups of pensioners. In short, attitudes towards retirement were changing substantially as demographic, economic and social forces combined together - increasingly, the cry was less one of work for the elderly, more one of better health, leisure and social facilities. But before analysing the nature of these changed attitudes in more detail, more must be said about the sociological work carried out in this area - and the theories provided for interpreting and analysing the retirement experience.

Footnotes

- 1 B Seebohm Rowntree (1948) p 94
- 2 For the background to the 1908 legislation see Heclo (1974) For a general review of the development of pensions in this period see Gilbert (1970)
- 3 J Stevenson (1977), p 61
4. These figures are taken from P. Thompson (1975)
5. Rowntree said of the old age pensioners living below the poverty line that: 'They are, indeed, the poorest people in the city of course they DO get an occasional ounce of tobacco, or a glass of beer, but only by suffering a little more from cold and undernourishment A poor drab ending to a life' Quoted in J Stevenson, op. cit., p 81
- 6 A D. K Owen (1935), p 81.
- 7 B. B Gilbert (1970), p. 253
- 8 Ibid , p 253
- 9 Both these examples are taken from N Branson and B Heinemann (1971), p 229
- 10 See F Thompson (1973), p 97
- 11 J B Priestly (1977), p 25
- 12 These figures have been taken from V Karn (1977), p 14
13. See J. Stevenson (op cit), p. 114.
14. The statistics on unemployment have been drawn mainly from G M. Beck (1951), see especially chapters 9 and 10.
15. Social services in Oxford (1938), p. 109.
- 16 British Labour statistics (1971), Table 109, p. 207
17. N Longmate (1974), p. 145
- 18 Hansard (1908), vol 190, Col 575

- 19 Hansard (1924-25), vol 184, 79.
- 20 W H Beveridge (1910), p 211
- 21 F C Mills (1917), p 54
- 22 A C. Pigou (1913), p 232
23. Ibid. , p. 232.
24. T.U.C. Congress (1928), p 488.
25. T.U.C. Congress (1929), p 195
26. T.G.W.U. Delegate Conference (1929), p. 10)
27. Ibid. , p. 30.
28. See 'Labour and the Nation A statement of Labour Policy passed at the Annual Conference in 1928'. Published as a pamphlet by the Labour Party in the same year.
29. R Skidelsky, (1975), p 184 For a more detailed discussion on the various retirement plans see R Skidelsky (1970)
- 30 Quoted in R Skidelsky (1970), p 119
- 31 Quoted in R Skidelsky (1975), pp 185-186
- 32 The Times, April 15, 1930
- 33 A Bullock (1960), p 403 See also pp. 516-7 for the details of Bevin's Pension Proposals.
- 34 Ibid , p. 4)3.
- 35 Daily Herald, 23 June, 1930.
36. Hansard (1933-34), Vol. 286, 425.
37. A. J. Cook speaking at the 1930 Labour Party Conference noted that in the mining industry 'they had 300,000 redundant men and it was the veterans who were thrown out' The miners' union was of course one of the main supporters of the early retirement scheme.

- 38 Quoted in J Stevenson (op cit), p 206.
- 39 Ibid. , p 207.
- 40 Quoted in J Murphy (1931), p 41
- 41 Quoted in A. Epstein (1931), p 28
- 42 W H Beveridge (1942), p 42
43. K Walker (1952), p 169.
44. N. O. P. W. C. (1952), pp. 59-60.
45. Ministry of Labour and National Service (1953), p. 24
46. N. O. P. W. C. (op. cit.), p. 52
47. Hansard (1950-51), Vol 486 Col. 849
- 48 Ibid , p 1392
- 49 W F. Anderson and N Cowan (1956), p 1346
- 50 Ibid , p 1347
- 51 J H Sheldon (1950), p 139
- 52 M T. Wermal and S Gelbaum (1945), p 16
- 53 This phrase is used by The Pilgrim Trust in a discussion on the long term effects of unemployment See J. Stevenson (op cit), p 263
- 54 R Cavan (1957) in C. E. Vedder (1963), pp 123-124
- 55 The inability of working class people to constructively use leisure was a consistent theme in this period, see for example Blythe Brooke, 1951, Amulree, 1954.
56. National Advisory Committee on the Employment of Older Men and Women (1953), p. 53
- 57 Phillips Report (1954), p 53
58. Ibid , pp. 50-51
- 59 Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance (1954)

- 60 Ministry of Labour (1959), p 26.
- 61 Ibid. , p.27.
- 62 Hansard (1958-59), Vol 599, 59.
63. Dr C O S Blythe-Brooke (op cit.), p.54.
- 64 A phrase originally coined by Lord Amulree and quoted in an article
by R H Jones (1952).

CHAPTER 3.

RETIREMENT AND AGEING IN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

3 1 INTRODUCTION

The early history of sociological theory in this area centres on an elaboration of the pessimistic views on retirement discussed in the previous section. The main trends which have been developed have been: first, role theory - dominant throughout the fifties, secondly, disengagement theory - developed in the late fifties and early sixties, thirdly, continuity theory - formulated in the late sixties, and still in the early stages of refinement.

Within these main currents there have been a variety of subsidiary themes and debates, these occasionally being stimulated by contributions from outside mainstream social gerontology (e.g. the work of Simone de Beauvoir, 1972, and Peter Stearns, 1977). The most distinctive feature to note is that the theoretical work done in this area has been produced primarily by American researchers - to such an extent that no other country has contributed any significant theoretical development or refinement. In particular, in Great Britain, theoretical issues in social gerontology have received minimal attention, and even where they have been discussed, developments made in more recent American research have been ignored. Thus, Crawford (1971) has noted:

The paucity of social gerontologists in Great Britain is matched by the rarity with which they apply sociological theory of any kind to their work. In this country, ageing, and the experience of retirement in particular, has been treated almost consistently in terms only of social welfare policies. The activities, finances, health and material needs of retired men have been described in a number of studies over the past 20 years but rarely has the sociologist looked at retirement in relation to its place in the social structure of an industrialised society. (p. 255)

This insulation of British social gerontology from theoretical debate and discussion is an important contributory factor to the lack of sophistication in

domestic approaches to retirement and, in particular, to the maintenance of a 'crisis orientated' view of the retirement period. The relationship between retirement attitudes and experiences and class, familial and community characteristics, remain virtually unexplored in British research. Still less, has there been any systematic attempt to relate empirical findings to theoretical models (Townsend's work, 1962 and 1963, in relation to the sociology of institutions, and the sociology of the family, being the most important exception here). Because of these features no apology is made (or needed) for a detailed review of the relevant literature (mostly American), particularly as the points discussed will provide an important background and 'anchorage' to the interviews with retired people which will follow this review

3 2 THE EARLY PERIOD: ROLE THEORY

There is no single reason for the dominance of American research in this field, rather, a series of factors can be discerned which combined to create an environment of keen sociological interest in gerontology. Thus, mention has already been made of the American debate on the elderly in the thirties, a debate which led to a greater consensus than the comparable British one as to the marginality of the elderly in the labour market (Donahue, et al, 1960). This debate took place within the context of the increased demographic importance of the aged - the combination of an increase in the number of the elderly and the number of wholly retired, laying the groundwork for the ensuing sociological discussion. There were also some important ancillary factors. Thus, concurrent with the above, there were discussions on the implications of the break-up of the extended family and the emergence of the so-called nuclear family, discussions on the social implications of the increased rate of geographical and social mobility, and, finally, debates on the impact of industrialisation and

urbanisation - debates which often focused on the elderly as the group most affected by the social and economic upheavals (for a discussion on all of these themes see Burgess, 1960, in particular) Then again, there was also the dominant theme of work as a 'central life interest' for most Americans - particularly men - and its corollary that retirement was often a stressful and unwelcome event (see Cavan, 1963, for a classic re-statement of this view).

All of the above factors coincided to provide theorists with a pessimistic outlook on the retired person's future, and a concern with ambiguities in his social position. The former is illustrated by the following comment by a pioneer in this field - Clark Tibbitts (1954).

Retired individuals, gradually bereft of companionship, characteristically become lonesome, complaining and self-centred and may make excessive demands on children, physicians, case workers, ministers, and others. Their children who must devote their energies to their own young, find themselves burdened with salvaging the social life of the older generation. Feelings of guilt and serious family problems result. (p. 307)

The ambiguity in the social position of the aged was summarised by Parsons (1942) as follows

In view of the very great significance of occupational status and its psychological correlates, retirement leaves the older man in a peculiarly functionless situation, cut off from participation in the most important interests and activities of the society ... Retirement not only cuts the ties to the job itself but also greatly loosens those to the community of residence. It may be surmised that this structural isolation from kinship, occupational and community ties is the fundamental basis of the recent political agitation for help to the old. It is suggested that it is far less the financial hardship of the position of elderly people than their 'social isolation' which makes old age a 'problem'. (p. 616)

A particular concern of researchers in this period was looking at how the elderly had fared in the shift from a rural to an industrial society, with all the accompanying changes in family and social structure. The general position adopted was that the elderly had fared worse than many other groups in the light of these changes, with their removal from a position of 'centrality' within

the family being the most notable feature (see Burgess, op.cit., also Field, 1972).

In general, the process of industrialisation was seen as causing a whole new range of insecurities for the elderly

(The elderly person) can no longer count as a matter of right and of moral and legal obligation on economic support by his children. He is less and less likely, if widowed, to be offered a home by a son or a daughter. If ill, particularly with a chronic ailment, his children are more and more disposed to shift his care to a hospital rather than to provide a bed in their home. If lonely, he must look elsewhere than to his descendents to provide companionship and sociability.¹

The suggestion of a weakening in the social position of the elderly was to become a common theme in the succeeding years and, combined with the institutionalisation of retirement, the question of developing adequate social roles for the retired was to become a major concern. Burgess (op.cit.) argued that the retired man and his wife were 'imprisoned in a roleless role',² having no vital function to perform such as they had in rural society. According to Burgess

The older person feels de-throned and devalued in the realm of family relations where he once reigned supreme. He can no longer count on the role of patriarch ordering the destiny of his children and grandchildren. He cannot even be sure of being venerated and respected. In short he has lost his old role of dominance and has not yet found a new one (p 272)

The failure to find a new role was partly attributed to what most researchers saw as the centrality of the work role and the difficulty - for men - of finding a replacement. Michelson (1954), for example, spoke of 'the rare individual who can look ahead to the golden years, make the needed changes in values, and substitute new vital activities for the meaning of work'.³ For most, separation from work was seen as likely to produce demoralisation and reduced self-esteem - especially as there were no substitutes with the same cultural values in American society (for statements supporting this view see Blau, 1973,

Cavan, op. cit, Miller, 1965) Donahue et al (op. cit.) provides us with a good summary of this position

While leisure and peaceful enjoyment of a state of non-work may be possible values to the working person in an idealised picture, they are still not socially recognised virtues in our contemporary society, and Americans seem unable to conceive leisure in a positive fashion (witness the popular expression 'killing time'). Certainly, leisure in cultural life has not reached the stage in America where persons engaged in full-time leisure can find a suitable, socially defined status-giving role to replace the sense of meaningfulness and functionality associated with pre-retirement life activities. (p 336)

This view was combined with a strong sense of pessimism (already referred to in Chapter 2) about people's ability to actually use leisure. This was explicit, for example, in Loether's (1967) suggestion that:

One of the serious problems facing our society is the problem of teaching the average working man how to use his leisure.⁴ (p. 76)

And it underlay Blau's (1973) view that

Ordinary men and women have relied on cultural scripts throughout their earlier lives, and when these no longer exist they often lack resources and the experience to improvise new ones. Instead, many older people just cling to life as they wait to be relieved of a lonely and useless existence. (p 177)

3.3 ACTIVITY THEORY

The counterpart to this concern with the absence of roles for the elderly, was a theoretical argument that psychological and social well-being was to be gained precisely through engagement in social roles and activities. Thus via the work of researchers such as Cavan (1949) and Havighurst and Albrecht (1953), activity theory emerged as an attempt to integrate accumulated knowledge and to explain empirically based findings (Bell, 1976). Havighurst (1954), for example, argued

Research has established the fact that activity in a wide variety of social roles is positively related to happiness and good social adjustment in old age and also that a high degree of activity in a given social role is positively related to happiness and good social adjustment. (p 309)

Havighurst linked this view up with the notion of 'role flexibility'.

From about 50 - 70 the individual is deprived of several roles. At the same time he grows discontented unless he is able to compensate for this by increasing activity in other roles or by the developing of new ones, that is, by role flexibility. The latter defined as the capacity or 'personal quality' to change roles easily and increase or reduce activity
(p 309)

One of the results of this approach was a considerable amount of data produced by researchers on the activities engaged in by older people - both in America and in other countries. Much of this data was purely descriptive, with often only tenuous linkages to any explanatory theory or set of hypotheses. For example, Havighurst (in Burgess, op cit) contributed a lengthy chapter on the various roles played by the elderly in America and seven European countries. On Switzerland he noted:

It might seem that older people in Switzerland lead a dreary life compared with those in England or Sweden, for example. But this is probably not true of those in the villages and country, where they retain the functions of the elderly in an agricultural society. In the cities their life probably is somewhat dreary. (p 316)

And on the elderly in Britain he suggested:

While the British rather expect a man to retire from his work at about 65, there is no clearly defined role for the older person as a user of leisure time. The upper-class person has been more or less leisured all his adult life and is expected to go on fairly much as in the past. The working class man is expected to be tired and to be happy with little or nothing to do. For the middle-class man the expectations are even less clear. Women of the working class or the middle class are expected to go on keeping house much as usual. (p 333)

Even where there was a clear methodology and purpose behind research, the results were often ambiguous. Thus Burgess and his associates at the University of Chicago undertook a series of studies - in the early fifties - designed to determine the principal factors positively corresponding with good adjust-

ment in old age Donahue, et al (op cit) have described the findings as follows

.. they found the factors to be satisfactory health, being married and having good family relations and friendships, participation in leisure-time and other activities, membership in at least one organisation, lack of discrimination or other unhappy experience of more than episodic character, a self-concept of being middle-aged rather than elderly, a feeling of permanent security, a social status equal to that held previously, plans for the future, participation in religious activities, and a belief in life after death. (p. 379)

This roll-call of prevailing cultural values does itself raise both general questions such as What is an adequate adjustment to old age? And subsidiary ones such as Is adjustment a 'once and for all thing'? Are some adjustments more/less appropriate in some contexts than in others? What are those factors hindering/assisting given adjustments? On the more basic issue, Brehm (1968) was to criticise many of the studies in this period on the grounds that

Since there are no norms of adequate adjustment to the social roles of old people, the measurement of their adjustment has usually involved arbitrary premisses about healthy or desirable subjective states and attitudes, or desirable attributes for the aged (p. 27)

On the subsidiary questions, activity theory has had only limited success in applying general findings such as those listed by Donahue, et al, to specific social contexts and structures Where this latter was achieved, however, important contributions were made Here, the work of Friedmann and Havighurst (1954) was influential in starting a debate (which is still being developed) on the likely relationship between attitudes toward retirement, and attachments to, and perceptions about work In a study entitled "The Meaning of Work and Retirement", four hypotheses were put forward

- 1 Work has recognised meanings in addition to that of earning a living.
- 2 Those persons who regard work as primarily a way of earning a living will prefer to retire at age 65 (or normal retirement age).

3. Those persons who stress values of work other than that of earning a living will prefer to continue working past 65

4. The extra-economic meanings of work are stressed to a greater extent by members of the higher skilled occupational groups

The results suggested that there was evidence that those who attached extra economic meanings to work were those who were most reluctant to retire, whereas those who looked upon work merely as a means of earning a living tended to look forward to retirement. Extra-economic meanings were most common among those in the high prestige, high skill occupations, those in such occupations were most reluctant to retire. There were some important exceptions to this, however. Thus, of the skilled craftsmen studied, a majority of those stressing extra-economic meanings to work indicated that they welcomed retirement. The authors note here

. . . we cannot categorically assume that, because a man's life may have become intimately bound up with the performance of his job, retirement may not hold a set of appeals for him which is capable of superseding or even replacing the satisfaction he got from his job. Instead we have to contrast the nature of the satisfactions obtained from work with the type of substitutes present in retirement. (p.185)

This work stimulated a number of enquiries on the relationship between occupational status and attitudes toward retirement. Loether (1975), for example, made a comparison between white and blue-collar workers, finding the former to have both more positive attitudes about their work and to be less enthusiastic about retirement. However, in terms of actual adjustment to retirement, the white-collar workers fared somewhat better than the blue-collar workers. On a scale designed to measure the person's self-concept, it was found that 70 per cent of the former had a favourable self-concept in retirement, compared with 48 per cent of the latter, with 20 per cent of the blue-collar workers having an

unfavourable self-concept compared with 5 per cent of the white-collar workers.⁶

Loether accounted for these differentials in the following way

A probable explanation for the differential success between the two groups in adapting to retirement is that the factors leading to the white-collar worker's greater identification with and attachment to his occupation also facilitate his adjustment to retirement. White-collar occupations generally require a higher education level and are inherently more interesting than blue-collar occupations. As a by-product of his higher level of education, the white-collar worker tends to develop greater role flexibility than the blue-collar worker (p. 91)

Limited though the above arguments may appear, they did lead on to a more sophisticated debate on the inter-relationships between work and retirement (see below, the work of Simpson et al, 1966), and the formulation of hypotheses linking occupational status and career, individual biographies, and attitudes towards retirement connections which remain wholly neglected in the context of the British occupational structure

3.4 ROLE THEORY IN RETROSPECT

In the years following the formulation of the basic positions adopted by role theorists, both theoretical and empirical research has led to substantial revision of some of the central assumptions made in the early work. Three areas may be singled out: the elderly in relation to the family, attitudes towards work, women in retirement

On the first point, the original assumption that the elderly had been moved from a position of 'centrality' within the extended family, to a more subordinate and isolated position in the nuclear household, has had to be revised in the light of subsequent research. On the one hand, writers from a diverse set of standpoints (Simone de Beauvoir, op cit, Anderson, 1971, Hufton, 1974, Thomas, 1976_a) have indicated the ambiguity in the social position of the elderly in past societies, suggesting that the likelihood of their receiving support was often undermined by

fluctuations in food supply, economic slumps, and loss of control over property.⁷

On the other hand, pessimism about the elderly's position within the nuclear family has had to be revised in the light of empirical research (see, in particular, Shanas, et al, op cit) Thus, Neugarten (1970) has argued that:

Large-scale surveys have shown that old people are not isolated from other family members. To the contrary while most older people prefer to live in their own households, they live near a child or a relative and see other members regularly and frequently (p 20)

One caveat to the above is that the general finding that the elderly still remain in close contact with their family, should not detract interest from the question of whether the elderly (particularly those over 75) are more vulnerable to isolation in contexts such as the inner-city, in regions subject to economic and industrial decline, and in retirement communities. Again, little work has been done in this country linking demographic and social characteristics of areas to the experience of retirement and old age (see Rosow, 1967, however, for an interesting American study along these lines)

Secondly, views about the individual's attachment to work have been substantially revised since the early post-war period. It will be recalled here that pessimism about the individual's response to retirement was based partly on the presumed difficulty of finding a substitute with the same cultural value as work, and one which met the same individual needs. What subsequent research demonstrated, however, was the extent to which attachment to work had been over-estimated and that of attachment to leisure under-estimated. Shanas, in a 1957 study of persons 65 and over⁸, asked retired men to list the things they missed about not working, and asked employed men to indicate what they would miss when they stopped working. The respondents were then asked to select the single item that they missed or would miss most. Half of all men, both among the employed and the retired, indicated income from

the job, money, as most important. About three of every 10 retired men, and four of every 10 working men, said that something other than money was most important to them. Shanas commented

Retired men in the United States, irrespective of occupational group, are most likely to miss 'money' when they retire. When occupational differences are considered, however, blue-collar workers, whether retired or employed, are more likely than white-collar or agricultural workers to report that money is the thing they miss about their jobs or would miss if they gave up working. (p 228)

Thompson (1973), in a sample of 1,589 men, examined the hypothesis that retired men have lower morale than employed men. She took the initial position that work was the primary source of man's identity, and that retirement results in demoralisation because it represents the loss of a major social role, and also those supports necessary for a positive self-image. She argued that if this position was valid then one would expect lower morale among the retired than the employed - regardless of any physical or socio-economic differences. However, her findings failed to support this with variations in morale between the retired and the employed being primarily accounted for by the combined effects of differences in perception of health, disability, age and income. She noted

These findings suggest that the retired exhibit lower morale than the employed principally because they are older, functionally more disabled, more likely to view their health in negative terms, and less well off financially and not because of any negative reaction to loss of the worker role. (p 344)

Thompson went on to conclude:

The results challenge the thesis on which this analysis was originally based and the theory that work is necessarily the central value in the lives of all older American males. While work is undoubtedly a prominent social value, it seems to occupy a position beside other equally important social values such as leisure. It appears that given relative youth, an optimistic view of health, a lack of functional disability, and an adequate income, the retirement years can be as pleasant as the years of employment

for a great many men and that leisure roles can adequately substitute for that of worker. (p. 344)

This finding confirmed the conclusion reached in the longitudinal study of retirement conducted by Streib and Schneider (1971) at Cornell University. The conclusion here was that 'retirement does not have the broad negative consequences for the older person that [was] expected.'⁹ In their study, Streib and Schneider found that women were more reluctant to retire than men, and the authors comment that this result may be due to the fact that men are not as devoted to work per se as they had anticipated, suggesting that the importance of the work role may well have been exaggerated - particularly for those with tedious jobs.¹⁰ On the relationship between psychological health and retirement they reported the finding that

No consistent change in psychological health was observed as measured by the questionnaire items. The changes which were observed were not clearly attributable to retirement. The respondents themselves did not attribute a decline in satisfaction to retirement. While nearly half did not expect retirement to make them feel less satisfied, a sizeable proportion of our respondents overestimated the adverse effect of retirement on this feeling of satisfaction. (p 116)

The findings of these various studies were subsequently to be summarised by Atchley (1972) in the following way:

There is little evidence that retirement per se has any necessary relationship to problems found among individual older people. Certainly, the commonest effect of retirement is the limitation it places on income. It is the sharp loss of income and the change in life-style associated with it that has the most significance on the individual. For people with enough money, the theories which link unhappiness with the need to work appear ludicrous. In my own studies of retirement only a minute proportion of those with moderate incomes missed their jobs. (p 169)

The third area concerns the question of women in retirement, and their experiences and perceptions of it, compared with that of men. The tendency here was for role theory to see retirement as relatively unproblematic for women, given what was seen as their weaker attachment to work, and the maintenance of the role

of housewife into old age (see Havighurst, 1954, Burgess, op cit) Thus, the existence of the latter role was seen as providing an under-pinning to the retirement experience, an advantage which - it was suggested - was rarely shared by men. Although a re-statement of this view has recently come in the work of Simone de Beauvoir (op cit.), on the whole one of the more important shifts in social gerontology has been a more critical approach to the question of women in retirement. Beeson (1975), for example, in a critique of ageing and retirement studies, has argued that

.. we have numerous judgements of the woman's experience as 'smoother', 'less demoralising' and 'easier'. There is little or no empirical basis for these conclusions. The justification in each case is essentially theoretical. Some form of role theory provides the basis for each evaluation. (p 55)

Whether there was empirical justification for these conclusions back in the early fifties when role theory in relation to ageing was being formulated, is an arguable matter. However, from the vantage point of the seventies, when the economic activity rates for women have been increasing - along with a heightened consciousness about the right to work and the right to share equal conditions with men - the original position adopted by role theorists has become increasingly untenable (a feature supported by empirical findings). These findings suggest that in some cases it may well be women more than men who experience distress in retirement. Streib and Schneider, in the study reported earlier, found that whilst for men retirement did not have the 'broad negative consequences' which had been expected, a 'more surprising' finding was that "women who retire report a sharper increase in feelings of uselessness than do their retired male counterparts."¹¹ The authors went on to suggest that further research was needed to examine the "stereotyped idea" that the male retiree found it harder to retire than his female equivalent.

In Britain, a study by Jacobson (1974) of pre-retirement attitudes amongst both male and female factory workers, suggested that women tended to view retirement much less favourably than men. He found that they were also more likely to support later 'ideal' retirement ages, to state that they would choose to go on working even if their economic future was guaranteed, and to accept their jobs as satisfactory.¹² This finding was linked up with changes in the position of women within the community.

One may speculate that the tendency among older women in this study to prefer to remain employed is consonant with a more general trend. It could be tentatively suggested, for example, that this tendency is embedded in certain broad social changes. These, it seems, are not entirely incompatible with a life style among females of the same strata as our respondents - one that is less decisively centred on the home and its diminishing range of social options. Among the changes of which it is possible to think in this context are re-development of urban areas, greater social heterogeneity of neighbourhoods, gradual dissolution of 'traditional' tightly knit social networks based on kinship and locality, increased residential mobility, elderly people's frequent physical separation from the main body of their kin, and a re-assessment of middle-aged and elderly women's roles, both in their own eyes and on the normative and institutional level. (p 491)

According to Jacobson, the consequence of these social changes may make a return to the 'isolated' nuclear family a much less attractive proposition for increasing numbers of those married women who have returned to work in their forties and fifties.¹³ Certainly, the combination of these employment trends, with a loosening of ties at a communal level, suggests the need for much revision of the original position adopted by role theorists - retirement for women can no longer be considered a 'non-stressful', 'non-disruptive' event.

3.5 ACTIVITY THEORY IN RETROSPECT

Finally, there is the issue of social activity in retirement, and its relationship to social and psychological well-being. Here again some important changes have been made to the original positions adopted. In a study by Maddox (1964)

support was found for the central hypothesis that reported activity was positively correlated with morale. Yet, Maddox went on to note a number of deviant cases and the unexpected finding that whilst "mean reported activity scores" decreased with each succeeding five year age category, "mean morale scores" did not. These negative findings led him to explore the conditions under which the relationship between activity and morale could be modified. He found that

Relatively good health, as indicated by medical evaluation or by the subject's self-assessment, increased the probability that high morale would be found even when activity was low. A sense of personal adequacy, as indicated by psychiatric evaluation (absence of depression) or by expressed feelings of usefulness, also modified the expected relationship between activity and morale, contributing to the achievement or maintenance of high morale even when reported activity was low. (p. 203)

In a later paper Maddox (1970) was to comment that whilst consistent support had been found for the hypothesis that, among the elderly, maintenance of contact with the social environment was a condition of maintaining life satisfaction, research had also indicated that rather than activity per se, certain forms of activities and relationships may be more important than others.¹⁴ This point was subsequently explored by Lemon et al (1972) in a test of a number of hypotheses relating activity and life satisfaction. Five of these were as follows.¹⁵

- 1 Informal activity with (friends, relatives, and neighbours) is directly associated with life satisfaction
- 2 Formal activity (participation in voluntary organisations) is directly associated with life satisfaction.
- 3 Solitary activity (leisure pursuits, maintenance of household) is directly associated with life satisfaction
- 4 Informal activity (with friends, relatives, and neighbours) is more associated with life satisfaction than formal activity

5 Formal activity is more highly associated with life satisfaction than is informal activity

Lemon et al found that none of the hypotheses linking frequency of activity to life satisfaction received consistent empirical support. Only informal activity with friends was associated with life satisfaction. Of the other hypotheses tested number 4 was the most well-supported, but the relationship was not high enough to draw any firm conclusions. The researchers commented:

Rather than reacting to only general social roles, as might characterise neighbouring or formal activities, friends react towards one another in terms of their specific idiosyncratic role identities. The whole person, or in the more precise terminology of interactionist theory, the totality of one's role identities, is thus taken into account to a greater extent. The friendship may also provide a sense of continuity and depth for one's role identities, this is especially important for high life satisfaction in a rapidly changing, complex society. (p 60)

Lemon et al linked this finding up with that of an earlier one by Lowenthal and Haven (1968) which suggested that the 'strategic correlate' of high morale was less the frequency of activities, more the presence of a stable, intimate relationship with a single 'confidante'. Thus, it was the quality or type of interaction, as opposed to the quantity, which was seen as the most important predictor of life satisfaction¹⁶

Once again, here, an important refinement has been made to the original theoretical propositions, with a concern with qualitative social ties and activities (and the meanings individuals attach to these) being developed (see, also, Mercer, 1967, Bengston, et al, 1969)

3.6 CONCLUDING COMMENT

When reviewing the literature of the late forties and the fifties - the period when role theory was being developed - much, it is true, seems over pessimistic in relation to the effect of retirement on the male, and often shallow

in relation to judgements about the elderly in the family, and about women in retirement. At the same time, the economic context in this period was all pervasive in influencing perceptions about retirement, and the limitations of role theory must be attributed in part to the constraints set by this environment. But, if this environment was unfavourable for establishing a balanced assessment of retirement, it did at least help consolidate a theoretical approach as well as provoke an important debate, many elements of which are still being argued over and developed

However, the paradox here is that the second major theoretical development - disengagement theory - asserted a contrary position to that adopted by most role theorists, suggesting that withdrawal rather than activity was the key to high morale in retirement and old age

3.7 THE MIDDLE PERIOD: DISENGAGEMENT THEORY

The disengagement theory was developed in the late fifties by a group of social gerontologists associated with the Committee on Human Development at the University of Chicago. The group included R. J. Havighurst, Bernice Neugarten, Elaine Cumming and W. E. Henry. The research group considered that to understand old age the elderly had to be studied within their own environments as opposed to institutions such as hospitals and nursing homes. Furthermore, understanding old age meant studying people at different time periods in order to discover and evaluate the changes taking place within the individual as he or she became older. The environment selected was Kansas City, Missouri, a large metropolitan centre. Here, a panel of healthy persons aged 50 and over were chosen as subjects and interviewed over a number of years. The theory of disengagement was subsequently derived from analyses of these interviews.

The central postulate of the theory has been summed up by Cumming and Henry (1961) as follows

Ageing is an inevitable mutual withdrawal or disengagement resulting in decreased interaction between the ageing individual and others in the social system he belongs to. The process may be initiated by the individual or by others in the situation. The aged person may withdraw more markedly from some classes of people whilst remaining relatively close to others. His withdrawal may be accompanied from the outset by an increased preoccupation with himself, certain institutions in society may make the withdrawal easy for him. When the ageing process is complete the equilibrium which existed in middle life between the individual and his society has given way to a new equilibrium characterised by a greater distance and an altered type of relationship (pp 14-15)

A key assumption made in the theory is that 'ego energy' declines with age, and that as the ageing process develops, individuals become increasingly self-preoccupied, and less and less responsive to normative controls. Further, the theory contains both social and psychological components. On the one hand, it deals with the relationship between the individual and society, on the other, it describes changes occurring within the individual. According to the theory, either the individual or society may initiate the process of disengagement. When done by the individual it is the result of ego changes, when done by society it is the result of organisational imperatives.

As with the early role theorists the central task for men is considered to be their work. Retirement - or the giving up of work - means that a man's central life-task is finished, and it is from this point on that disengagement begins. The process is made easier for the individual by the setting of fixed retirement ages and pension schemes - developments which undercut individual dilemmas about when to disengage. Retirement in fact is seen by Cumming and Henry as a form of permission for men to disengage from demanding social roles, for women, widowhood is considered to be the formal marker of disengagement.

In addition, it is also argued that disengagement or withdrawal from social relationships will lead to the individual maintaining a higher morale in old age - higher, that is, than if he or she attempted to keep involved in a range of social affairs and activities. Thus, disengagement is seen as both natural and desirable, with a stronger sense of psychological well-being being the result. Finally, this feature of ageing is suggested as a universal phenomenon, associated with ageing in all cultures.¹⁸

In a later article, Cumming (1963) attempted to specify in greater detail how the process of disengagement is experienced by the individual. She suggests that

Disengagement probably begins sometime during middle-life when certain changes of perception occur, of which the most important is probably an urgent new perception of the inevitability of death. (p. 381)

With this perception there may begin a process of internal self-exploration, where previously taken-for-granted values such as 'achievement' are called into question. Alternatively, disengagement may begin with the individual being confronted by certain objective 'losses', such as the death of close friends, the moving away of children. According to Cumming

With each loss, the ageing person must surrender certain potential feelings and actions and replace them with their symbolic residues in memory. In a sense this substitution of symbol for social action changes the quality of the self. Even if the role partners themselves are replaced they cannot often substitute for the lost relationship because sentiments built up over the years cannot be copied. (p. 382)

Cumming goes on to suggest:

The most crucial step in the disengagement process may lie in finding a new set of rewards. The esteem that achievement brings can be replaced by the affection generated in socio-emotional activity. The inner rewards of weaving the past into a satisfactory moral fabric can partly replace the public rewards of achievement. (p. 382)

In sum, whereas for role theory the 'inner-life' is inextricably tied to the external world through the social role and social activities, disengagement theory

suggests a substitution of the latter via the inner-world itself - with an accompanying tendency for people to interact in fewer and fewer roles

Since its formulation, disengagement theory has attracted considerable critical attention - much of which has been exceedingly hostile. Thus, Blau (op. cit.) was moved to observe:

The disengagement theory, as originally formulated by Cumming and Henry, has little, if any, scientific value. (p.152)

A point of view which had earlier been echoed by Maddox (op. cit.)

In the balance, disengagement theory has been found wanting empirically and in its original formulation is rarely defended by anyone (p. 21)

The reasons for the hostility towards the theory has to be understood at two levels. First, it was seen as attacking a consensual view that activity and participation were positively relative to well-being and morale. Secondly, it was seen as providing a theoretical under-pinning to social and economic policies which reinforced the marginality of the aged in American society. According to Blau (op. cit.)

The disengagement theory deserves to be publicly attacked, because it can so easily be used as a rationale by the non-old, who constitute the 'normals' in society, to avoid confronting and dealing with the issue of old people's marginality and rolelessness in American society. (p. 152)

It was the former point, however, which tended to receive the most amount of attention, with a veritable army of researchers quoting either from their own research or replicating aspects of that done by Cumming and Henry, in attempts to undermine or substantiate the thesis. Few reports appeared favourable. Tallmer and Kutner (1969), in a partial replication of the Kansas study, covering 181 subjects in the New York City area, came to the conclusion that:

there appears to be substantial evidence for our hypothesis that disengagement among the aged can be predicted to occur as a concomitant of physical and social stresses which profoundly affect the manner in

which the life pattern is re-directed. Because they have ignored the apparently definitive effect of such factors on disengagement, Cumming and Henry were led to the conclusion that advancing age was a sufficient explanation of the factors obtained in their study. It is not age which produces disengagement in our investigation but the impact of physical and social stress which may be expected to increase with age. (p 74)

Peter Townsend (1973) in Britain, in arguing that there was little evidence of old people taking the initiative to 'disengage' or withdraw, and a good deal to suggest that they are distressed by the loss of roles and relationships, went on to suggest that

Insufficient attention has been given to forms of compensation, replacement and substitution when there are losses of roles and relationships in old age. Widowed people re-marry or rejoin their married children, or develop more intensive relationships with one or more of their children. They may see more of their neighbours. Extensive social interaction may be gradually replaced by intensive local interaction, involving many fewer people. (p. 230)

The variety of responses to ageing and retirement was also a point made by Shanas (1971) in an article questioning the identification made by Cumming and Henry between retirement and disengagement. Some men, she argues, want to re-engage in new activities and interests after retirement, others simply want to enjoy the sense of freedom and relaxation which retirement brings. Shanas comments

The evidence that retired people from various countries say that they miss nothing about their work or that they miss primarily the income, the diverse ways in which retirement is accepted in various countries and by different individuals, the fact that industrial workers in many countries are asking for earlier retirement ages, should serve to alert us that there is not necessarily a decrease in social activity or engagement with retirement. (p 114)

Atchley (1972) whilst conceding that disengagement did indeed take place saw it as a product of the opportunities for continued engagement in the social world. Thus, he suggested that much voluntary disengagement has resulted from the fact that people saw disengagement as inevitable because of the rules

of the institutions they participate in "That is, it is really the result of societal disengagement."¹⁹ This view was subsequently to receive some support via the work of Crawford (see below) in Britain, and Hochschild (1975) in America, who argued

it is not ageing per se which determines disengagement, but a combination of factors associated with ageing (e.g. poor health, widowhood) and other factors associated with the nature of society and one's location in it which together influence engagement or disengagement (p. 563)

Most of the above writers, whilst disputing the position which takes disengagement as a natural correlate of ageing and retirement, still admitted its reality as a consequence of given physical and social conditions. Other writers, however, in their speed to bury the theory have often tended to dispute the reality of disengagement under any conditions. Reichard et al (1962) suggested that there was little evidence, from their sample, of ageing or retirement leading to any extensive decline in social or leisure activities, and Blau (op. cit.) whilst conceding that disengagement might be found amongst some elderly people, argued that this was the exception rather than the rule, and she went on to strongly attack the idea that disengagement was a healthy or desirable response to ageing.

Empirical evidence shows that as a rule just exactly the opposite is the case. Numerous studies in a variety of communities and in institutions for old people report that activity, whether in the form of work or an avocation, and sociability, whether in the form of a single, intimate relationship or more extensive social relationships of a less intimate character, are the most stable and consistent correlates of high morale in old age (p. 151)

As well as criticisms on substantive issues there have also been questions about the logic of the theory. Hochschild (op. cit.) has recently argued that the theory is, a) so constructed as to make it unfalsifiable, b) the major variables are composed of sub-parts which do not vary in a unitary way - the omnibus

variable problem, c) the theory ignores the meanings which actors attach to experiences in old age.²⁰ The first two points are of particular importance.

The argument behind the first criticism is that there exists no clear criteria as to what constitutes counter-evidence to the theory, hence, its supporters have ruled out some of the studies quoted above by, for example, "stressing some criteria and belittling other criteria for disengagement"²¹ On the second point, Hochschild argues

The omnibus variable problem is most pronounced with regard to the other independent variable, age and with regard to the dependent variable, disengagement. In fact, the characterisation of disengagement as a unitary process has proved to be one of the weakest points in the theory and the discovery of its complexity the most significant result of the follow-up research. Both age and disengagement turn out to be "umbrella" variables which crowd together, under single titles, many distinct phenomena. When researchers began to unravel the parts from the whole, we found that, a) different dimensions of disengagement became dozens of distinct dependent variables, and b) when broken up by this continual fission, former parts of these whole new variables can be transformed into promising new independent variables. In addition, c) different parts of the independent variable (age and related phenomena) have separate links to various aspects of disengagement. (p 557)

Hochschild goes on to give a number of examples to illustrate this point. She notes that all the psychological and sociological forms of disengagement which are united in the theory do not seem to be so united empirically. Atchley's (1971) study of emeritus professors, for example, indicated that there could be social disengagement without psychological disengagement. A study by Carp (1969) distinguished different types of social disengagement. In this study, disengagement from family relationships was negatively related to disengagement from material possessions, mental stimulation, social activities and relationships with other people. Carp concluded²²

Some inconsistencies from study to study regarding the nature of disengagement may result from the use of different partial criteria and of compound criteria with different elements.

All of the above criticisms cast some doubt on the extent to which disengagement can be regarded as a unitary and universal phenomenon. Yet, caution is necessary before exercising a blanket judgement on the theory. Certainly, the universality of withdrawal either within or across cultures must be regarded as a highly suspect thesis (see Rose, 1964, and Crawford, 1971, for the relevant critiques), as must the view that withdrawal is an intrinsic feature of the ageing process (as opposed to it being just one of a number of styles of ageing). Whilst acknowledging these points, however, important questions remain still to be answered. Thus, the issues raised by Atchley, Tullmer and Kutner, and Hochschild, regarding the likely conditions precipitating disengagement, clearly need to be developed further, and the view should also be noted of researchers such as Loether (op cit) who suggest that rather than see social activity and disengagement as opposites, the two may in fact supplement each other. Once again, there may be a number of different types of adaptation to the ageing process

On balance, then, whilst many elements of the theory must be rejected, subsequent research has suggested its applicability for understanding certain parts of the ageing process. It is to an examination of this research that we must now turn.

3.8 DISENGAGEMENT THEORY IN RETROSPECT

Whilst Maddox (op. cit) is probably correct to argue that many of the original arguments put forward by Cumming and Henry have been found wanting in the light of subsequent research, it is also the case that many researchers have used elements of the theory to interpret or develop their own research findings. Lehr and Dieher (1969), for example, in a study of retired teachers and steelworkers, whilst finding no evidence to give overall support to disengagement

theory, note that it might be applicable to the period just after retirement - where the individual is adjusting to what they call a "new life situation" After this transitional period they suggest that

a renewed form of engagement is possible, as seen in the 70 - 75 year olds in our sample, in whom an increase of social activity and strong feelings of being needed are combined with life satisfaction and a positive morale (p 135)

At the other end of the "old age scale" there is the finding that disengagement may occur in the 2 - 3 years prior to death (Lieberman and Coplan, 1970) Though even here - as Hochschild (op cit) points out - social factors may make this more probable for some individuals than for others.

Strieb and his colleagues re-assessed the Cornell study in the light of the disengagement theory, commenting that viewing retirement as "permission to disengage" (qua Cumming and Henry) "enables us to view retirement as a way of preserving self-esteem in old age"²³ They note that the traditional outlook sees reduction in social activities as a harbinger of reduced psychological well-being, however, they suggest that an alternative view is possible "that those who view retirement as 'permission to disengage' are free to lower their level of activity and still preserve their self-esteem"²⁴

Yet, the researchers also note that disengagement from work may permit the older person to remain engaged in other spheres of life - interacting with children, and grandchildren, visiting relatives, and so on, and they put forward the concept of "differential disengagement" to encompass these continuing (or new) forms of engagement.

By this term we mean that disengagement occurs at different rates and different amounts for the various roles in a person's role set Cessation of work activity does not necessarily result in automatic disengagement in familial, friendship, neighbourhood, and other role spheres Disengagement operates unevenly in terms of role demands and in its pace (p 179)

The salience of this was subsequently to be brought out by Crawford (op cit) in her British, longitudinal study of retirement. Amongst pre-retirees she found a strong tendency to associate retirement with disengagement, however, there were still a variety of meanings attached to the event. She distinguished one group who were content to accept retirement as a period of withdrawal, they were looking forward to spending most of their time at home, relaxing and enjoying certain hobbies - re-engaging in fact within the domestic sphere (Monkhouse, 1974, found a similar group in her study of retirement). Secondly, there was a group dreading retirement, dreading the loss of work and the income and relationships that go with work - feeling as well that there were no adequate substitutes available for these. Finally, there was a group who were looking forward to retirement because, far from seeing it as a time when they will withdraw or disengage, they saw it as a time for extending their life in different directions, as a time for re-alignment.²⁵

In a later paper, Crawford (1972), studying the same respondents five months into their retirement, noted a clear tendency to resist any disengagement or withdrawal. She found that the majority of her respondents, when asked about participation in a number of roles, were intending to participate as fully as, or more fully than they had participated before retirement. And she concluded (pace Comming and Henry) that if people do withdraw on retirement, it is neither particularly frequent nor a very happy experience.

Crawford also noted in this paper sex and class differences in the type of roles people intended to be active in.

Middle-class men were going to be more active parents, organisation members and leisure-time users. Working-class men were going to be more active parents, sibs, household members, friends and leisure-time users. Middle-class women were going to be more active parents and leisure time users. Working class women were going to be

more active parents. Some of the roles in which people intended to re-engage after retirement were limited to the family and the home, e.g. those of parent and household members. Some were limited to extra-mural activities. (p 233)

Finally, Crawford found two major patterns amongst men regarding anticipation of retirement. First, a group who were looking forward to retirement, and who already had a variety of roles outside the home which could be used more fully after retirement, this group were more likely to be non-manual workers. Secondly, a group of manual workers who played few roles outside the domestic sphere and the immediate family and who were dreading retirement. Crawford says of this group

They seem to have depended almost exclusively on their work for a variety of satisfactions - company, interest, structure, etc. Work appeared to be their framework and without it they saw their lives collapsing. They felt either unable or unwilling to re-structure their existence and consequently they concentrated upon the losses rather than the gains which retirement implied. (p 234)

In findings such as these there is considerable movement away from the original disengagement theory, with its stress on the ageing process per se - independent of the social and economic context in which ageing takes place. Indeed, it is a recognition of the influence of the latter, which is such an important feature of social gerontological work carried out from the mid-sixties. From this work, no clear theoretical alternative to that of role theory or disengagement theory has yet emerged. However, a number of alternatives have been put forward, and it is to one of these that we now turn

3 9 THE LATER PERIOD · CONTINUITY THEORY

There are a number of features about the social gerontological work carried out in America from the mid-sixties which make it quite distinctive from the work that had been done previously. This distinctiveness arises

in part from a major shift in social attitudes and policies towards retirement. In essence, this later research was to reflect the consolidation of retirement within American society and its increased cultural and social legitimation.

This was a context where leisure had increased in its cultural value since the post-war period a context where having 'free time', 'time to spare' was less an occasion for feelings of guilt more one for following interests connected with self-development and the creation of new life styles. The increased importance of leisure had a powerful impact on conceptions about retirement, with images of anxiety and withdrawal being replaced by those emphasising liberation from work and participation in cultural and social activities. Harris (1973), in an article entitled "Radical Retirement Chic", has pointed to the changed political attitudes accompanying these trends.

Pensioners are already radicalizing themselves, forming militant groups demanding change in both the economic system and society's attitude to older people. They want more income tax deductions, free health services, exclusion from education and capital gains taxes. It's nothing outrageous, just some rights after a life-time of service. (p 90)

In sum, the context for the work in the sixties was very different to that of the late forties and early fifties, i.e. the period when role theorists were developing their more guarded and pessimistic view of retirement. It was this context which was to stimulate an important shift in emphasis in social gerontological research.

This change in emphasis has yet to be reflected in research in this country, so this is still relatively fresh ground. In what follows, an attempt has been made both to summarise the arguments emerging from the debates and research in the sixties, and to highlight specific issues worthy of further investigation. To clarify the main differences between the later and earlier debates, four points may be noted.

- 1 A variety of life styles and responses to ageing and retirement is now accepted, with the debate about activity theory versus disengagement theory being subsumed within this perspective (see for example, Neugarten, *op cit* , 1970)
- 2 There is a more critical approach to instruments purporting to measure adjustment to retirement or to ageing (see Rosow, 1963), and an increased concern to uncover the meanings which individuals themselves attach to these periods (amongst British researchers see, especially, Johnson, 1977, and Crawford, 1972).
- 3 There is a concern with the economic and social context in which retirement takes place, with a corollary of this being a concern to demonstrate how social and economic constraints are operative in the later years (see Maddox, 1965)
- 4 There are increasingly sophisticated studies looking at links between class, occupation social life-styles, and experiences in retirement, these studies illustrating the continuity between pre- and post-retirement experiences (see Simpson et al *op cit*)

The first point provides an under-pinning to the tenor of the debate in this period, indicating not just the profusion of life-styles as regards the subjects, but also the variety of methods and approaches adopted by those engaged in the studying. Regarding the former, Neugarten (*op cit*) has commented

There is a wide variation of life-styles among older people, enormous diversity, and multiple patterns of successful ageing. There is no single pattern of disengagement, and no single or modal pattern that produces life satisfaction. (p 21)

On the latter, the key feature is a more critical approach as regards methodology, and a concern to uncover biases and distortions in instruments used to measure satisfaction and happiness in old age. This point is brought out in an

important essay by Rosow (op cit) the first part of which contains a lengthy critique of the measures adopted by social gerontologists in studying the elderly. Rosow looks, for example, at the assumption made by activity theorists that social activity is positively correlated with high morale, and he argues that we now know of many deviant cases to this proposition - cases which call the meaning and generality of this finding into question. He suggests a number of grounds for this

First, extensive sociological data show major class differences in social participation, even among the aged. White-collar and middle-class groups show much higher rates of organisational membership and similar formal activities than working-class groups. Consequently, any adjustment index based on activity scores contains a built-in class bias which penalises the working class and favours the middle-class. With this basis in middle-class norms, manual groups will have lower and white-collar groups higher adjustment ratings. The very least that one can expect of an adjustment measure is that it gives each group an equal chance to score well according to its own class norms. But, in the face of class differences in participation, the middle-class conception of the good, active life penalises manual groups arbitrarily. (p. 201)

Secondly, Rosow argues that the relationship between activity and 'good adjustment' applies under conditions which are typically ignored - and he notes that Kutner (1956) and Barron (1956) were among the few writers (before the sixties) to point out that only activity which is meaningful to the individual can contribute to morale. Thirdly, he argues that many inactive sedentary people have otherwise 'good' adjustment when judged clinically or by measures other than inactivity (see Reichard, 1959 for an example of this). Rosow went on to conclude:

Both happiness and activity, then, represent ideological biases based on middle-class values which limit our thinking about what adjustment involves and the framework within which we should analyse it. Such orientations are common enough, possibly even inevitable, in early work in social problem areas. But this does not mean that they should become insurmountable obstacles, for they help to crystallise issues which demand conceptual development and clarification. (p. 202)

Rosow's alternative was to use the individual as a source of norms for assessing adjustment, comparing patterns of adjustment in old age with those established at an earlier period in life. He suggested that ideally this base, or criterion period, should be after a person has raised and discharged most of his responsibilities to his children; a period after which the individual has more freedom to exercise choice, and make decisions about him or herself. At this point, then, objective restraints are at a minimum and opportunities at a maximum "under these conditions, the person can perhaps most closely approximate and realise his picture of the good life. To the extent, then, that this is an optimal period in the vestibule to old age, it offers a criterion for later adjustment."

In deriving individual criteria for adjustment, two sets of variables were employed - continuity and discontinuity, and relative deprivation and gain. Rosow summed up the application of these as follows:

First, 'good' adjustment is represented by maximum continuity and minimum discontinuity of life pattern between the two periods. Insofar as they resemble one another and life has few major changes, the overall pattern is stable and has high continuity. If, however, there are major changes, instabilities, and shifts, then the overall pattern has high discontinuity, which we regard operationally as a 'poor' adjustment state. Thus, extent of objective change becomes a primary index of adjustment.

Second, this is further qualified by the subjective meaning or impact of the change or lack of change observed. Thus, our first assumption is subject to this proviso: changes which eliminate previous negative aspects of life (frustrations, onerous burdens, and the like) or add new positive features (satisfactions, sought opportunities, etc.) shall be regarded as contributing to 'good' adjustment. For our purposes, these changes represent net gains to the person. Conversely, stable patterns which intensify persistent frustrations or introduce new dissatisfactions contribute to 'poor' adjustment. Therefore, the second index of adjustment becomes the person's deprivation or gain in old age relative to his own earlier patterns. (pp 216-7)

This type of formulation poses a number of questions - hitherto virtually unexplored - about the relationship between the individual's social and occupational position and the experience of retirement - with stress being laid on both the

constraints operating in the social environment, and aspects of the individual's life experiences. One way of conceptualising the latter is in terms of work careers and work histories. Thus, Maddox (op cit.) in a critique of disengagement theory, suggests that

. . . an individual's life-style, reflecting, for example, an orderly career and its correlates, developed during his mature years might be an important variable intervening between his response to retirement and the hypothesised intra-psychic process of withdrawal (p 131)

These types of continuities were to be explored in a research programme conducted at Duke University, and reported in a work entitled "Social Aspects of Ageing", edited by Simpson, et al (op cit.) Amongst the many findings discussed in this work two must be singled out. Firstly, the research found that status and orderliness were positively related to high involvement in retirement and that orderliness of work history - though not status - reduced the likelihood that pre-retirement involvement would be lost. It was also found that status and orderliness were inversely related to feelings of job deprivation and directly related to morale, and that these relations tended to persist even when level and loss of involvement were controlled for. Simpson et al went on to the following conclusion

Our findings . . . suggest that the influence of work is not completely lost with retirement but that many patterns of social involvement supported by work persist, reflecting the same effect of occupational status and orderliness of work history evidenced in earlier life stages by other studies. This is not to imply that retirement does not affect the life patterns of an individual, it does, and we found more loss of pre-retirement involvement by upper-white-collar retirees than by other status groups because less of their pre-retirement involvement could be meaningfully maintained outside the work setting. It does appear, however, that retirement did not destroy the supports of occupational status and orderliness of work history in maintaining involvement and favourable self-evaluations in retirement. Yet our data indicate that, regardless of status, if these social involvements have not been built up before retirement, they are unlikely to be established in retirement.

Similarly, those individuals whose work had not provided these supports - semi-skilled and disorderly middle status retirees - had less involvement and less favourable self-evaluation in retirement. It is not retirement per se which is responsible for their lack of self-anchorage, but their work histories which had not allowed them to develop ties with society. Support from other sources is needed if these individuals are to enjoy favourable self-evaluations. (p 73-74)

The second finding to be singled out relates to research on the linkages between pre-retirement work activities and activities in retirement. Here, Simpson et al distinguished between upper-white-collar jobs orientated about symbols, middle-class jobs orientated around people, and semi-skilled jobs orientated around things. Their research indicated that middle-status people showed the greatest continuity in style from pre- to post-retirement, suggesting that activities in retirement offered more opportunity for practising interpersonal skills than for practising skills orientated around symbols or things. 26

In relation to this finding Robert Atchley (1971) has commented

The implication here is that it is not so much the ethic learned on the job that interferes with the successful pursuit of leisure in retirement but rather the skills. Those who learn job skills that cannot be readily used in leisure pursuits have a hard time adjusting to an increase in leisure unless they have had the opportunity to learn the skills elsewhere. (p 15)

The possibility of specific forms of continuity facilitating adjustment to retirement has been the most important departure from previous theoretical approaches. Thus, neither role theory nor disengagement theory, gave enough attention to the fact that certain life-styles, work-careers, etc. may be of key importance in hindering or supporting the individual's adjustment to retirement (and hindering or supporting adjustment either to new roles or to the process of withdrawal). Both theoretical approaches tended to divorce adjustment from the life experiences of the individual, and, at the very least, it has been the merit of continuity theory to bring the nature of these experiences back into focus,

the response to retirement being allowed to follow the contours of the individual's own life history, as much as being the product of external social constraints, or the 'inner' constraints generated by the ageing process itself

Having discussed some of the main themes of continuity theory, some issues for future research may be outlined

3 10 CONTINUITY THEORY ISSUES FOR EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The research discussed above has focused on a number of important questions which need to be examined within the context of the British social and occupational structure. The main issues may be listed as follows

- 1) If continuity in experiences and life styles is a crucial variable in removing some of the tensions and strains from retirement what are the conditions facilitating or reducing the likelihood of continuity being maintained?
- 2) Given that the theory has been developed almost exclusively in America, does it have the same relevance here? Are elements such as orderliness of work career likely to have the same importance, or will there be other factors of equal relevance?
- 3) How do the occupational variables - which have been the most well-developed and studied - relate to others such as marital status, community structure, health, and so on, i.e. (to paraphrase Maddox, op.cit.) how do cumulative life experiences and conditions affect life in retirement?
- 4) If the theory is correct in pointing out that a diversity of life-styles is possible in the retirement period, what sort of life-styles can be encountered in the British social structure? What sort of experiences do these life-styles signify? How do these life-styles vary in relation to differing occupational and community contexts and individual biographies?

Because of the absence of any detailed empirical studies in this country which could explore these issues, it was decided to carry out a series of interviews with retired people in various communities and occupations. These varied from retirees in an inner city area and a mining community (both in the North East) to retired car workers and architects in the Midlands. The purpose behind the comparative structure of the sample being to construct an alternative theoretical approach to retirement - building on the work done by continuity theorists, an approach which would indicate in more detail the nature of the retirement experience, and its variations in given social and occupational contexts. It is a presentation of these interviews that forms the next, and central part, of this thesis.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Burgess, E W (1960), p 17
- 2 Ibid p 20
- 3 Michelon, L C (1954), p 371
- 4 It is notable that Loether 'softens' this view in the later (1975) edition of the book, removing the passage quoted here entirely All further references to this book are to the later editions
5. Friedmann, E A and Havighurst, R. J , p 7-8
- 6 Loether, H. J . (1975), p 91
- 7 Thomas, (1976) in a recent study of the elderly in 16th and 17th century England suggests that they were respected only as long as they retained control over property, and thus had the power to make their children obey them According to Thomas the lot of those without property was grim indeed for they were reduced to semi-starvation and beggary, at the mercy of institutionalised poor relief For a discussion of Thomas' work together with that of Fischer's recent study "Growing Old in America", see the review essay by Laurence Stone (1977), New York Review of Books, May 17
- 8 This study is reported in Shanas (1972).
- 9 Streib, G F and Schneider, C J (1971), p 163
10. Ibid p 51
11. Ibid p 161.
12. Jacobson (1974), p 40
- 13 For a further discussion on this see Jacobsor (1970)
14. Maddox, G (1970), p 21

- 15 Lemmon, B W , et al (1976), p 56
- 16 Ibid p 60
- 17 This paragraph draws on the summary by Shanas (1971)
- 18 Cumming, E and Henry, W E (1961), p 15
- 19 Atchley R (1972) , p 223
- 20 Hochschild, A R (1975), pp 555-558
- 21 Ibid p 556
- 22 Quoted in Hochschild, A R , Ibid p 558
- 23 Strieb, G. F and Schneider, C. J , (op. cit), pp.176-177
- 24 Ibid. p 177
- 25 Crawford, M (1971), p 274
26. Simpson, I. H , et al, pp 111-115

SECTION 2

THE EXPERIENCE OF RETIREMENT

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This section reports on a series of interviews which were carried out over a period of 12 months as part of the second stage of the thesis. The aim behind the interviews was, first, to uncover some of the details regarding the experience and process of retirement, secondly, to relate different retirement experiences to varied work histories and class, community and familial locations. Within this broad specification the focus was narrowed down to the retirement experience of a) the 'young'-old, i. e. those in the 60 - 75 age group; b) male pensioners. There were a number of reasons for restricting the interviews in this way.

First, as regards the age group restriction, it was felt that whilst there were a number of studies relevant to those beyond 75, there were fewer in respect of younger pensioners - a group for whom existing sociological models or theories of retirement were most directly applicable. Secondly, as regards the restriction to male pensioners, it was felt to be beyond the scope of this study - broad though it is - to include the retirement experiences of both men and women; the latter being affected by a number of influences which do not apply to men, and which really require a separate study. However, this concentration on the male's experience of retirement should not be taken as indicating a belief that retirement is necessarily a more difficult and anxious time for men as opposed to women - an assumption which has under-pinned much of the theorising about retirement. On the contrary, recent work by Jacobson (1970 and 1974), and Lehr and Dreker (1969), suggests that if there are difficulties in retirement women are just as likely as men to experience these,

though, once again, the pattern of causation will be rather different. However, whilst attempting to understand retirement from the standpoint of the male, it would clearly be quite impossible to exclude women altogether, since, one argument or 'mythology' under-pinning crisis-orientated views about retirement, is that husband and wife - now thrown together for 24 hours of the day - often find it difficult to get on with each other. Via the interviews conducted for this study I have examined this particular notion in some detail, and in doing this have inevitably brought in the wife's experience of the retirement situation.

In the appendix on research methods I shall cover in more detail the reasons certain groups were selected to be interviewed, the organisation of the interviews themselves, and so on. A number of points are necessary here, however, to clarify the aims and intentions behind the interviews. First and foremost there was the question of whether to take a general sample of pensioners, or whether to take a group based on particular localities and/or occupations. Given some of the aims of the study, it was relatively easy to decide on the latter, since a general sample of pensioners would probably not have provided enough scope to explore detailed changes in the retiree's relationship to his immediate environment. Given an interest in this aspect, a choice of samples based on particular localities seemed essential. However, there was also the question of the relationship between work experiences and retirement. This issue has figured prominently in the gerontology literature (see Chapter 3), with attempts to trace attitudes to retirement as partly the product of attitudes to work, and also attempts to understand given retirement experiences in terms of the resources and skills provided by previous work environments.¹ This issue has dominated studies of the male's experience of retirement, so it seemed to be of some importance to incorporate this aspect into the sample design. The

solution eventually adopted was to base the structure of the sample on a mixture of localities and occupations, these being: a mixed group of workers in an inner-area part of Newcastle, a group of miners in a Durham Colliery village, a group of car-workers in a Midland suburb, finally, a group of architects, also in the midlands. This selection, representing as it did individuals from a variety of locations, and with a variety of skills to be brought into retirement, also served the purpose of illustrating the advantages or disadvantages of a particular theoretical approach; one which emphasised the importance of pre-retirement skills and relationships in facilitating adjustment to retirement.²

The design of the interview schedule was influenced by a variety of considerations. Firstly, I wanted to find out as much as possible about the individual's life prior to retirement, thus attempting to situate the experience of retirement within the context of particular biographies and work histories. Secondly, as regards retirement itself, I wanted as much description and information as possible about daily life in retirement - particularly in respect of the retiree's relationship to family and friends. Thirdly, I also wanted quite a substantial amount of factual data, viz. how much pension did the retiree receive? What sort of house was he living in? How long had he been living at his present address? How often did he see ex-workmates, friends or his children? The combination of these three elements produced a quite demanding interview schedule, one which combined a number of factual questions with more open-ended ones - questions which led on to a discussion of areas with specific relevance to the individual being interviewed. In designing the structure of the interview, I was influenced by Butler's (1963) paper on the occurrence amongst older people of a "Life Review". According to Butler-

The life review may be first observed in stray and seemingly insignificant thoughts about oneself and one's life history. These thoughts may continue to emerge in brief intermittent spurts or become essentially continuous, and they may undergo constant re-integration and reorganisation at various levels of awareness. (p.68)

Butler goes on to quote the following remark by a 76 year old man:

My life is in the background of my mind much of the time, it cannot be any other way. Thoughts of the past play upon me; sometimes I play with them, encourage and savour them; at other times I dismiss them. (p.68)

Although most of the interviews were conducted amongst people in their late sixties, where the onset of a life review would still be in its early stages, it was felt that an interview which followed the main contours of the individual's life would have greater meaning than one which simply started off from the point of retirement. Further, by placing retirement within the context of a particular life history, it was hoped to see in much clearer detail relationships between particular life experiences, and experiences in retirement, and to look as well at the social relationships and resources brought into retirement, and the impact of these on the retirement experience

The bulk of the interviews carried out for this study (101 in all - including 5 pilot interviews) were tape recorded. The transcriptions usually being done on the evening of the day of the interview, or the day after. At the end of this second stage, therefore, there was some 300 hours of detailed interviews with retired people - these forming the basis of the following four chapters.

In the presentation of the interviews I have tried to combine extensive quotations from the interviews with factual summaries about the groups discussed and the communities they lived in. How far the right sort of balance between these two elements has been achieved I must leave, once again, to the judgement of the reader. However, insofar as a central desire in presenting the interviews was to get at the ordinary, daily experience of retirement, as opposed to the

mythologised "common sense" version of retirement, it is on this basis that the organisation of the material must be evaluated.

Footnotes

- 1 The work of Friedmann, E and Havighurst, R. J. (1954) and Simpson, I. H and McKinney, J. C. is of particular importance here
- 2 See, for example, the argument developed by Robert Atchley (1971).

CHAPTER 4

RETIREMENT IN THE INNER CITY

4.1 THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

The immediate context in which retirement takes place - the individual's neighbourhood and community - will have a varying impact on perceptions and experiences of retirement. In some areas the interaction between the two will be close, elsewhere it will be more remote. Inner city areas will usually provide examples of the former, i. e. environments where the problems of change - and in the example to be discussed - decline, merge in and become part of the everyday difficulties experienced in retirement itself.

Benwell was once one of the foremost industrial areas in Newcastle, with shipbuilding and engineering dominating its industrial landscape from the nineteenth century onwards.¹ The area had been important for mining as well - particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the profits from these workings eventually being reinvested in deeper pits in the Durham and Northumberland coalfield, and in the development of heavy engineering and shipbuilding. By the end of the nineteenth century the area contained some of the most advanced sections of British industry - with armaments and shipbuilding being foremost (the build-up to the First World War providing boom conditions for these industries) One of the most important factories in this sector was Armstrong's (later to become Armstrong-Whitworth), which by 1900 had 25,000 employees, many of whom lived in Benwell. The expansion of the firm was halted after the First World War, after unsuccessful attempts to diversify into the production of consumer goods, and it merged with another large local firm, Vickers, in 1927.

Employment conditions in Benwell were boosted with the onset of the

Second World War, but with the ending of the war, further expansion was halted yet again. After this, the pattern increasingly became one of industrial decline and the loss of jobs, with new investment taking place away from the inner city. Thus, between 1966 and 1971 Benwell saw a 14 per cent decline in the number of industrial jobs, and a decline of 23.1 per cent in the number of workers living and working in the area.² Commenting on the effect of such changes on local communities, a C. D. P. report (1977) noted:

Over the last decade in particular there has been an accelerating rate of job loss from the traditional industries. Opportunities locally for relatively high wage employment in these industries have diminished dramatically to be replaced in part by low-paid, unskilled jobs. These changes have fundamentally altered the function and life of the local community. It increasingly serves as a 'reservoir' of unemployed and under-employed workers to be tapped only in times of boom, and as a source for low paid service activities over a widening area of each conurbation (p. 37)

This decline in employment produced a series of reactions throughout the community. In Benwell the population has dropped by one-quarter since 1966, with younger and more skilled workers moving away to find better jobs and better housing (the deterioration of the housing stock being an important facet of inner city decline). Comparing Benwell to Newcastle as a whole (the figures for the city are in brackets) 16.64 per cent (8.68 per cent) of households are sharing or lacking any hot water, 21.46 per cent (9.26 per cent) lack a fixed bath; 38.84 per cent (16.37 per cent) lack an inside W.C.³ In terms of economic deprivation (i.e. access to economic resources) Benwell is the sixth poorest ward in the city (out of 26 wards), in terms of amenity deprivation (i.e. access to household amenities) it is the fourth poorest.⁴

This economic and social deprivation will be particularly acute for certain sections of the population - with the elderly being one of the most seriously affected. Benwell in fact has a lower percentage of pensionable households

(13.5 per cent) than many other wards in the city, though this percentage is very close to that of the city as a whole (13.6 per cent). As regards the incomes of the elderly, it is noticeable that in the Newcastle Household Survey in 1975, a random sample of elderly people drew only 16 (1.5 per cent) with weekly incomes above £30. The survey report commented.⁵

The elderly live in relative poverty compared to the rest of the population. Particularly striking is the lack of income over and above the pension

The survey also indicated that of all the elderly, those living alone were most in need of assistance - a group constituting 30 per cent of all pensioners in Benwell

Pensioners are thus one of the poorest groups in Newcastle, and those living in Benwell are to be found in one of the poorest areas of the city. The interaction between these two factors will play an important part in our analysis of the retirement experience in Benwell. In presenting this analysis attention will be focused on the varied experiences of retirement - placing these both within past work and social histories, and within the contemporary environment of Benwell. Because of the limitations of numbers it will not be possible to draw any firm association between, say, given work histories and particular retirement experiences; however, some tentative associations will be drawn, and these will be discussed further in the final section of this thesis where comparisons between the different groups interviewed will be made. But for the present, more must be said about the social and occupational backgrounds of the Benwell retirees, and it is to an examination of these that we now turn.

4 2 SOCIAL AND OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUNDS

After 5 pilot interviews in Benwell, 21 people were eventually interviewed, the individuals being drawn from the records of a survey of pensioners being

carried out in Benwell, and from names taken at random from a list of patients registered at a group medical practice in the area (details of the sampling methods for this study will be found in Appendix 1). Using the Registrar-General's classification of social classes, and working on the main occupation people had had during their lives, the class composition appears as follows:

Table 4.1

Social Class Composition of Benwell Retirees

<u>Social Class</u>	<u>Number</u>
I	0
II	5
III	8
IV	5
V	3
	<hr/>
	21
	<hr/>

The majority of those from S. C. III were manual workers, so the sample as a whole is drawn predominantly from the manual sector. 16 of the 21 were married, 13 lived either in a council house or a council flat, 5 owned their own houses, 3 lived in private unfurnished flats. Financially, 9 of the 21 had a state pension, plus the supplementary pension, as their only source of income. The rest had the state pension and an occupational pension, though the latter for most of the group (excluding the three managers in the sample) was not very high - averaging £16.13 per month (1975 figures), 5 out of the 21 were currently supplementing their income by part-time work.

The average age of the group was 69.3 years, and the average length of retirement was 4.2 years. The majority of the group had been born in the North-East, the two exceptions being a Yorkshireman and a Southerner. This

point, together with their age, adds an important dimension to the group's early work and occupational experiences. These men had entered the work force either just before or just after the general strike, i. e. in a period of political and economic crisis. The results of this crisis were at their worst in the old industrial areas, where unemployment was two or three times higher than in areas such as London and the Midlands. Between 1927 and 1934 the percentage of those unemployed amongst insured men in the North-East varied from 15 per cent - 25 per cent (the total for both men and women varying between 13.5 per cent and 22-5 per cent). Seven out of the 21 interviewed experienced a spell of unemployment longer than three months in the '20s and '30s, and even where unemployment wasn't directly experienced it still figured prominently in people's recollections about their entry into work.⁶ John Francis, a capstan operator, who was unemployed for twelve months in the '30s, recalls:

"I can remember the 1926 strike ... the policemen on horseback riding about after them (the strikers) ... when they congregated in the streets the police would come with their batons and set about them ... an old fashioned idea you know ... keep them down by force.

"There was only about one out of 20 working, you had to be in the factory before the buzzer went .. as soon as the buzzer finished blowing ... that door was shut in your face ... didn't matter if you were just outside the door.

"Oh, there's no doubt you were exploited ... gaffer would come up to you and say 'can you do this?' ... 'Oh .. well fellas standing at the gate can do it see'. . So you had to do it ... it was either do what he told you or somebody else was in on your job ..."

Richard James, who was working as a slaughterman at an abattoir throughout this period, and who vividly recalls the queues of people for cheap cuts of meat, says of the thirties:

"Oh, it was terrible times ... you'd see ... a man ... used to be on street corners you know .. standing ... you couldn't do nothing ... every street corner you went in the town you'd see .. . In Durham it was just the same . miners and that . but in Newcastle it was tradesmen, fitters and everything and all unemployed. And policemen

used to come and chase them . . . you had to keep walking around the town. If you went to the Library to read a paper you couldn't get in the Library for people out of work . . . "

Arthur Dickens made a similar point about this period:

"Terrible . . . plenty of people out of work them days . . . parks used to be full, you couldn't get a seat."

In this context of mass unemployment most of the people interviewed still set themselves the task of finding a secure and permanent job. Even amongst this small group, however, some were inevitably luckier, more adept, or more favoured in finding secure employment than others. Looking at the work careers of the group, and using Form and Miller's (1949) model of the five periods of work adjustment as a basis, three work patterns can be distinguished:

Firstly, a generally unstable work pattern where the individual had a number of jobs, these being punctuated by redundancies and spells of unemployment. Secondly, a pattern where there is an initial period of job changing, followed by a longer period of stability in a particular work position, followed, lastly, by further period of job changing and spells of unemployment. Thirdly, a pattern which approximates most closely to Form and Miller's model, where, after some initial adjustment periods in the early part of the work career, there is a long period of stability in a particular work position, followed by retirement. In this pattern the transition from work to retirement may still have certain complicating features - with early retirement because of health or labour 'shake-outs' being chief amongst these.

Of those interviewed, 2 fell into the first category, 4 into the second category, and 15 into the third category.

Before looking at the occupational experiences of the men in more detail it is interesting to note that 10 out of the 21 had actually stopped work before 65. In the first work pattern above both men had been unemployed prior to reaching 65; in the second, one of the 4 had been unemployed prior to reaching 65, in the

third, 7 out of the 15 had retired before reaching 65. The reasons behind this large amount of unemployment and early retirement should become clearer when some of the work experiences are described.

4 3 WORK CAREERS AND WORK EXPERIENCES

(1) The Unstable Pattern

In the first career pattern there were just two individuals, Dick Harris and Frank White, both unskilled labourers. Mr. Harris had had a long period of unemployment in the '20s and '30s, thereafter having a series of labouring jobs, broken only by further unemployment, and a four year spell in the Army during the Second World War. Frank White had also joined the Army - though at an earlier date.

"I had been in the Workhouse in Gainsborough ... a Catholic Home when I was 15, they sent me out to a farm. I worked there till I was 17, that was 2 years for 5/6d. a week doing general farm work. It was very hard work. Might mean you got up at six and if it was harvest time worked through until the early hours of the morning. I went on to work for another farmer for 12 months, and then to another one - through the hirings. I got sick of farming and joined the army when I was about 21 ... I joined the Royal Berkshire Regiment."

Why did you join the Army?

"Well the reason I joined was that it was either that or just farm work . you couldn't get another job."

Joining the Army, however, only delayed the ultimate problem of finding secure employment. Frank White's view of the various jobs he had, which ranged from working on an ammunitions dump, picking out wires and sludge from machines in an engineering factory, to labouring at a railway freight depot, is straightforward.

What sort of things did you look for when you went for a job?

What sort of things about it made you accept it or not?

"Well, the jobs I took was what the labour exchange gave me. I had no choice because I'm not a tradesman. It was just a matter of labouring. So if they said well you go down there ... you get the job ... if you refused the job they'd stop the dole."

Dick Harris returned home from the war to find that his wife "like thousands of others" had left him. After a short break he started what was to be the main pattern of his life until he retired, cheap unfurnished flats, and low paid insecure jobs. These latter included labouring in a steel works, in a wood yard, digging trenches on a building site, and finally, caretaker at a sports ground, his last job before being made redundant at 63.

"I got a few shillings out of it . you know . . redundancy money ... and since then I've said to meself . they want young men not old men . with a good education . scholarship . . you know .. for a job. Either a young man or an old man if he has got a good education he might get a number So I'm done It's come day go day with me now. "

Frank White's work career ended at the age of 59 He finished work at a freight depot when he was 51 because the work was getting too heavy for him. After this he found a job at a Naval Yard, but was eventually made redundant just before his 60th birthday. After this he found jobs almost impossible to get:

"Jobs was getting bad because I was getting older ... and it was a bugger when you were used to the big wages and then you had to drop onto the dole. "

Apart from Christmas work on the post Frank White's working career had effectively come to an end:

"You just couldn't get a job. A man 60 odd couldn't get a job, they wouldn't look at you, they'd know that somebody else had had the best out of you I never bothered. I just signed on the dole, hoping I might get a job but knowing that I wouldn't get a bloody job. They wouldn't look at me, a man of my age Employers wouldn't have you They just didn't bother with me, that's why I was out for five years before I got a pension They'd feel (the employers) this may be only good for brushing up "

Frank White recognised that "the best" had been taken out of him, just as Dick Harris saw that he was now "past it" They were both though at this point still in their early sixties How were these perceptions to affect their view of the years ahead of them and of retirement itself?

(2) The Stable Work Pattern

By way of contrast let us consider some of those in the third work pattern, where initial job changing is followed by a longer period of stability in a particular work position. Steven Josephs was a railwayman all his life. Not for him just a railwayman, but someone who had been born into a family of railwaymen, and who took on the tradition.

"As regards my railway career, my father was a railway man and my grandfather was a railwayman; and, of course, in those days the railways, along with the mines, were considered a secure trade. It was not the money, both poorly paid, but security was the thing in those days. I left elementary school when I was fourteen and my father sent me to a private school for an extra twelve months, which was Skerry's school in New Bridge Street, Newcastle, full time. If I remember rightly the fee he paid was 14 guineas for a year for what they termed a "railway course". Now that had nothing to do with railways whatever, but to become a clerk on the railways a young man in those days had to know shorthand and typewriting because there were no female typists, or not many .. this course at Skerry's College ... included shorthand, typewriting, arithmetic - which you term mathematics now - English and various other things."

From there the path was laid out, a structure with the potential for regular promotion - 'poorly paid' - but 'secure'.

"I started on a clerk's job at the bottom and in time I was relief controller ... and then I finished up in charge of Tyne Yard at the finish arranging all the trains there and then acting as boss. So the last 28 1/2 years ... as I say ... I gained promotion every 5 year."

Did you ever think about leaving the railways?

"No not me very few of us did. Whether it was born in you that the railways was a secure job you didn't seem to have the courage to take the step (i. e. to look for another job, C. P) .. you were afraid to go into another job in case it flopped ... whereas the railways were secure "

Another railwayman, John Gallagher, had a rather different experience, though he too had fancied the railways from an early age.

"I used to go along to the railway and I used to look through the railings at the signal cabin; and I used to go to the central station and say 'do you want any boys?' They'd say 'No, the books is full up.' So on this particular Wednesday I goes there and I puts

me long trousers on .. me knickerbockers ... you know ... like a Sunday suit. So I says 'do you want any boys?' ... and he looked at me and says come behind here ... and I was 5'3" then ... I was a big lad ... he took us round and he says 'right oh' ... and he gives us the forms to fill in .. and I had to get two people to speak for us."

Mr. Gallagher started as a learner in a signal cabin, eventually doing relief work in various cabins until 1926 - the year of the General Strike. He was off for a fortnight, only to be told when he returned: "Sorry there's no job for you, you shouldn't have gone on strike." Eventually, after 12 months unemployment, Mr Gallagher was taken back

"I was young sort of thing so I didn't care, I was trusting in other people, and I thought, well I will trust them Well, eventually I finished up on the goods station I've been there ever since. I was absolutely disillusioned with the railway company I was dead set on the railways you know "

It was certainly a let down after the work in the signal cabin, but what about alternative work? What about after the depression was over? Why still remain on the railways?

"I could have been a civil servant and I could have got a job in a place on the coast road. Years after I would think ... why didn't I do it? Somebody would say - you should have you know. But the point was we were like ... sort of like men clinging to a straw. We had that suspicion that something might happen. You know, we had a job, a good job, and it was . If I'd been younger again I might had had a go but we were dead frightened about leaving one job .. we had had such an experience in the thirties with the unemployment .. I thought ... I don't fancy it . . something might happen. "

In the group as a whole there are three managers, two of them fit into this third work category Harold Rothe started off as a lad in a butcher's shop, eventually becoming manager of a wholesale meat depot, and keeping with virtually the one company all through his working life "It paid off in the end", he comments, "because I became the manager, and the manager's pay wasn't too bad considering. "

Samuel Patrick became general circulation manager of a Northern newspaper. His entry into journalism was based on perceptions about the job situation similar to many others in the group.

"Let me make it quite clear that at that time jobs were very very scarce. You were in the same position as you are getting in now and the one major factor was security and anybody who got employment with a firm like the Newcastle Chronicle or the Gas Company or anybody like that thanked their lucky stars, and said it seems as if I have got security at least and this was the case as far as I was concerned because I had had no newspaper experience as such, I had newspaper connections because my brother-in-law was also Transport Manager at the Chronicle and I had visited the Chronicle ever since I was a boy going down to see him, but it wasn't because I had had experience or that I had any particular leaning towards newspapers. I must be quite frank and say that it was probably the question of security because at that time I was married and I had two children "

So, security was once again a major factor, though this time within the context of a rewarding career structure.

"I started in one of their branch offices and learned the business the hard way circulation-wise and from there I was eventually transferred to their head office into the circulation department and gained more experience there. I then went out as a Branch Office Auditor, going around all their branch offices ... and I was doing that until the war broke out ... [after the war] ... I rejoined my company in the accounts department as auditor and then I rejoined the Circulation Department ... I was made Assistant Circulation Manager after a period and that position I held until about 5 or 6 years before I retired. My chief then, the General Circulation Manager, he retired and I more or less stepped into his shoes at that time and I stayed on in that capacity."

Eight people in this work pattern continued at work until 65, seven, however, retired before 65. Two as a result of accidents at work, two through ill-health; one through the death of his wife, two as a result of volunteering to be made redundant. Mr. Haines injured his back in a mining accident and retired at 59. Mr. Dickens, who had worked for the Gas Board for 30 years as a labourer, retired at the age of 64 after he had injured his leg in a fall at work. Of the two who retired through ill-health, both of these were related to

work in some way. Jim Pigott had followed his father in becoming a bricklayer, eventually becoming general foreman for the last 15 years of his work career. He was forced to retire at 62 through arthritis, a complaint from which he says "Everybody in the building trade suffers." Charles Deacon retired after a heart attack at the age of 63, he had been with Newcastle Corporation for 35 years. For him, conditions at work were an important factor reinforcing the medical reasons for his retirement

"The pressure of work was terrible at times especially at certain periods such as preparing estimates at Christmas time ... sometimes I would work every evening until about 8 p.m. Then the department moved into a new building (a year before Mr. White retired) and the ventilation was terrible ... I said to my wife ... 'this building will be the death of me' "

Regarding the two who volunteered for redundancies both had very similar work career patterns, working in the same industry - haulage - but for different companies. Both had started in a general labouring capacity, eventually becoming drivers, subsequently to be promoted to work "inside" supervising the loading and unloading of vehicles. In addition, both saw the small companies they had initially started work for grow - only to be taken over by bigger firms. Brian Haworth recalls the early part of his work career as follows:

"The first job I had was driving a horse and cart delivering groceries, then I got into this shop on the counter after working in the warehouse. I was promoted to counterwork and was there for seven years but the wages weren't very good. I got a job after that labouring for the corporation doing road work but it only lasted eight or nine months. I fell out of work then for about nine months, and then I got a job on haulage contracting as a mate to a driver, that lasted about eight months and I was out of work again for about a year. I eventually got back into this haulage company as a general sweeper - up (labourer) and I finished my working years with this firm. The company was in a very small way in the first place and I grew up with the company."

Had you ever thought of leaving the job in those 38 years?

"No .. It was a job I loved I was the type that looked forward to work I used to leave home at 6.00 in the morning to get to work, to start at seven, and I looked forward to that. I was interested in the job, I grew up with the job . well I was there nearly 40 years which is the best part of your life "

Mr. Haworth was eventually promoted to foreman, a job which he held until 1971 The company had by this time changed hands three times being finally taken over by British Road Services:

"They wanted some reductions in the staff ... I was getting toward 64. At the time it was first in last out but there was a number of chappies in their 20s and 30s. Well things were getting bad in 1971 (as regards unemployment) and I thought well I haven't much longer to go, I could weather the storm until I was 65 and maybe save one of these lads a job. Mind you I was a foreman and these lads were clerks but it didn't take much adaptation ... when I got me redundancy money through though they never replaced me "

Derek Johnstone had seen his company taken over twice, and with the last take-over the beginning of a new managerial style.

"We had a new manager, he started cracking us with a stick sort of style, had to reduce expenditure. First thing he thought of was expenditure. And first thing that came with that was reducing staff, and he asked me to get rid of two men, I said it was impossible to carry on with two less. I'd always worked for the firm, I didn't spend a penny belonging to the firm if a halfpenny would do. I always found the cheapest market for everything, such as tyres and oil. I said I'm not in good health (he had chronic asthma), I've got a suggestion to make, you make me redundant, you can always split the job, you've got plenty of chaps upstairs that's got time, who could do the job, get rid of me, and that way you will save two men's wages. "

Why did you come to that decision?

"Health-wise and because I felt I was being unfairly done to . unfair to ask me to get rid of two of my staff when I was on the boarder-line to start with .. and I thought it wouldn't be a bad suggestion. It was impossible to carry on. "

Finally, in this group, Mike Feather also had to retire before 65, a decision forced upon him by the death of his wife. He had worked 25 years as a fireman and 16 years as a security officer.

"I always wanted to be a policeman but I couldn't get into it because I just failed on the chest measurements ... and the next best I was told was to join the Fire Brigade. In those days it was the Police Fire Brigade before it was taken over by the city . . . even the uniform was similar ... when I came on to security it was a different life altogether ... I advised on fire precautions to the offices and examined fire apparatus in the office. Sometimes I would go out and have a look at a claim for fire damages and I would give an opinion as to what had happened."

With the death of his wife when he was 62 Mr Feather decided to retire.

"I still had three sons at home and I was doing the cooking, doing messages, it got a bit hard. The circumstances made it necessary for me to retire. If the wife had still been living I would have carried on until I was 65. It was just getting a bit too much."

(3) Work Instability in the Later Years

There were just four individuals in the second work pattern where a stable period had been interrupted, leading to a subsequent job or a period of unemployment. Two of these, Richard James and Sam Jennings, were forced in their fifties to give up their jobs because the work was becoming too heavy for them. Mr James had been working as a slaughterman in an abattoir for 35 years

"There was a rule in the abattoir where we worked. If you were killing beasts, get enough money and chuck it at 47. Get a different job. The work was too heavy, it was telling on you at 47. Some went on. But now these old men they can hardly walk around."

Mr James actually broke the rule because he didn't finish until he was 61. He recalls saying to his daughter:

"Well I says I must finish work its getting too heavy. It was too much I couldn't keep up you know. They were getting younger lads in see I couldn't keep up. So she says: 'I'll get you a job. It may only be labouring, but it will be light enough.' So I went there (to a local engineering factory) I was sweeping the floor you know. I swept the floor for about three months then they put us on messages going about the factory and that. Well it was no hard work. Well I done that for four years until I was 65."

Sam Jennings had been working for a haulage firm for 10 years after being demobbed from the army, and was made redundant at the age of 55. He had initially been driving a horse wagon delivering goods.

"When the horses had to go a few went. They were oldish middle aged chaps They wouldn't go on to the (motor) transport. Well I went on for a while like until they said the job was getting too heavy that it was more for young people it was heavy work cos you were going to big factories getting these big tool benches and all that carry on .. I've been on the dole like I was on the dole for about 18 months just when I was turned 60 ... eventually I got the job with Lord Lonsdale . it was a big estate ... they had all kinds . . cows ... horses ... and I thought ... well ... I might just go because I love horses ... so I took that job and I was there right up until I was 66. I would be there yet if it hadn't been that the estate was sold."

Of the other two in this group, Eric Peach had become Production Manager in a steel firm, retiring early at 48 because of an ulcer -'that was through the job.' He went away for a long holiday abroad, and came back to start a snack bar which catered for the wholesale meat trade, opening at 6.00 in the morning, and closing at 2.00 in the afternoon. He had that for 15 years when the market was closed. Mr Peach subsequently took up a partnership in a firm supplying juke-boxes and pin-tables, retiring after 3 years at the age of 66

Finally in this group, Bill Franklin, who started off on the stage as a tap-dancer and ukulele player, gravitating to cinema management at the age of 28, had seen his cinema close down because of falling attendances. That left him in his early 60s without a job, and he remained unemployed until he was 65 when he went onto the old age pension

Amongst this group of old people living in Benwell there is, then, not only a variety of occupations and work careers but also a variety of experiences affecting people in the run up to retirement - with ill-health, accidents at work, and unemployment figuring prominently amongst these. Because of the variety of work experiences uncovered, and the smallness of the sample, it will be difficult - as suggested earlier - to draw any clear conclusions about the impact of particular work histories on the retirement period. However, an attempt will be made to demonstrate the interaction between the type of resources built up

prior to retirement and the interaction of these within an area where communal resources were deteriorating. Because of the latter retirement into Benwell was undoubtedly a "problem" for many of those interviewed - with difficulties of maintaining social contacts and "filling in time" predominating. Thus, in presenting the interviews, attention will be focused on these latter issues, but with constant references to work and social biographies to illuminate some of the connections and associations involved.

4.4 INTO RETIREMENT

Retirement can, of course, have numerous meanings. a new life or a "fresh start" in a house or a bungalow by the sea; a continuation of the old life but carried on at a more relaxed pace, or a life of poverty and increased social isolation as friends die and neighbourhoods break-up. But for retirement to have any meaning at all there must be certain supports (material, social, and psychological) to provide a foundation for retirement. supports which will help cushion the strains which will occur in this period. It is not necessarily the case that retirement is more ambiguous in its meaning or is more of a social vacuum than other periods in the life-cycle, but it is the case that the effects on the individual when these supports are missing are in some senses much greater. Greater, because the alternatives for older people in our society, when they are faced with the loss of a crucial source of support, are that much less easy to find. Alternative sources of income, alternative sources of friendship, even alternative life-styles, all these are highly restricted in the post-work period - even though the need for such alternatives may be greater than at any other period in the life-cycle.

In looking at the experience of retirement in Benwell two points must be kept firmly in mind when reading and interpreting what people had to say about it.

Firstly, the incomes which people had retired on represented in most cases a sharp drop from what they had previously been earning. Most of those interviewed were dependent either on the state pension alone, plus a supplementary pension, or they were lifted just above the supplementary level by an occupational pension - though the latter rarely effected a significant improvement in living standards in retirement. Secondly, the environment in which people had retired into was a deteriorating one. Benwell had lost nearly a quarter of its population between 1966 - 1971, and the consequences of this exodus, combined with the decline of the industrial sector, had had visible repercussions throughout the community. Housing and social facilities in general were deteriorating and the environment as a whole was perceived - particularly by the older residents - as being on the decline

Before looking at the retirement experience of those interviewed, some general points about the group must first of all be summarised. None of those interviewed had made any specific plans for retirement, and only two had thought about it at any length.⁷ This finding is perhaps less striking when it is remembered that nearly half of the group were unemployed or had given up working prior to reaching 65, and for these men more immediate preoccupations connected with poverty and ill-health were posed. Ten out of the twenty-one reported varying degrees of difficulty right at the start of retirement.

"Oh, I felt terrible ... yes ... I felt lost ... absolutely lost ... didn't know what to do with meself. I was getting up at usual time. I was really sometimes a bit depressed."

(Mr. Jennings)

"Well I was a bit puzzled how to fill me time in and that. You were used to getting up at just turned 6.00 in the morning, and you found you needn't get up until 8 or 9 o'clock, just lying there ... wondering how I was going to put my time in."

(Mr Francis)

On the other hand, six out of the twenty-one reported that whilst the very early period of retirement was satisfactory, problems connected with boredom and/or financial difficulties crept in usually after three or four months had elapsed.

"The first 5 or 6 weeks you were appreciating not working. Appreciating lying in till maybe 9.00 in the morning. Then it became a bore to you. You got fed up with every-day doing nothing "

(Mr. Head)

"Well the first month was alright, but after that you seemed to have nothing to go for .. it was a matter of coming in and sitting down ... having a meal and going out again - that was it "

(Mr. Howarth)

The majority of the 16 having these adjustment problems eventually, after the adoption of various strategies or through force of circumstance, made some sort of accommodation to retirement. Five, however, were unsuccessful in this. Finally, there were just five out of the twenty-one who experienced no problems either in the early or later stages of retirement.

The fact that only a minority of retirees had an undisturbed entry into retirement is worthy of comment here. The major reason for this can be seen in terms of the environmental context discussed earlier, and particular attributes of those interviewed. Only three out of the twenty-one had any regular contact with former work-mates, and thus most were either dependent on friendships they had built up inside the community, or were faced with the situation of starting afresh and building up a new circle of friends. The problem here - particularly for men in the latter group - was that the community was in a state of considerable change, and the facilities and structures for encouraging such friendships were themselves deteriorating. It is noticeable here that six men mentioned difficulties of forming friendships as one of the initial problems they had encountered in retirement, and that nine people mentioned general insecurities they had begun

to feel about living in the neighbourhood. These insecurities were put in terms of elderly people being more vulnerable to aggression from others, and in terms of specific groups - such as the young - being unconcerned about them.

"You pick up your paper and you read about an old man or woman being beaten up . . . you're frightened to go out at night now."

(Mr. Jennings)

"They will have a leg off you now the present day . . . the young uns."

(Mr. Haines)

"I'm frightened to leave her (his wife) in the house at night because they come in (burglars) when people are in the house "

"If you go into a pub for a drink now you've got to be careful. You've got to be careful when your talking because the young ones have got no room for you . . . have no respect for age . . . and you can get mixed up in a fight."

(Mr. Hanner)

These feelings of facing a hostile world where a word out of place might exact a physical reprisal, or where homes might be broken into if left unguarded, undoubtedly exacerbated tensions and ambiguities in the retirees relationships with others; at the very least such conditions hardly provided a satisfactory environment for negotiating new relationships. Yet, the achievement of the latter was important for many in this group, if for no other reason that they had few interests they could pursue on their own either outside or inside the home. 13 out of the 21 either said they had no hobbies, or had just one particular interest. Many of these were related to certain sports, e.g. playing bowls or watching football, and the problems which would be posed when these could no longer be pursued were usually recognised by individuals.

It would be wrong, however, to interpret the lack of interests and hobbies simply in terms of the personal inadequacies of those interviewed. Prior to retirement, recreation had been shaped around the dominant influence of work. For most of these men the latter had involved hard physical labour - often with

considerable overtime and/or awkward shifts to be worked. There was little in such work which left time or energy for the self-development which might be useful for the later years. Retirement had to pick up resources which a labour process had already helped shape and mould - resources which were as much an expression of a particular division of labour as of individual choice. Further, in a context where financial and communal resources were limited (or too expensive for the elderly to gain access to) these initial restrictions and limitations were compounded.

The social activities of the group when not orientated around family and relatives were focused primarily on workingman's clubs, bars, and private clubs 13 regularly attended (at least once a week) one of these, and for many they were a central source of relaxation and enjoyment. However, 12 out of the 21 mentioned that they had had to cut down on social activities since their retirement, with reasons of finance and poor health predominating.

The question of the retired male's position within the family will be explored further below, but a number of points may be summarised here. Of the 16 who had had children (the average was 2.19 per family), 11 maintained weekly or daily (in 4 instances) contact, and 2 fortnightly contact. The typical pattern for this group was to see children at weekends - usually they had moved out of Benwell itself - with possibly the wife visiting a son or daughter during the week. Important as these relationships were they were perhaps less significant as regards adjusting to day-to-day living in retirement. Regular access to children was always at hand - since most had stayed in Newcastle - but for most of the men in this group, children or grandchildren did not constitute a primary source for reconstructing daily life after the cessation of work. In this context it was the husband/wife relationship which was central, a relationship which often assumed greater importance with the advancing years.

As a final comment on the group it is perhaps worth noting that nearly half (ten) felt that there was nothing in particular that they liked about retirement. The rest specified "peace of mind", "release from tension at work", and "ability to do things when they liked", as the main virtues of retirement. Three mentioned specific interests which retirement had given them time to pursue.

4.5 EVERY-DAY LIFE IN RETIREMENT THE PROBLEM OF 'TIME'

Although a variety of retirement experiences in Benwell will be documented below, there is a common theme running through most of the interviews. This theme pivots around the problem of coping with and managing time - this within the context of drastically reduced financial resources and diminished resources at a communal level.

In facing relatively unstructured areas of time - areas which had hitherto been dominated by the demands of work - the retiree had now to develop strategies for dealing with an expansion of "free-time". Now such an expansion does not in itself create any problems. However, within the lives and environment of the people in Benwell tensions and strains did emerge. Time in the inner city appeared to "hang heavily". Facilitating the passing of time appeared as a constant struggle - part of a conscious process. Thus, for example, an activity would often be viewed less for any intrinsic worth, more for its value in "killing" or "filling in" given periods of time (see Corrigan, 1973, for a similar point, in relation to the activities of teenagers).

"On a Sunday morning we have all the furniture shifted and she polishes it a bit and I do the hoovering properly . . . it passes the time away." (Mr Pigott)

"There are all sorts of chores to get rid of . . . doing the grate . . . and all this sort of thing that takes up an hour or two . . . and the stairs have got to be done that takes a bit longer . . . anything like that " (Mr Oxford)

"It's a help (part-time work) it wastes maybe 3 or 4 hours in the morning ... by the time I come home and have me lunch and read the morning paper it's nearly tea-time again "

(Mr. Howarth)

"When you're working you are killing a lot of time. "

(Mr. White)

The important point here is that whilst problems connected with the passing of time are encountered in a variety of contexts, most of these centre around 'official' definitions of time, e.g. in factories or total institutions, definitions which have to be contended with if the individual is either to maintain his identity or realise a particular set of goals (see, for example, Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Ditton, 1971). This "oppositional context" is less apparent for the retiree. He may face analogous "time" problems with such diverse groups as disabled persons (Calkins, 1970) and long-term prisoners (Cohen and Taylor, *op. cit.*), but he lacks the social and physical boundaries which act to define in some way the scope of the problems involved. He has, clearly, a greater degree of freedom than the prisoner - he can, after all, choose either to step outside his door or to stop in. But in having this freedom the retiree may have only limited financial, social or physical resources with which to exercise its scope to the maximum effect. In this respect the worst thing about retirement may be precisely the "abundance of time" and scope for free choice, since the denial of the necessary resources to pursue this choice restricts the notion of a "happy retirement" to an abstract and unrealisable ideal. "Retirement's alright as long as you've got money and your health", people would say. And so it is, for without those things it becomes a burden, a routine existence - even more routine than the world of work; a world where despite the dominance of institutional definitions of time, free areas could be fought for, and invasion of these resisted, i.e. people could experience a sense of real as opposed to abstract freedom

"Well, when you're at work you know how you are going to pass the day away ... it just comes natural and you're looking forward to your weekend. I used to go round with the boys to the pub and have a game of darts in the club ... and what not ... Well, when you're retired you have nothing of that to look forward to."

(Mr. Pigott)

"I used to start at 8 and finish about 4 at night ... when you're grafting for your money you feel a lot better don't you ... you feel champion when you get your wages at the weekend ... you go into a bar you feel more happier .. I really enjoyed a pint because I worked for the bugger "

(Mr. White)

Now there are some complex problems in explaining these sorts of feelings and experiences, and there is a need to consider here some of the different arguments and viewpoints that might be involved. Firstly, it might be argued that such statements reflect the bifurcation between "work" and "life" which writers like Zaretsky (1976) suggest is central to a capitalist society. For Zaretsky the organisation of production around alienated labour encouraged the creation of a separate sphere of life in which personal relations were pursued as ends in themselves - this division being reinforced by high levels of private consumption. Thus it is the family that becomes the main repository of emotional life, the world of work becoming an alienated sphere dominated by routinisation and impersonality. This argument is rather too crude for our purposes ignoring as it does both the differential attachment by individuals to work, and the extent to which individuals attempt to carve out - despite the injustices and indignities suffered by labour under capitalism - a sphere of personal meaning within the world of work. It also perhaps fails to recognise that a bifurcation between "work" and "life" itself depends on an internalisation of work discipline - an internalisation which will undoubtedly help shape and mould the "separate" sphere of personal life. The question here is how important is this internalisation in respect of how people respond to a period such as retirement?

For writers such as E. P. Thompson (1967) and Jock Young (1971) the value placed upon work in a capitalist society is seen as an explanation for the obstacles limiting fulfilment in leisure. Adults, so the argument goes, feel a sense of guilt about "letting themselves go", uninhibited expressions of feeling being restricted only to childhood. For the adult, according to Young, "play metamorphoses into leisure",⁸ bringing forth feelings of guilt and ambivalence about activities unconnected with work, E. P. Thompson goes as far as to suggest that to properly use his leisure man may have to re-learn some of the arts of living lost by the advent of the industrial revolution.⁹ Another writer, Charles Reich (1972), outlining the emergence - particularly amongst young people - of a new consciousness concerned more with the self, argues:

"For older people, the great object of a new consciousness should be the recovery of self from the whole mass of duties, obligations, fear, external standards, necessity and endless work; a recovery of the child's knowledge of how to be happy (p 241)

Now some of these arguments do fit quite well into many of the experiences that will be described below. It is certainly true that older people in Benwell are rarely to be found playing in the parks, or playing hide and seek up the high street or, for that matter, indulging in adolescent love affairs. Many do express feelings of dissatisfaction - even guilt - at not working. Rather more, simply embrace a routinisation of their lives which bears marked similarities to the world of work they have left. However, simply to say that this routinisation of every-day life reflects an inadequate sense of play, or the predominance of the work ethic, is an over-simplification of the issues involved.

First, in their search for meaning both within and outside of work, individuals draw on and are influenced by a range of experiences and emotions - not all of which are connected to a work ethic. Secondly, none of the above really

tells us how such an ethic is sustained outside of work, in a period such as retirement. What are the ideological forms and institutions which assist in its maintenance? How do these operate? Through what social and political forms are they generated?

It is the case that as with Marsden and Duff's (1975) unemployed workers, many of those interviewed realised - in their retirement - just how important work had been in sustaining their identity and self-esteem. People often talked of their sense of "loss" of being without work and, in particular, of the relationships and social environment that went with work. This loss of a particular relationship or identity has, however, to be placed within the context of an absence of alternatives, an absence which must itself be related to the historical and social context in which retirement in general, and pensions in particular, developed.

Historically, pensions developed to assist and encourage individual thrift, and it was the latter which was deemed to be crucial in the way individuals experienced retirement and old age. In addition, from the late twenties onwards, as has been seen, pensions became closely controlled by a wider concern with the economy as a whole, with the amount of any increase depending on notions of "what the community could afford". In other words, pensions have never been related to the simple - but vital - question of how much scope for individual freedom and choice should they permit? Indeed, it has usually been assumed that questions such as the latter are dependent on the individual's own resources, and that the state can only provide a certain minimum beyond which the individual should not fall. But where, given the nature of a capitalist economy, the numbers failing to provide themselves with sufficient resources is so considerable, this limited commitment by the state is liable to have disastrous consequences. This

was particularly true for many of those interviewed in Benwell. Thus it was the state pension which defined - in effect - the boundaries regarding the degree of choice and freedom the individual experienced. This boundary was both a material and social one, it defined areas, for example, where people could go and areas from which they were excluded (through insufficient resources) i. e. it created a social world for retirement, a world which was in sharp contrast to any idea of retirement as an expansion and realisation of particular freedoms.

For retirees themselves this boundary was hard to pin down. It did not have the same physical presence as the walls of a prison, or even that of a foreman in a factory. Its effect, however, was similar - it defined a particular social relationship, a level of existence, and a set of possibilities, ultimately it made people aware in the most awesome fashion of the limitations of those freedoms they had struggled for.

4.6 THE MANAGEMENT OF TIME

In examining the retirement experiences of the elderly people in Benwell three groups can be distinguished: first, a group who had found retirement a stressful and isolating experience - a group for whom the problems of managing time were at a premium; secondly, a group of eleven who had also experienced short and medium term problems, but who mounted various "strategies of resistance" against these difficulties, finally, there was a group that had had rather fewer difficulties in retirement - a group for whom the passing of time did not appear as a problem.

(1) Lives in Disarray

To take up the various points discussed above let us look first at those individuals where problems connected with the management of time are at their most acute, a group for whom problems connected with marking

out and differentiating time consume a large part of everyday life.

Frank White, it may be remembered, had come to the end of his work career at 59, finding that employers were after younger and fitter men. In his case, retirement and long-term unemployment merged in with one another, so that by the time he came onto the pension he was at least accustomed to having a lot of time on his hands. Yet, despite this "experience" day to day living in retirement wasn't becoming any easier, though it has to be said that Frank White didn't have a lot of things going for him to begin with. He was living in a group of flats which were generally regarded to be one of the worst in Newcastle. His own block was actually half-empty, with smashed windows and peeling paint-work much in evidence. He himself lived on his own after being divorced from his wife, and was completely dependent on the single old age pension, plus a supplementary pension which paid the rent, and also occasional necessities such as blankets and shoes. Here is his account of an ordinary day in retirement.

"I generally get up about 8.00 .. 8 - 9 .. you have a cup of tea have a look round . have a bit of breakfast .. perhaps tidy up a bit. So time rolls on to about 11 00 What I generally do . my money comes to about £2 a day to live on . that's not counting Sunday I generally go out about 11 00 and go and get me rations and sit in the bar with the lads and have a yap. You don't have to drink a lot of beer. So I just sit with the lads and have a couple of pints. I then go and get some groceries perhaps and then land in here (home) about three o'clock ... after just sitting there killing time (in the bar). After this I generally have a cup of tea and a lie down, not that I'm drunk or anything like that, I just have to lie down to kill the monotony. I generally get up about 7 p.m. and have another cup of tea, and then I put the telly on and maybe have some dinner. Then it's about 9 p.m. , and I listen to the news and then again at 10."

Frank White puts the problem in terms of finding friendships and contacts. He had not built up many of these when he was working, and since coming to Benwell eight years ago he hasn't built up many there either - apart from a

circle of friends in a local bar. The latter was important in providing a regular source of contacts - these often being people in the same position: people who would be sympathetic and understanding to the difficulties encountered through living alone on a low income. Outside of this situation, however, in the street and other public places, hostility and rejection were seen as the likely outcome of overtures of friendship.

"If I go and sit on a seat and try to talk to a bloke he would want to know who the hell I am. He would ask me what did I want, might think I was a dip or something. See, when I go into the bar the lads knows. That's how I break my loneliness. But I'm frightened if they move us away from here I will be back in the desert again that is what I'm frightened of. If they put me away where I don't know anybody and I've got to make a fresh start .. go into a new bar ... I would be lost ... that's what worries me now. The bar is my second home but it's not for the drink .. it cannot be on this money .. its just a second home where I can go over and kill the strain of this because if I stop here like any other man or woman of my age ... I would just fade away, without anybody at all to talk to."

So there's the worry here of social isolation leading to a form of mental deterioration. Frank White puts it in terms of "going stale" or "fading away", if left on your own for too long "your mind starts to wander". Going over to the bar on the other hand helps "clear your mind", its like "two different atmospheres" (between home and the bar). But then there's always a time when you can't get out, when your stuck in that "atmosphere" - what happens then?

"I can't do much on a Sunday. It's a bad day for me. I've got no money for that day. I don't put nothing by for Sunday. I usually hit the bed. I might go to bed about 2.00 (in the afternoon) and lie through till about 9.00. If I can make it I try to get some kip in. But then I can't sleep at night so your just as bloody worse off."

Bill Franklin, the cinema manager, was in a similar position. He had not built up any savings, the job had been poorly paid, and there was no occupational pension. He had come into Benwell shortly after he was made

redundant, and occupied an unfurnished flat. He had been divorced from his wife many years ago, and although one son was living quite nearby they did not have regular contact. Once again, a local bar was an important source for contacts and for breaking up the monotony.

"I'll tell you this when I can't go out at night for a glass of beer and to see my friends, I'm the most miserable man on earth, if you understand what I mean . . . I'm not so miserable because I'm sitting in here, but the time hangs so heavy, you see? And when I think . . . I sit here now. . . I couldn't go out Wednesday night . . . I hadn't enough money, I only had about 11 pence or something, you can't get a drink with 11 pence . . . so I thought, 'Oh well.' and I just sat. And when you're sitting like this, it's not so bad if anybody's here, like you are, or anybody else, but on your own, your mind's going round and round, and you think, 'Oh my God.', and the time hangs, hangs, hangs . . . and I said, 'Oh to hell.' and I took my coat off, hung it up, and got to bed. I laid in bed and I thought, 'Oh, God.' Because I've been so busy all my life, and very busy. When we were the staff of a place, a cinema, there's always problems to sort out quick, there's no time to ponder, you have to decide very quickly what you're going to do. You haven't got a fortnight to think it over, you have to get it done straight away, and believe me, I many a time get that sick, I say to myself, 'I wish to God I could have saved something, had a bank-book, and put so much away every week, then I'd have been all right.' I could have said, 'Well, I'm going to have a couple of weeks in London.' I know London very well, I do, I've worked it so much. 'I'll go and have a couple of weeks in London, and I'll go here and I'll go there.' But with this carry on . . ."

"A typical day for me is this. I get up, I don't get up early . . . I mean there's no need to. Why get up early? I'm not going to work. So I get up about 9 o'clock. . . sometimes it's been 10 o'clock when I've got up. So I get up make a cup of coffee and set . . . fool around . . . read the paper. I get a paper given by the way . . . every night . . . up at the top . . . Mary . . . the barmaid there she gives me the paper every night. I'll get on tonight . . . and I read the paper . . . and then I buy the Sunday papers. . . and I just sit a bit . . . then I go and have a couple of beers . . . then I come back and get a bit of something and just sit all the time. Believe me . . . it's murder. It is . . . it's horrible. Many a time I think to meself 'what the hell's the purpose of it all? What's the end going to be?'"

One might conclude from these two examples that being old, single and poor, and living in the inner city, is an unhappy combination to say the least. On the other hand, that's not the whole story. Fred Haines, for example, an

ex-miner, is married, and has a daughter living opposite him. Also, relative to some of those around him, he's not poor, having an income of £35 a week (1975 figures and including a hardship and disability allowance). Mr Haines had retired at 59 after an accident underground. It was a "cut off" for which he had half prepared for since he did have the option of retiring at 60. Nonetheless, it was still a shock.

"I was lost cos I worked hard you know what I mean? People used to say 'you going to work', and then when you said no, they'd say 'Well what's the matter with you?' Then it all comes back to you."

What did you miss by not working?

"Why, you know what I mean. When you are going to work, everybody gets to know you. Going along the street or wherever you are. People see you standing at the bus stop, at such and such a time and they practically set the time by when they see you standing there. You're like a landmark to them that's what it was. Now I saw a man the other week who I haven't seen since I was finished. He says 'I could put my watch by you... standing at that bus stop'... He says, 'I didn't know what was the matter I never saw you again.'"

Fred Haines may have been a "landmark" going to work, but on the estate where he was living - which wasn't part of a mining community - he was simply one more retired person. Most of his friends had been drawn from the pit, and he still met some of them at a local workingman's club, but the relationship was now rather different.

How do you find retirement has changed relations you had with work mates and friends?

"Well, you know what I mean, you get to know when you're working, you may be didn't hear or see things in the paper. They'd say such and such is in the paper. You'd say, 'No'... Then they'd stop you see what I mean? You miss that that atmosphere.."

Outside of that "atmosphere", that intense day-to-day contact, retirement was empty and without real substance. Time was no longer overlaid by the

labour process, and the relationships surrounding that process - managing time had become a problem.

"It's the time business you see, putting something in to fill your time . . . to fill it in. See if you get up at 9.00 in the morning you maybes didn't get to bed until 12.00 at night . . . you might sit up until 11 - 12 at night, it's from there (i.e. from 9.00) that's where the gap is. She'll tell you I put my time in watching that (the television), but it still gets on top of you. You see? You're seeing, but you're not being asked to help to do it."

"... If you had something to fill that gap in after you had done whatever you had to, till you went to bed, something just to fill that gap in that . . . you see what I mean? It could be sport, could be cards, or dominoes, something like that. As long as it filled that gap in. That's what you miss .. It's like loneliness, you're .. like ... lost. You like sit down and think what can I do next, there's nothing to go on to. So you think Oh I'll stop in, then you get morbid, you get into that mood when you don't care whether you go out or not .. Then maybe about Wednesday or Thursday you'll say 'I'm sick of sitting in the house I'm going to get up and go out.' You see how it takes you? It's like ... it's difficult to explain . . . it's difficult to say . . . It's like going through these barriers. You start here, and you go through that barrier to the next .. what are you going to do till the next that's the only way I can explain it. The barrier is the time to fill in you can't get away from it."

Fred Haines' complaint is that there is nowhere for him to go. He does not want to sit in the house all day, and since he's still only 64 he does not feel ready yet for Golden Age clubs. He has thought about working, but his injury is a problem here, and he lacks confidence about learning something new. Basically, he's run up against more than just a time barrier. He's not really fit enough for work, but he's fit enough to want the interest and stimulation which work once provided for him. Unfortunately, the facilities for providing this - in Benwell at least - hardly exist. The individual has to provide his or her own solution - in spite of, rather than with the assistance of, the immediate environment.

There are two more people in this group. Sam Jennings we left at the point where he had been made redundant - at 66 - from the country estate

he had been working on. He left on a sour note.

"My Boss said to me 'When your 66 most of the work is out of you.' Well I disagreed with him, disagreed entirely."

The boss, however, was adamant and Mr Jennings moved back into Benwell, an area where he had originally spent his childhood. He found it had changed considerably, and mainly for the worse. For him it was both less friendly "You don't see friendliness at all", and more violent. "You are frightened to go out at night." Lacking both friendship in the local community and any particular hobbies, retirement wasn't to be welcomed:

"I don't see retirement fascinating ... good. I see it boring you know. I shouldn't be retired. I could be working all this time until I reached 70. You can't blame a man for leaving at 70, but being chucked out at 60 ..."

In fact, Mr. Jennings is now 72 and his sense of dissatisfaction with retirement is as strong as ever.

What's an ordinary day like for you now?

"I get up about 8.30 .. come down .. if the wife's there ..course she goes out twice a week in the morning to Jesmond (cleaning, C.P.); she's just the same as me, she gets edgy just the same, she's always worked Just come down and get my breakfast . do all the chores about the house . clean up and then if it's a nice day I go for a walk. Maybe go visit the daughter. The daughter lives down West Denton go visit her . that's all. I don't go up there too often because I don't like to impose on them because they've got their own life They play up because I don't go down often enough."

What happens when you're not at your daughter's?

"When I have a bad day . all I do now (wintertime) is stop in and watch the television. Now summertime you can get about and walk around. You still get bored stiff walking around ... you're walking around the same place every day you know."

Alone amongst this group John Hanner had happy memories about the early period of retirement.

"We used to enjoy ourselves. We thought it was great at the beginning. We went down the town, had a little drink, had a bottle of guinness ... go in and have a meal which was cheap then about two years ago. We knew a place where we could get a nice little meal, just 15 shillings for two of us, a really good little meal Of course I had the money

to spend - the £200 (from an insurance policy, C.P.) - and I had a little bit put by, but as time went on it just dwindled away. After a few months it began to get me down not having the money. But at first I thought it was great."

With the money having run out Mr. Hanner found his state pension plus his small occupational pension insufficient to provide for those social activities - dancing, the pictures, music shows - which he and his wife had enjoyed when working. Activities had now to be scaled down and organised around a narrow margin of income. The social world of retirement became progressively stripped of what had been important components of daily living - the latter, as a consequence, becoming less and less tolerable.

"I can't say that I enjoy myself. She doesn't... she doesn't because she never goes out. She's just let herself go."

Underlying these five experiences there are a number of common themes. Earlier, the importance of continuity between the work and post-work periods, had been noted as a possible contributory factor in adjustment to retirement. For these men, however, there were strong material, social and psychological discontinuities between the two periods. It is noteworthy here that 3 out of the 5 had moved relatively recently into Benwell, and that the other two either had their most important relationships outside the community, or were particularly pessimistic about building relationships inside it. Of course, many of the problems of this group would have been solved if they had valued social relationships less highly or if they were increasingly less concerned about moving around outside the home. However, pace Cumming and Henry, it was precisely because of a strong need for continued forms of social engagement that the obstacles to such engagement were experienced in the way that they were.

Domestic factors were also important in shaping the retirement experience of this group. In looking at the domestic arrangements of the retired people

in this study I want to utilise Elizabeth Bott's (1957) analysis of conjugal roles and social networks - assessing the significance of variations in these for the retirement period. Of the men who were married in this group one - Mr Haines - was in a transitional stage, having left a close knit network based around sporting interests, his work, and a club, conjugal segregation having been maintained however. With the other two men there was a joint conjugal role relationship associated with a loose knit network.

In the case of Mr. Haines there had been a sharp division between his social network and that of his wife's. With retirement his own network had disintegrated somewhat - assisted by his geographical isolation from his fellow workers. This factor, combined with the degree of segregation inside the home had clearly contributed to the difficulties experienced in retirement. This is brought out in the following exchange where Mr Haines is asked how he feels retirement has affected relationships with his wife.

"Why you know what I mean if she was going out why . . . I would say if she was a long time coming back . . . I would say where have you been you've got that you see . . . you think you've been left . . . so you realized the woman has to do her shopping . . . she's gone for this or that that's where you see that's how I found it "

In the case of Mr Hanner and Mr. Jennings their social networks - both loose-knit - had undergone change as well. Bott (op. cit) describes this type of network in the following way

. . . many of their friends did not know one another, it was unusual for friends to know relatives, only a few relatives kept in touch with one another, and husband and wife had very little contact with neighbours. Furthermore, there was no sharp segregation between the wife's network and the husband's network. With the exception of a few old friends and some colleagues, husband and wife maintained joint external relationships. (p. 78-79)

In the case of Mr. Hanner, as has been noted, it was precisely these "external relationships", which financial problems in retirement had undercut,

and which had had, as a consequence, a deteriorating effect on the relationship as a whole. This aspect was reinforced by the fears and insecurities felt about living in Benwell: fears about being attacked in a bar, fears about having the house burgled, fears as well, about the absence of "good neighbours", and about the "decline of the community". These fears mingled with worries and anxieties connected with old age itself, indeed, the two types of fear simply reinforced each other. Like Mr. Franklin, Mr. Hanner asked: "Where am I going?" "What does the future have in store for me?" As with Mr. Franklin, these questions had few clear answers.

For Mr. Jennings, who shared Mr. Hanner's feelings of insecurity about the environment, it was a turn towards the family which "replaced" friendships inside the community.

How easy has it been to make new friends here since you retired?

"Oh no, I haven't made any friends. There's not many wants to be friends with you when you're retired. . . when you've got nowt . . . you're no good to them. . . you're just good for your own family. . . that's all. . . as regards people outside they don't want to know you."

With five children living locally (including one still at home) there was at least a substantial basis for this turn towards the family, though in Mr. Jennings' case this didn't diminish a strong desire to return to work.

Despite the more flexible arrangements inside the home in these two cases, this wasn't by itself a compensation for withdrawal from social ties, and the disruption of the individual's own social network. Changes in social ties have, of course, to be viewed in both quantitative and qualitative terms. For these five there was a reduction both in the number and quality of friendships - with the deterioration in quality being perhaps most significant. Lowenthal and Havan (1968), in a paper on the role of the confidant, have argued that:

The impact on adjustment of a decrease in social interaction, or a loss of social roles is considerably softened if the individual has a close personal relationship. In addition, the age linked losses of widowhood and retirement are also ameliorated by the presence of a confidant (p 29)

The absence of such a relationship was particularly noticeable in the case of the single men. Mr White, for example, puts the problem in these terms:

"I never thought I would get lonely when I was a young fella because I had a hard active life, being in the army and travelling around a bit. I've always been used to company . . . always been used to a bed-mate . . . you know . . . a lad sleeping at that side of me and another at that . . . you know . . . company all the time. When you get into a place like this you just go bloody dumb . . . you shut the door and you've had it."

In the context of the isolation experienced by many older people, there is a particularly vicious circle at work. For the single pensioner the money he has hardly supports an extensive social life, indeed, the pension acts as a material base guaranteeing some form of social isolation. When friends die or move away the material limits set by the pension make it difficult for them to be replaced - a material restriction which is reinforced by a cultural one in terms of the devaluation of the importance of friendship (Brain, 1977).

Arguably, if one wanted to design a situation which maximised the difficulties for people in retirement, it would be difficult to find a better example than the situation of older people in Benwell. They are presented with an income which restricts them to a limited range of social activities, a community where impersonality and hostility are permanent features of daily life, and where the main desire is a wish to escape to something better, and, finally, a cultural image which reinforces all those social and environmental restrictions which are experienced. What, in this situation, are the alternatives? How do people manoeuvre within the increasingly restricted range of social

options which open up before them? How, in other words, do people overcome the feelings of anger and depression which have dominated the lives of the individuals discussed so far?

(2) Strategies of Resistance

The previous section focused on lives in apparent disarray. Lives which had been pulled apart less - to be quite accurate - by retirement itself, more by the coalition of forces which went along with being retired. In this section I want to consider people who, although faced by some of the forces discussed above, managed to adopt strategies which nullified in some measure the potential harm these forces could have. These, then, are people who successfully fought back when retirement began to bring them down, began to "make them sick", or depressed them. Success is of course a highly ambiguous term, and for many in this group its achievement was recognised as being of potentially limited duration - open to disruption by loss of a job, loss of a friend, loss of a particular activity. But a certain kind of success it was felt to be. The individual had secured himself again, had dug himself back in, perhaps to a highly structured routine, perhaps to a particular kind of relationship, perhaps to a balance between a certain job, and certain pattern of leisure.

There were eleven people who had had difficulties in adjusting to retirement and who had developed particular ways of dealing with the problems that arose. Seven had concentrated mainly on a re-organisation of their domestic and personal lives to provide a structure for organising themselves in retirement; three had taken on part-time work as the main solution; finally, there was just one individual where health problems gradually overlaid initial feelings of

frustration about retirement - the difficulties posed by these problems assuming a pivotal role in the response made to retirement.

Let us consider some examples of the first strategy Dick Harris was introduced right at the beginning, with Frank White, as sharing the latter's unstable work career. The two in fact are similar on a number of other accounts. They both live on the same estate, both live alone, and both have only the state pension as their primary source of income. They also shared the experience of being unemployed prior to retirement. Dick Harris's view of the employment situation was that:

"They could see I was past it probably that's my opinion ... they could see I was past it so ..."

Who do you mean? The employers?

Mr. Harris

"Yes ... so I packed it in. I says I've had me day ... to meself . bugger it I won't bother no more."

That sums up Mr. Harris's view of things very well. He has a favourite expression in fact. "It's come day go day with me," he says, "I never bother now. I'm past that. . all I do is the routine that I told you."

The routine is Mr. Harris's strategy for living in retirement, unlike his neighbour Mr. White, Mr. Harris had given up the search for regular contact. He has given up scouring bars or chancing his luck with strangers in the street. Unlike Mr. White he has turned his back on all that. In his two-roomed flat, with his three dogs and two cats, he has dug in and secured his own kind of anchor.

"When I get up I put me bit of fire on, while I'm lighting that me kettle's on, I'm a tea man. Well I put, I rinse me tea-pot out, make meself a pot of tea, take the dogs out around the blocks ... on the grass ... you know .. around there ... clean themselves out. I come back, I sit meself in the chair. I have a good drink of

tea til half-past-six, then I take them out again another way round there ... you know just a routine when you get into it ... you know ... take them round there I have a bit of toast or egg, what I fancy, I never go short, I've always got an egg or a bit of bread and butter Well I sit down and enjoy me meal. Then about 10.30 I take them out again around Half-past 12 I put the kettle on again I might have a bit of bacon and egg you see then I'm finished till about half-past three, then I have another walk That's all I do do walk out exercise for me and the dogs Well I then come back have a biscuit and a cup of tea .. that's all I do drink tea . till about . . I get ... quarter to six news Well I check my watch then . . I check me watches then I know I'm right for the next morning. Well about . say about half-past six I just take them for a short run . come in ... and I'm in for the night then I go to bed "

Do you ever find you have too much time on your hands?

"I never bother now . I'm past that. All I do now is just the routine that I tell you. Just up and out around, maybe's 10/15 minutes, back in ... smoke ... tea That's all I do smoke and tea, smoke and tea. I never bother, I'm past it anyway... I'm content."

What are the main drawbacks you've found about retirement?

"Away back it used to get on me mind. I used to dread it. I used to say up again in the morning, nothing to do except walk around ... walk around ... walk around. But you get over them things. If you go on you'd fall out of your head. I'm telling you with me now. It's come day go day. I get up in the morning. I look for a drink of tea .. a smoke ... it's a routine ... around ... back in ... around. The day's over . . before it is ... I mean when I was younger I used to be out of a night ... you know ... but it comes to everybody doesn't it? I don't bother now . I'm past it."

It may be objected here that such an extreme routinisation of daily life is exceptional, that it hardly characterises the everyday existence of most retired people in Benwell Extreme it is, exceptional also, in some respects, but as a strategy for survival, as a way of minimising the psychological pain which living on a certain income, in a certain area, can bring - it is not unique More typical perhaps is John Oxford, who had worked for an aircraft company, milling and machine setting for 33 years before retiring at the age of 65.

Some people say they find difficulty filling the time in during the day Do you find that at all?

"No . . . we keep to a system every day . . . same thing over and over again, repetition work like (laughs). Washing we do on Monday; cleaning the windows Tuesday, Wednesday, we clean upstairs we keep to a system every day. Might nip out and get some bread in between working . . . it all takes time."

A number of men in fact reported that they helped their wives more now with domestic chores, and these latter were important both in respect of the time factor and - in at least one instance - assuaging guilt feelings about past neglect of the wife and the home

"She used to get up every morning and get me breakfast ready . . . get me bait ready oh it does really . . . I think as you get older your life changes toward your married life. You find out . . . you think 'Oh hell I neglected them there should have spent more time at home, but you usually spent more time with your friends and that. I used to go out and have a drink every night when I was working." (Mr. Francis)

Both in Mr. Oxford's and Mr Francis' case there is a suggestion of a turning in towards the marital relationship. In the latter's case there is a move away from a segregated conjugal relationship, with Mr. Oxford there is a more intense exploration of an existing joint conjugal relationship.

The extent to which the structure of domestic relationships is changed by retirement has hardly been explored by researchers. Yet, clearly, the strategy of alternating aspects of the role structure within the household, may be an important one for adjusting to retirement. In the case of Mr Oxford this strategy was made more likely given the position he and his wife had within the community. They had moved 16 years previously from the West Country to Newcastle (they wished to be nearer their son), a move which had involved the severance of social ties which had not been replaced. They still say they have difficulty in understanding what people say in Newcastle, and they have not built up any social life equivalent to that previously enjoyed. These

biographical factors, combined with retirement, thus helped to contribute to a 'deepening' in the marital relationship.

In Mr. Francis' case feelings about a past neglect of his wife, combined also with her illness, had assisted a small, but significant realignment:

"Well, the way I am now with the wife and that being not too grand I get up of a morning take him out (the dog) and go and get me paper ... Then I come back and make the breakfast for her; we have our breakfast then she gets ready - I wash the dishes up for her and I Hoover around . . . and then I'm finished for the shift . . . finished for the day."

In itself this is hardly a radical overturning of the domestic division of labour, but in relation to Mr. Francis' past beliefs and actions in the domestic sphere, it is of some significance.

"If she'd asked me when I was working to wash the dishes or cook the breakfast I would have turned round and said 'What the hell are you there for?' Oh well . . . I've been brought up in the old fashioned idea you know that the woman's place was at home or in the kitchen. But after retirement . . . well now you see I wash the dishes every morning for her and she just gets ready to go out and do the shopping ... Oh I help her now more since I've been retired than all the time I knew her."

Mr. Feather, it will be recalled, had retired early after the death of his wife. For him, with three sons still living at home, housework posed itself as an immediate and necessary task. A task which had also helped Mr. Feather to satisfactorily negotiate the early period of retirement.

"I had no hobbies or anything like that. In the summer I would play bowls but in the winter I had nothing to do. Doing the housework was a challenge and I beat that challenge ..."

So in a way you didn't feel you were stepping into a vacuum?

"No it was more like taking over from one responsibility to another responsibility. It's quite a responsible job (running the home, C.P.) That's how it got me. The way I am .. I'm quite happy. I enjoy doing my job."

You see housework in terms of a job?

"Yes I do . . . I see it as a job . . . The woman's life is a job and I see it the same way. "

As well as, or in place of seeking integration at the level of domestic relationships, another possibility explored was the securing of another peer group - one which could replace that previously found in connection with work. A successful example of this can be found in the case of Mr Pigott, who, after a lifetime in the building industry, had had to retire early because of arthritis . . . He describes the first six months of retirement in the following way:

"I was down in the dumps . . . because I was never off work in my life . . . never on the dole or nothing all me life. In the first six months I was wishing I was dead . . . soul destroying . . . there was nothing to do you were getting up in the morning wondering how to pass the time of day " . . .

The crucial change came when he joined a bowls club, a club for whom he eventually started playing. The significance of this Mr. Pigott puts in the following terms

"Well . . . you are with fellows your own age you see . . . you get pally . . . you crack jokes . . . they crack jokes . . . you have a good gossip . . . you go in the pub and have a drink . . . you have a pint like . . . it opens your life out. "

Finding a new group of friends to relate to had been for him the most important task, since he felt he could no longer go around with those he had had when working - many of whom were much younger than himself. This age difference could apparently be tolerated when he was working but not when he was retired. This point is explored further in this exchange:

After retirement you say you didn't keep up those social friendships you'd had when working?

"I didn't bother . . . I fell out you see . . . I didn't want to do those things any more " . . .

Why was that?

"Well you felt out of place going with young people and you said to yourself let the young uns go with the young uns."

Was it something they said, or something you felt yourself?

"No I felt it myself. I felt I was too old to go among these young people. I felt I was spoiling their company."

Where do you get your friends now?

"From my own age group ... playing bowls ... that's my ... that's the only thing I've got ..."

In Mr Pigott's case this re-orientation towards a new circle of friends was also combined with closer domestic involvement, particularly in relation to tasks such as painting and decorating - which he had never done before - and more general cleaning jobs around the house.

"My wife does all the cooking ... I Hoover the floor in the sitting room, the passage and the bathroom, about three times a week. On a Saturday morning we have all the furniture shifted and she polishes it a bit and I do the hoovering properly . it passes the time away . because on a Sunday I never go out unless it's a lovely day, and then the wife and I will go down the coast."

Finally, there were three individuals who used some form of work as a deliberate strategy for overcoming problems in retirement. Two examples may be given here. Mr. Rothe, the wholesale meat manager, had reserved a number of house maintenance jobs to do when he retired, however, when these were finished he found himself getting into an unrewarding routine.

". . . fortunately when I did retire I had an awful lot of jobs to do in here ... all these alterations That went on for about 9 months then it used to be the old procedure, down the town with the shopping baskets ... going round the shops ... along to the supermarkets along here till I got absolutely bored with that .."

Eventually, he came to an arrangement with a friend who owned an abattoir that he would help him with the accounts This was a loose arrangement and he comes and goes as he pleases, but for Mr. Rothe there is the important feeling that

"When I do go there I'm a bit indispensable . I know I can contribute to a great extent and they would miss me very much . . and it's nice to say that, because at my age you're not really missed at all are you?"

In Mr Rothe's case the strategy of finding a job is also linked to a wider rejection of retirement itself.

"Oh, I never think about retirement . . I'm not retired . . I would say I'm not retired not really In fact it's not for me doddering about with a shopping bag . . . buying something in these supermarkets. "

In fact, going back to work reflects a number of elements which in practice are difficult to separate out: money, boredom, status, friendships - all of these may be important in stimulating a desire to return to work. For Mr. Head, after three months of retirement, it was a question of finding less and less which could occupy his time.

"It was a matter of coming in, sitting down, having a meal, and going out again . . . that was it. "

After five months he decided to take a job, first working at Woolworths, and then as a lollipop man - a job which he has been doing for the past four years:

"It wasn't any hardship to go back to a job. It was more to me advantage. You could account for a part of your time during the day, and that was it I think boredom was creeping in before. The job was also a financial help But somehow you feel better when you are doing something . it kills the boredom. Well this five years have crept over in no time . . five years walking about the street would have been a hell of a long time. "

Mr. Head's response here has to be related partly to his domestic life. He describes himself as someone who at night is content with his own fireside and that even (or especially) when working he would rarely venture out at night. In this respect - and others - he differs markedly from his wife. She regularly attends an Over-60s club, and a Women's Guild, she regularly goes away for holidays, unlike Mr. Head, who usually stays at home, she also visits her daughters every week (Mr Head on the other hand, rarely visits his daughters' houses) Neither have regular contact with either relatives or neighbours.

Inside the home, roles are segregated, though slightly less than when Mr Head was working full-time. However, the disparity in social activities between Mr Head and his wife, which if anything has become more marked in retirement, makes a greater degree of domestic integration unlikely. In the absence of any regular relationships outside in the community, and the maintenance of segregated relationships at home, work seemed to pose itself as a viable alternative to "walking about the streets".

(3) A Happy Retirement

So far it is mainly the difficulties connected with retirement that have been discussed, the problems concerned with adjusting to a new pattern of income, a new pattern of domestic relationships or a new circle of friends. There is, however, another side to retirement. A side where retirement isn't viewed as a harbinger of obsolescence, or as a period - either in the short or long term - marked by feelings of boredom and disenchantment. On the contrary, retirement, in the examples below, is an accepted part of the life cycle - one where the individual often feels a sense of release and freedom.

Of the five individuals who had had a largely undisturbed entry into retirement some important features may be noted. All had either an occupational pension or substantial savings and investments to supplement their old age pension. Four out of the five were active participants in the community - at various levels. One was a committee member of a community centre, another was involved with charitable work, one was treasurer of an over-60s club, finally there was also one company director. The single exception - Mr. Deacon - had retired early through

ill-health, and had been forced to curtail outside activities. It is also worthy of note that four out of the five come from the stable work pattern, averaging 42 years service with just one company or organisation.

Certainly, it can be said that retirement came in very different circumstances than that for many of the people we have described so far. It came at the end of a long uninterrupted work career, and was as much likely to be regarded as a "reward" in some way as opposed to a sign of obsolescence. In addition, retirement did not have the social and material disadvantages which others in Belwell had found, a standard of living was maintained and - crucially - this allowed the continuance of outside activities (or the taking on of new ones) within the retirement period

Retirement as a continuation, at a more relaxed pace, of certain activities and interests is probably the best description for this group. With varying degrees of satisfaction people had reached a certain point in their occupational lives and were not displeased to let go. Pressure at work was in some cases increasing, or standards deteriorating, sometimes people just felt that they had had enough - time to let somebody else do the worrying, or cope with the tension.

Both the railwaymen - Mr Gallagher and Mr Josephs - mentioned what they felt to be deteriorating standards in their last years at work. Mr. Josephs put it as follows:

"The system and the organisation on the railway was, in the office, deteriorating, there wasn't the interest there, there wasn't the same atmosphere. They kept cutting this job out and that job out and there were savings, false economies as I called it. It was making it harder for the ones that were left. At one time all of those sections which I mentioned previously were the control of each section and you knew where every train in the whole district was minute by minute, the whole lot. The management got to the stage where they couldn't care less about punctuality and all that, which to the likes of me went very hard, because if you are conscientious all your life and try to keep the job going to the best

of advantages, and then they just come and strike off time because it suited them. You never knew what was in the management's mind for five years ahead, you as an individual, they work 5 or 10 years ahead you know on various things, new schemes and all that and centralisation, and they centralised offices and departments for years and tried them different ways and they always came back to the original "

Mr Deacon, after 35 years in the Housing Department at Newcastle, retired early through heart trouble. Pressure at work was an important factor in his approach to retirement.

"Well, to be honest, I was getting a bit tired and they (the doctors) told me I had to retire. I looked at it philosophically. I was working in a heated atmosphere and it was no good for that (his heart) ... and I thought I can't go back to that again ... In the last years the pressure was greater as you're getting older the pressure is higher, there is more staff coming in but your brain is slowing down and it becomes harder to cope with."

Mr Patrick, the newspaperman, whilst not retiring because of illness or pressures at work, noted that the possibility of the latter was an important factor, and he re-called the following conversation with the managing director of the paper.

"He said to me, I'm going to mention something that might take you by surprise ... I know you are over 65 and he said one of my duties as managing director is to keep an eye on old servants who have done their stint and who may be thinking about retiring or whom we, as a company, might think should retire ... and he said I mention this because I know the pressures are going to become much more severe over the next 12 months and he said there is going to be a number of changes and I would hate to think all the years I have known you and all the service you have put in that these pressures would endanger your health at your time of life so I'm mentioning it to give you the opportunity of going, but I'm not forcing the issue, don't think that. But if you want to think about it let me know and if I can arrange a pension which is acceptable to you .. he said .. I would certainly seriously think about it "

The advantages of retirement were felt almost immediately by most in this group. Steven Josephs was particularly grateful at not having to do any more shiftwork.

"I was pleased at not having to do any more nightshifts. Because you had three shifts, 6 - 2, 2 - 10, 10 - 6, and in the winter on frosty and foggy nights you used to go on nightshifts and you didn't know what was facing you and all that . . . and it was nice to think that in the foggy weather, frosty weather, snow or whatever that you could just put the clothes over your head and say: 'That's it . . . get on with it' '"

For Mr. Deacon it was the release from the tension at work which was important.

"When I retired I was as happy as anything, I knew full well I could occupy my time. There's the garden, I could concentrate on that, and on top of that I could relax I had to go to the doctor because I was so tense and when I retired I started to lose all those tensions. I found myself . ." (in retirement)

In the case of the newspaper manager and the director, retirement had been part of a more gradual winding down of work responsibilities Mr. Patrick was asked to supervise the planning and building of a sports pavilion for the company's employees and this, together with his work for charities, meant that he "hardly ever realised he was retired". Mr. Peach had been winding down his activities for two or three years before eventually retiring, though even here he still occasionally visited sites and companies for his firm.

It was suggested earlier that managing time had been an important theme running through most of the interviews in Benwell. This was also true for some in this group - though at a much lower level of difficulty. Instead, most people felt they had enough interests and resources to sustain them in retirement, and that even where there were occasional feelings of boredom these could be overcome.

". . . there are days when you've got too much time when you're retired so you've got to find something to do that fills your time. See when I go in the garden now I'm different from what I used to do I used to go in the garden once and try and get everything done quick . get everything planted. Now I'm getting down to what you call a real appreciation of gardening You see now I take great care in planting things and I think to myself this is what gardening is all about "

(Mr Gallagher)

Certainly, the prospect of having more free time available was not viewed with any great concern:

"Time on my hands was no worry, that was one thing I could never say, if I thought that I probably could never have said to Mr Harton (the managing director) that I would retire. But I've got so many interests, apart from the charity work and the Choral Society. I am handy with tools. I do my own house repairs. My sons always have a job on the stocks for me, if it's not building a rabbit hutch for the kids, it is doing something else. I put this fireplace in, built a porch out the back, put a garage up ... my wife says she doesn't know how I found time to go to work." (Mr. Patrick)

"When I retired I was happy as anything. I knew full well I could occupy my time. There's the garden there, I could concentrate on that, and on top of that I could relax. I can sit here and watch the life in that garden. you see the finches. . . they come down when the fruit is growing they have nested in the trees ... and I've protected them from the cats. I found myself in retirement there was lots of things I wanted to do." (Mr Deacon)

"I reckoned I could fill my time in very nicely at home. I'm not a 'do it yourself man' I'm not handy like that .. there would be paint work and all this but I thought after you have worked 50 years I think you've worked your limit as long as you've got interests to keep you going because my family has been away for some 18 years now, we can always have a bit holiday by going to see them. we could always put our time in that way I reckoned after working 50 years I had worked enough." (Mr Josephs)

At its best, where income, health and domestic relationships are in harmony, retirement can be a relaxed and enjoyable period. A period where the freedom of not having life ruled by the clock or by a shift system can bring a great change to the individual's life

Mr. Josephs found a change both for himself and his wife, particularly with domestic life no longer being organised around the "continental shift".

He notes in relation to his wife:

"At one time the clock ruled her life. well she has found a great difference ... we can please ourselves when we have a meal or we can put it off and go here and go there it has made a tremendous difference to her life "

Can you tell me some of the things you do on an ordinary day?

"Well we get up about 8.00 or 9.00 a.m., get ourselves a cup of tea and by the time you have got your cups and saucers washed up between you, your wife and you, you might decide to go to the town, or you might go to see this one or that one, you know relatives. She might decide that she wanted to do a bit of spring-cleaning, then we would have a bit bash at that, or if she wanted to go to the town and I didn't I would go for a stroll up Denton Burn and call into the Club and have a pint, by which time it is 1.00 p.m. or after and by the time you get a bit of bite, your luncheon you might go for a bit more stroll, or go to the Over 60's Club. Then it is teatime, by the time your tea is finished it is television time, you know how much time that occupies, television, quite a bit . . . but in the winter months it is very nice

Samuel Patrick's days are rather more structured than this, including as they do the part-time work he does for the newspaper which involves distributing books of vouchers for a competition it runs. Here is a description of a typical week for him

"We are still trying to get round to what you asked me and that is a particular day or working week. Monday, so far as I am concerned I went off this morning down to the office, I went to the bank and paid some money in. I called in to the office and got a number of these voucher books and I had a chat with one or two of my colleagues at the office. I had a walk round and by the time I got away from the office it was about 11.30 and by the time I got up here it was nearly 12.00. This afternoon would have been more or less a free afternoon as far as I was concerned, I would probably have been doing odd jobs around the place. Tomorrow, I will be going at about 9.00 to Sunderland and I will get back about lunch time. I will then check my money and get things ready to pay in at the office. Then I have a meeting down at the office on a Tuesday afternoon. Wednesday, I have a case to call on for "Old Ben", the charity thing and I will probably pay another couple of calls on Wednesday to some other old folks I know to see if they are all right. Thursday, I go to North West Durham in the morning with more or less the same thing in the afternoon, no, that is not quite right, in the afternoon I go to my wife's sisters and bring them over here. Friday morning we have a pensioners' meeting at the Chronicle, they throw open the Executive Club to the pensioners so I go down there. Then I come home for lunch and then on Friday afternoon we go to my wife's sisters and I also take over another friend of ours. Saturday morning my wife has coffee in here or next door and I make myself scarce for the women and I just go down the town and look around. In addition to all this I am telling you, my son has just had an extension built on his house, he is decorating and that sort of thing so one day last week I went down there and was decorating for him. There is always something for me to do. With spring coming on there will be a little bit of gardening to do."

The generally more relaxed approach to retirement taken by this group was facilitated by aspects of their domestic lives. All were married, and using Bott's analysis again, four out of the five could be classified as having an intermediate degree of conjugal segregation associated with medium knit networks. Following Bott's description, in external relationships husband and wife had some joint relationships and some segregated ones - particularly via neighbours and local clubs. The division of labour within the household was more flexible than in the case of extreme conjugal segregation, with an increased emphasis on joint organisation and at least some shared interests. This arrangement - particularly in respect of external relationships - had some advantages in retirement, with the maintenance of both joint and independent relationships easing the strain which might otherwise have been placed on marital relations. The combination of both joint and separate activities is illustrated by Mr. Gallagher in his account of social activities:

"Well I'll be out tonight. My wife's going baby-sitting to her daughter's up at Fenham. The wife and I go out dancing on Wednesday night and Saturday night. My wife goes out on Monday night, she dances with some of her lady friends. Then she goes out Tuesday night to some guild, then I usually go up to the club and have a crack with the locals."

This degree of independence in external relationships also carried through to the organisation of the household itself:

Have you done any more housework since you retired?

"Oh yes I always clean the house, wash dishes do this and that every day ... I do the carpets and all this sort of business ... clear the place up. I can cook ... I can cook a full meal anything like that ... if I like to do it. Perhaps my wife might go away to London for a fortnight to see the family, we have a daughter down there, well when she goes away she knows she's alright because both my sons are the same, they're good cooks . . . all the family's been brought up like that . we can all be independent . see I can cook a meal . I'm not dependent on her being here "

This independence is particularly important in the context of retirement, where the possibility of one partner feeling "left out" or "in the way" in the

context of the domestic routine is often a problem in the early stages. Compare Mr. Gallagher's comments above, for example, with those of Mr. Haines, whose feeling that "you think you're being left" in relation to when his wife went out for any length of time, illustrates a divergent attitude towards domestic life with an obvious source of tension as a result.

It is the presence of an "alternative" which is, however, probably crucial here, and the presence of a social network which will provide the necessary supports for this. This can be expressed at a very simple level as when Mr. Josephs says: "...if she wanted to go to the town and I didn't I would go for a stroll up Denton Burn and call into the club and have a pint." Or even more directly as when Mr. Patrick says "Saturday morning my wife has coffee in here or next door and I make myself scarce for the women and go down town and have a look around." Either way, an alternative is there, and the presence of independent activities and relationships is assumed to be a natural part of the conjugal unit and the relationships therein.

4.7 CONCLUDING COMMENT

The conclusions to be drawn from the interviews above should become clearer when we examine the retirement experiences of individuals in other occupations and communities. For the moment, however, the point will merely be made that the group discussed above illustrate the problems of retirement in a deteriorating inner city community: problems of community decline often interacting with limited social and financial resources on the individual's part. At the very least, the surrounding community offered little support to the individuals' retirement, in extreme cases it virtually destroyed any resources and relationships which had been built up. The implications of this for policy makers will be discussed later. For the moment, however, we turn to a group

of retirees in a very different environmental setting - a setting where community supports were more numerous and offered far greater scope for supporting social life in retirement

FOOTNOTES

- 1 This summary draws extensively from The Cost of Industrial Change, C D P , 1977
- 2 Ibid , p 37
- 3 These figures are taken from the 1971 census
- 4 Urban Trends (1975), p 68
- 5, Ibid , see editorial section "Households with Elderly Persons"
6. For recent accounts by working people of life in the North-East in the thirties see, Hello, are you Working, Armstrong, K. and Beynon, H. Erdesdun Publications, 1977.
7. This finding has been confirmed in a number of studies. For a British example see Crawford, M (1971), for an American one, Kerchoff, A. (1966).
- 8 Young, J (1971), p 133
- 9 Thompson, E P (1967), p 64

CHAPTER 5

RETIREMENT IN A MINING VILLAGE

5 1 THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

Some 23 miles to the south of Benwell is the village of Wheatley Hill in County Durham - the locality for the next group of interviews. The reasons behind the choice of areas and occupations will be discussed further in the appendix on the methodology of the study. However, a few points about this choice are necessary here. First, the Benwell interviews illustrated the tensions for retired people living in an area undergoing structural change. The interviews in Wheatley Hill were designed to explore this theme further, but this time within the context of a specific occupation as well as a specific community. The choice of mining was an obvious one since the erosion of the importance of the mining industry had been a central feature of industrial change in Durham in the 50s and 60s,¹ such a change would inevitably be felt most acutely at the level of particular mining communities, where the bulk of the occupied male population would be involved in mining.² Secondly, because pit closure had been such a dominant theme in the economic and social life of the County, it was decided to concentrate on a community where the pit had been closed for a period of time (8 years in the case of Wheatley Hill), presenting this as an important background to the retired miner's life.

Taylor (1966), following Smailes (1938), has identified three life stages in the development of mining communities: youth, characterised by immigration and population increase, maturity, characterised by decline or falling off in immigration, but with continuing population increase, and old age, characterised by declining population and emigration. In Wheatley Hill this cycle has taken just under 100 years (the first coal being drawn in 1870), with the main housing developments occurring in the late 19th and early 20th

century (mainly colliery houses), and in the 20's and 30's (mainly council housing) The population of the village had actually started to decline before the closure of the pit, falling from 6,607 in 1960, to 5,473 in 1967 and to 4,214 in 1976

For the purposes of this study, the question that has to be considered is how far the retirement experience is affected by these various economic and social changes. Taylor (op.cit), in his study of migration from the Durham coalfield, suggests that shifts in population away from the old mining communities exert their maximum impact on groups such as the elderly

In all aspects of the support once given and now much reduced, it was the elderly parents, and especially widows and widowers, who experienced the greatest loss. Younger parents were less affected For the older parents the migration of their children meant increasing dependence on neighbours and on local geriatric services In a few cases widows and widowers with migrant children were completely dependent on their daily home help, or on the meals on wheels service (p 250)

The effect of migration on the elderly will be dependent on a number of factors In the case of Wheatley Hill many of the moves by children had been of a relatively short distance (e g to Newton Aycliffe, 14 miles, or Peterlee, 6 miles) and hence regular contact could still be maintained Often at least one child had stayed behind in Wheatley Hill, so, in terms of the importance of children for help and support, this was of some assistance. Also, even where long distance moves had been made, to the Midlands or, in one instance, to the south coast, there was one advantage in that migrants' homes would provide a regular source for holidays. Taylor (op.cit) found that parents with more than one migrant child usually had more than one holiday, and that if they were retired they would often stay away from Durham for months at a time (instances of this were also found in Wheatley Hill) ³ Finally, the effects of migration may be cushioned by the existence of personal supports via the medium

of friends and neighbours - these latter being of particular importance to the retired and elderly. House and Knights' (1967) study of two mining communities in the Houghton area indicated a tendency for increased age and limited incomes to produce a 'turning in' towards the village and to relationships within the community as opposed to outside it - thus confirming the importance to the elderly of relationships in their immediate area.

As yet, little is known about how social relations inside communities are affected by pit closures. Neither the Ryhope study (H M S O., 1970), nor the study by House and Knight (op cit) investigated this in much detail. The aforementioned study by Taylor has been one of the few exceptions, and some interesting points emerge from this work. Thus with children and grandchildren moving away Taylor found a tendency for parents to remain in their homes more than they had done before the migration (though he also noted the opposite effect on some, who found their houses too quiet and lonely and went to see friends to escape from the solitude). Taylor also noted a tendency for old-established residents to complain about the increased amount of mobility, and the larger numbers of strangers in the village.⁵ The point is also made that there may be selective factors at work determining who migrates, migrants often being those who had less commitment or who were less rooted in village life.⁶

The above findings suggest that there are a number of conflicting and contradictory pressures working upon the mining village with the collapse of its economic base. Certainly, the immediate effect is likely to be one of worry and concern about the future of the village - will enough young people stay behind? Will there be enough alternative jobs? Will facilities in the community be maintained? These questions - and others - will all be asked over and over again. However, there is a need to step outside the community to appreciate the

exact dimensions of the problems it faces - placing it within a wider framework which incorporates both the general decline of mining in the Durham area, and the response to this at the level of planning and social policy

Wheatley Hill colliery is one of many that have closed in the area, and thus its own demise was part of a more general County-wide upheaval that had long been affecting community life. This can be seen most clearly in debates on how the old colliery villages were to figure in development plans for the county as a whole.⁷ The 1951 Development Plan identified four categories in which villages could be placed depending on assessments about future employment prospects in the vicinity of the village, the physical condition of property and services and the siting of the settlement. Thus, for example, in Category A the investment of considerable further amounts of capital was envisaged because of expected future regroupment of population or because of the anticipated retention of the natural increase in population. In Category D, on the other hand, where a considerable loss in population was expected, it was stated that⁸

There should be no further investment of capital on any considerable scale and that any proposal to invest capital should be carefully examined. This generally means that when the existing houses become uninhabitable they should be replaced elsewhere and that any expenditure on facilities and services in the communities which would involve public money should be limited to what appears to be the possible future life of existing property in the community

Wheatley Hill was designated a Category A village. This allowed the possibility of some re-development but there was to be no major reinvestment - this being concentrated on the nearby New Town of Peterlee. From the early fifties up until the mid-sixties there was no new housing development at all in fact - though since this point the policy has been slowly relaxed to allow some new building but with the main focus still on Peterlee. Undoubtedly in planning terms the

village has a more secure future ahead of it than might have seemed likely in the period in the fifties when the policy of re-grouping mining settlements was at its most fashionable. However, the community still has some difficult problems to face.

Physically, the condition of the houses in the village is probably better than at any other time in its history. Most of the old colliery houses have been pulled down or vacated, with the population now being concentrated on the mainly pre-war council housing estate (many of these houses having had extensions put on to bathrooms and kitchens). The improved conditions inside many of the houses have to be set against fewer facilities in the village as a whole. Both of the cinemas which the village once had have now closed, as well as two of the larger stores, and some smaller shops.⁹ This has given the centre of Wheatley Hill a rather desolate air and there is a clear need for new building developments in this part of the village. On the other hand, the two workingmen's clubs in the village remain open (and appear to be flourishing) as well as three other pubs - these along with the community centre, and the churches and chapels in the area, supporting a considerable range of activities (many of which will be documented below in the interviews).

Other problems relate to the age structure of the village which, with nearly 17 per cent of its population over pensionable age, and with an increasing number of single person households (just over 40 per cent of those over pensionable age are single, widowed or divorced), is becoming to some extent unbalanced.

This raises the question of how the different age groups are affected by the sort of processes outlined above. In this study it could be argued that concentration is being placed on a group least affected by the changes running through the community. This would appear paradoxical given that attention

is being focused on a group whose working lives effectively finished when the pit closed, and who then looked forward to possibly major upheavals both within their own lives and the community as a whole. However, whilst the group interviewed - men in their late sixties and early seventies - were the most affected in the very immediate sense, they had rather less anxieties either than the younger age groups, or the very elderly. For this group, the pit may have closed but the social relations surrounding pit life were still very strong and providing some support both in relation to the general changes within the community, and to the periods of crisis provoked by illness or widowhood. Most in this group were still maintaining their old pattern of life, and in circumstances which many felt to be more advantageous and favourable than those previously experienced. Increased age will of course bring an inevitable weakening of these relationships as friends die and/or illness takes hold. Further problems may arise from the strain placed on formal and informal support networks by the increased number of single elderly people. For the younger age group a number of problems may appear. With an increased amount of time spent in travelling to work there will be less time to spend on leisure inside the community, with an additional tendency for a greater concentration on home-based activities (see House and Knight, *op. cit.*, for supporting evidence on this point). In addition, with childhood friends moving away to the Midlands or to the New Towns, those remaining will have new friends to find. This, however, is within the context of reduced leisure time and fewer facilities within the community. It should be borne in mind, then, that attention is being focused on a group who may be less affected than others by changes in the community. Of course, many who were interviewed complained of the decline of community life, and the decline - in particular - of neighbourliness.

There were also some who were burdened with a disabling illness - an illness which had started the withdrawal from social life at a comparatively early age. But there were also people grateful for the "early retirement" which the closure of the pit effectively brought about, as well as people who despite many distressing experiences connected with illness and widowhood continued to participate in an extensive network of activities and relationships.

The existence of the latter, and their relationship to the nature of the miners' work, inevitably suggest consideration of what some writers have termed the miners' occupational community. Bulmer (1976), suggesting the utility of the concept in relation to mining, has noted that:

The Gemeinschaftlich ties of kinship, residence and friendship help to bond an ongoing local pattern of social interaction which may in time become relatively autonomous in relation to the dominant local activities (p 84)

This will be amply documented below in relation to the "young"-retired miners in Wheatley Hill. The closure of the colliery did not - for this group - mean the dissolution of the social relationships characteristic of the mining settlement. Indeed, in retirement, these relationships were often to become more - not less - important in their impact on daily life. This raises the issue of the relationship between the occupational community of miners and a period such as retirement. According to the criteria adopted by Salaman (see Bulmer, op. cit.), the three defining characteristics of an occupational community are: first, that members see themselves in terms of their occupational roles; secondly, that they share a reference group composed of members of the occupational community, thirdly, that they associate with and make friends with other members, and so carry work activities and interests into their non-work lives. Bulmer comments here that

The development of an occupational self-image is important because the value systems held by members of an occupation are frequently relevant not only to the worlds of work but to many other aspects of members' lives. For example, it is often suggested that the patterns of mutual aid, characteristic of work underground in mining is reflected (in a close-knit mining community) in the patterns of mutual aid between neighbours at times of domestic crisis. (p. 80)

The question here is how will these relations and patterns of mutual aid affect the experience of retirement? Will they under-pin the period of retirement as they did other periods in the life-cycle? How will they operate in the times of crisis specific to the retirement stage? In sum, how does membership of an occupational community affect retirement? Is it made different to that which would be experienced by an individual who is not a member of such a community?

5.2 THE OCCUPATIONAL CONTEXT

On the 3rd of May 1968 Wheatley Hill colliery closed down.¹⁰ Like so many others in the area it was now deemed to be no longer profitable to run, with the cost of extracting coal increasing and the quality of this coal deteriorating. The majority of the 500 or so miners employed at the colliery were transferred to pits in other areas - Easington and Blackhall collieries in particular. Most of those over 60, however, were made redundant - receiving in exchange nine tenths of their wages for the next three years.

Nearly eight years later, 25 former employees of the colliery were interviewed - many of these having retired when the pit closed (a minority going on to other collieries or to entirely new jobs in factories). The decision to include miners raised a number of important issues in respect of how such a group might see retirement. From a review of the literature on miners and mine work it seemed reasonable to think that retirement might be a very welcome release from an exhausting and dangerous occupation.¹¹ Also, the implications of membership of an occupational community (see above) seemed to

suggest the possibility of supports which might be useful in the retirement period. To set against this there was the likelihood of the retired miner being affected by disabling illness or injury. There was also the possibility - judging from researchers' reports - of conflict and disharmony within the family and domestic sphere. Thus, the work of Dennis et al had suggested that a major "flashpoint" in the miners' retirement might appear within the domestic unit itself - characterised as it was by highly segregated conjugal relations. The authors write:

Just as most women see further than the home and the tasks of its maintenance on only one or two occasions each week, the husband is very often a comparative stranger to his home. One wife of 30 said of her husband, 'The only time I see anything of him is in bed.' her neighbour described her husband as always being 'at work, at the club, or in bed'. Other men spend all their non-working hours in the garden, or a very small number silently pottering about the home. (p. 204)

This study will be discussed in more detail later, but the issues it raises in terms of the type or mode of explanation are of considerable importance. Rightly enough Dennis et al see the relations of production between capital and labour as the determining factor in the pattern of social relationships. These production relations appear - in the case of the miner - to have penetrated further into his personal and communal life than perhaps for any other occupational group. The miner appears to carry aspects of his work situation with him wherever he goes - whether in the bar, in the street or at home. The dangers encountered in mining work, the extreme degree of exploitation, the isolation of mining communities, all these aspects feed into the distinctive image which the miner has - he appears, indeed, the archetypal proletarian.

Whilst taking account of the above points there is also a need to introduce an additional analytic level; a level concerned, as Bulmer (op. cit.)

puts it, with the social meanings which actors attach to their actions, their definition of their situation at particular points, and the ends which they are pursuing. Bulmer notes here that.

Such an emphasis upon subjective orientations is not an alternative to, but complements, an approach in terms of the structural determinants of action at the collective and individual level.

The introduction of this level is important because at the same time as acknowledging the powerful economic and political forces shaping the miner's life, there is also a need to indicate his self-awareness of aspects of these forces, and to indicate also the extent to which he manoeuvres and fights within the environment in which he finds himself, and, further, to the extent that he does this, he stamps his own presence on that environment, thereby influencing its effect both on his own life and on others.

An attempt will be made to keep both these sides in focus in what follows. First, however, more must be said about the miners who were interviewed, discussing, in particular, their social and occupational backgrounds.

5.3 A SYSTEM OF CONSTRAINTS

The majority of the twenty-five miners interviewed had been born in the North-East, many coming from Wheatley Hill or mining villages close by. The majority had had fathers and brothers who were also miners, with just a small number coming from that other great extractive industry - agriculture. Eighteen out of the twenty-five had started in the pits at the age of 14, in most cases working straight through until the closure of the pit in 1968

In considering the nature of the miners' work it will be useful to bear in mind the distinction made by Marx between the modern proletariat as a class of "free labourers" and the position of a class of slaves or serfs.

Marx writes.¹²

The slave, together with his labour power, is sold once and for all to his owner. He is a commodity that can pass from the land of one owner to that of another . . . The serf belongs to the land and turns over to the owner of the land the fruits thereof. The free labourer, on the other hand, sells himself and, indeed, sells himself piecemeal . . . The worker belongs neither to an owner nor to the land, but eight, ten, twelve, fifteen hours of his daily life belongs to him who buys them. The worker leaves the capitalist to whom he hires himself whenever he likes, and the capitalist discharges him whenever he thinks fit, as soon as he no longer gets any profit out of him, or not the anticipated profit. But the worker, whose sole source of livelihood is the sale of his labour power, cannot leave the whole class of purchasers, that is the capitalist class, without renouncing his existence.

With the emergence of the "free labourer" a series of distinctions starts to emerge between "work" and "life", between authority relations inside, and those outside the factory, and - at a very general level - a distinction between economic relationships and political relationships (R. Blackburn, 1976). It is this first distinction which most concerns us here, and the question of the degree of penetration of capitalist relations into the structure of daily life. In the case of the miner these relationships - expressed spatially, socially and economically - seem to have penetrated to their fullest extent. The *raison d'être* of the community has always been the mine, and the political and social relations flowing from it - relations which spread their influence through both domestic and social organisation inside the community. The pit has a presence, in other words, in people's daily lives, their non-work, as well as their working hours, an active presence - one which shapes individual futures and defines possibilities, causing "work" and "life" to appear virtually inseparable. This point was illustrated in a number of ways at Wheatley Hill. The opening of the cinema would be timed to coincide with the end of a particular shift, workers might be roused from their sleep at home to help with a problem down the pit or, if a shift was short of men, to make up the numbers, to receive sick pay from the company, workers were confined to their homes at particular hours

of the day, and had to have special permission to travel more than three miles at any time,¹³ sons of miners in colliery houses were "expected" to follow their fathers, and if they did not, the family's removal from the house might be threatened. In fact, in an area such as Durham where alternative employment was so scarce in the twenties and thirties, many sons would indeed follow their fathers. Economic and social pressures combined - choice, in other words, never really entered into the scheme of things.

"No ... that was about the only employment you could get around about ... there was none of this factory business or anything like that ... and then you see you had your school pals and one thing and another. They were going into the pit ... why you used to think well, if they can go I may as well go as well to get a job."

(Mr. Holmes)

Did you ever think of leaving the pit?

"I had no chance to leave coz there wasn't any other job to get. When you went down the pit ... when your fathers and your brothers worked down the pit you automatically went down the pit. If your father was a blacksmith or electrician or joiner automatically you went to be a joiner . . . a blacksmith or an electrician . . . it was heredity at the pits then."

(Mr. Taylor)

Of course, at the age of 13 or 14 improved status within the family and the excitement of starting a job tended to take the edge off any initial doubts and thoughts about other types of work. On the other hand, the first experience of working in a pit must have been quite a frightening one, with perhaps the first job that of trapper boy - crouching in the dark, opening and shutting the air doors for the putters going in and out with their tubs.¹⁴

From the work histories of the twenty-five miners interviewed some general patterns and experiences do emerge. For those destined to work underground (a small number would remain "at bank", on the surface, all their lives) a typical work history might be first starting off as a lamp-boy or trapper-boy, graduating then to some form of haulage work, then on to pony putting, then

to hand-putting, then to coal hewing, and, finally, filling, increased mechanisation would of course bring work with coal cutters. In addition, or as an alternative to the above, the individual might do various other work around the face such as "drawing" (removing the timber and steel supports from "the waste" - the area left empty by the previous working of the coal face); "development work" (opening up new areas) There were, as well, a number of jobs away from the area of the coal face itself, e g onsetter, wagonwayman; some of which might be filled by face workers who had received an injury of some kind. A number of men would, of course, set exams. for their deputy's tickets and a smaller number would become overmen. ¹⁵ Here are some descriptions of this process:

"When we first started work we did what you call lamp carrying. From there we used to get jobs like driving ... that's using a pony to pull the tubs away from the face to a haulage system; and from there you went probably to watch a landing place where the haulage system ran to putting the tubs on ... taking filled ones out and empty ones back Then there was the putter . that was the fella who took the tubs from the driver . to the face .. to the man had it filled he'd have a tub in, he'd fill that one, you'd go in with the empty one stick it in a little siding, bring the full out out, give him the empty one to take on . that was called putting . . there was hand putting and pony putting From there you started coal hewing on the face see, and afterwards, when they got mechanised .. the faces and that skip faces and such as that we went on them "

(Mr. Richards)

"You started lamp-carrying at first then driving . when you have a pony after that hand putting taking the empty one in and the full one out from the coal hewers I did about seven years putting .. and the big day comes when you start hewing . then you're doing about 3 or 4 years of that . then you start tub filling .. coal hewing is when you do it with your hand . tub filling is a bit better than coal hewing depending on the circumstances of the coal. Then after a few years down on that they got what you call the skips in (a mechanical conveyor running across the face of the pit, C.P.). I was on that until I got a fresh job starting stonework

then I got a knock on my hip (off work for 28 weeks, C.P.) ... after that I had to go on what they call 'light work'." (Mr. Keithley)

"I started on stonework ... manager had said 'if you are half as good as your brother at stonework you will do for me.' I went on to filling .. then on to drilling ... then on cutting ... then on power-loading at the finish. Then I got me back fractured. After that I had to come to Bank ... that's the only job in industry where the longer you're on you're deteriorating . you start on datal work and you practically finish on datal work when you get to a certain age or you get injured ... you have to go back onto stonework or light work." (Mr. Bell)

Mr. Bell's comment here alerts us to a major factor likely to interrupt the smooth progression through the various jobs around the coal face, namely, the likelihood of a disabling work-related illness or injury. No less than 10 out of the 25 interviewed (that is, 10 out of the 19 working underground) had transferred to 'light work' or datal work (work on a day wage as opposed to a piece rate). Five of these had contracted pneumoconiosis and were thus moved away from the face, the rest had suffered a major injury - usually to the head or back - which necessitated a shift to lighter work.

"We had to come off ... we couldn't manage the other (face-work) ... we were getting that much dust You see with losing all the wind you hadn't the strength to carry on .. you had to pack it up." (Mr. Holmes)

Mr. Taylor had been diagnosed as having pneumoconiosis when he was 44 and had been "turned-off" from the pit for 7 years before being recalled to work in the stables - he eventually became head horsekeeper. Mr Wilson was working on the coal face up to 1944 when he fractured his skull in an accident at work, when he tried to return to do face-work he had feelings of claustrophobia and dizziness and he decided to start work on the surface. Harry Bell moved on to light work after fracturing his back in a roof fall:

"... a piece of the roof about half the size of this ceiling just lowered onto me back and doubled us down ... I couldn't speak .. it was resting on me side ... if it had had any height to fall I wouldn't be here."

Apart from these major illnesses or accidents most of those interviewed had had some minor accidents or injuries - though in some cases these had still had some long term effects Mr. King, for example, who had injured his back whilst hand-putting and who had subsequently gone on to the wagonway, describes his main injuries as follows.

"I've more scars on me . more scars . I had a back injury ... I had that done . I was split from there to there (split one of his fingers from a fall of stone, C.P) . I split a bone on my knee (has occasional pain when climbing upstairs as a result, C P) I was off 6 months with dermatitis ... all my hands . . and all my feet ... everything in bandages (caused through coal and stone dust, C.P.). I also have pneumoconiosis (10 per cent, C.P.)"

Undoubtedly some were luckier or perhaps more "canny" than others in managing to avoid major accidents. Mr. Bell, who as well as fracturing his back, broke one of his legs, lost a finger (developing gangrene as a result), and broke two of his toes, appears to have been particularly unlucky. Mr. Richards on the other hand, who in his 46 years underground did practically everything around the face, escaped with no injuries at all.

Grainger and Hurst (1969), in a study on the general extent of disability amongst Durham miners, found that in the age group 55 - 59 one in five was disabled, and that for those aged 50 - 56 it was almost one in six. They found 40 per cent of disability was caused by accident, 31 per cent by industrial disease, 23 per cent by illness and 6 per cent by other factors, suggesting at least 70 per cent of disability was associated with the pit. They went on to give the following profile of a typically disabled Durham miner:

He is 50 years old and has worked in the colliery all his life.
He has a 65 per cent likelihood of having either pneumoconiosis or some pit injury and there will be only a 30 per cent chance

that he will have registered as a disabled person. He has an 83 per cent likelihood of being unskilled. He is almost certainly manual and lives within five miles of his pit in a council or colliery house. His prospects for re-employment should he be made redundant in coal mining are obviously grim. (p.25)

The extent of disability amongst miners is a crucial point when considering both their perceptions about, and their experience of, retirement. Thus, ill-health and disability may play an important rôle in the final years at work - with positive attitudes towards retirement being one possible outcome. In the Wheatley Hill group 11 out of the 25 reported increased tiredness in their last years at work, or specific problems associated with work related illnesses or injuries.

"The health was getting worse all the time ... it was bound to make it more difficult. Besides that there was times down the pit when ... the overmen ... the odd ones they didn't seem to care whether you were disabled or not." (Mr. Holmes)

"You felt more tired ... you get looking forward to getting retired." (Mr. Maughan)

"It used to be hard just getting up to me job and back then ... because I had short wind like." (Mr. Irwin)

"Well you find that you're not as good see when you're approaching 60 ... you try to keep up with the young ones and you find it takes it out of you." (Mr. Cooper)

Given that the average age of the group was just over 60 when the pit closed it is difficult to speculate on what their medical condition would have been if they had continued working until 65, i. e. if the pit had remained open. The likelihood for many would have been an early retirement anyway, or increasingly longer periods of absence from work. The extent of the latter amongst older miners has been demonstrated by Lunn and Waters (1969) in a study of surgery consultations by miners before and after retirement at 65. They found that the surgery consultations sought by the 79 miners in their study fell from 836 in the year before retirement to 206 in the year following; the

proportion consulting, the number of episodes, and the number of consultations per episode, all being greater in the pre-retirement year (a control group of non-miners had only 1.7 times as many consultations in the pre-retirement year as the year after retirement). The authors comment that

The most likely reason for the consultation pattern among miners seems to be their need for medical certificates to justify unfitness for work. (p. 257)

Virtually all of the group of eleven discussed above were either still on the coal face, or had come away from the face onto "light-work" after some illness or injury, so the problems under discussion are heavily concentrated amongst those working on production, or those who have formerly done so. Six out of the twenty-five (including two men in charge of the winding engine) had stayed on the surface all their working lives, and only two of these reported problems in their final years - one through hypertension, the other due to the heavy work he was involved with maintaining the cages which sent men and materials down the pit shaft.

So far concentration has been placed on the debit side of the miner's life. This account of the miner's working environment cannot, however, be left without some consideration of his own views about his work: how did those who were interviewed regard the sort of work they had to do, and the conditions under which they laboured?

In their study "Coal Is Our Life", Dennis et al portray the miner as someone who, despite the often brutal conditions of his labour, still forges a strong sense of pride in the work that he has to do. They write

Pride in work is a very important part of the miner's life. Old men delight in stories of their strength and skill in youth. A publican or a bookmaker will often joke about the number of tubs "filled off" each day in his establishment by the old men. Older men in the pit who go on to light work will confide that they can still 'go as well as the young uns' but they think they deserve

a rest Men over 60 still working heavy contracts are visibly proud of themselves and resent any preferential treatment. Another influence may be discerned in this pride of miners in their work For long, and they know this, mineworking has been looked down on; this is felt strongly, and a man's assertion of pride in being a miner is often partly an attempted self-assurance that he does not care what non-miners think of him. (p. 73)

Douglass (1977), whilst adopting a more critical approach to the question of the miner's identification with his work, suggests that the control which the miner has achieved underground makes his position better than that of any factory worker:

The Coal Board would like to introduce more and more supervision into the miner's work, and to reduce all miners, and all classes of their work, to a single status. They would like the mines to work as factories. The attempt is foolish and bound to fail. A coal mine has little in common with a factory. The entire "plant" has to be moved forward three or four times a day; the working material is often wet, filthy, and crawling with beetles; the roof and walls are liable to cave in. All the time he is working the miner has his ears strained for ominous rumblings and his eyes on the alert for signs of collapse. He must be prepared to drop everything and secure his workplace before carrying on with the job. All equipment necessary for advancing the face, all roadways, all materials and all the men pass through two or three low and narrow tunnels. Most factory workers would regard the mine purely and simply as a black and filthy hole, funnily enough, the miner in turn regards the factory as a prison and its operatives as captives. (p. 215)

There are some important points at issue here and there is space to touch on only a few of these. First let us consider the opening point made by Dennis et al, this question of the degree of pride the miner has in his work as reflected in his boasting about past feats of strength and skill. Given the nature of this study it would have been a useful corroboration of this point if the interviews carried out had been filled with boasts of this kind, unfortunately, very few of these stories were encountered. Certainly, there were many protestations by old miners about how hard they had worked as opposed to how hard people work now. But this is a quite different phenomenon, one which is bound up with the tendency for every older generation to believe it has worked harder than the one behind it -

it certainly does not tell us very much about orientations to work. The latter were in fact both more complex and ambiguous than simple statements of pride. Of course, many of these old men were also sick men (weren't they in Ashton too?) and they were sick men precisely because of a certain pride in their work, a pride which reflected itself in a tendency to work on and show others that they could stick all the considerable hardship that was being thrown at them (though this suggests it was a question of their pride as workers, rather than anything connected with the work itself). In any event the interviews rarely indicated a simple, unequivocal pride in being a miner - often, indeed, mining was discussed with a sense of anger

"There are many things in a pit you don't like. Really it's hard to explain some of the conditions you come under sort of thing. There was times we'd be more or less working in about a yard and 6 inches and then we had a spell on just 20 inches. Well you can understand what that was like. It was more or less punishment you know. There was some difficult times in them low seams, you couldn't get off your knees it was so low. Oh it was a lot of punishment in that height. And then at the finish we got onto knee pads and such as that. Mind they were a big help because instead of being crouched up when you were shovelling and that sort of thing you could get onto your knees and ease your back and that sort of thing a bit."

(Mr Harvey)

Were there some things you liked about mining?

"Well there was different things like but you know taken all through it was a bad job so much dust and one thing and another, especially where we were working on the face and then when we came onto shaft work with the health being gone that flattened your spirits altogether. It seemed as if you know it was going practically against the grain to keep going whereas if you'd been a young chap you would have just gone at it. You wouldn't have taken much notice of it."

(Mr. Holmes)

For some, identification with work was exactly what they attempted to avoid.

"They (hewing and putting) were just hard labour ... but we hadn't to think about that ... all we had to think about was going to the pit getting a shift in. Making as much as we could and coming home."

(Mr Taylor)

Others, looking back on the work, and on the environment as a whole, felt less a sense of pride, more a feeling of being too tolerant and

accepting.

"But you know the community . . . when you reckon it up . . . didn't want all the money in the world we was easily pleased . . . That's the way I've always looked at it . . . many a time . . . go in the club there . . . you go out on a Saturday night . . . had a couple of pints and away to the pictures . . . some thing like that . . . you were over the moon . . . you more or less accepted it I think. I think this is it . . . I think once you start accepting things it's not too good neither like is it really . . . not in an environment like this. But anyway that's the way it was. We didn't ask for very much . . . we were easily pleased I think meself."

(Mr. Keithley)

To suggest that many of these miners felt more a sense of anger and regret at the consequences of their labour is not to ignore the expressions of pride in the way the miner's lot had improved and the extent to which his needs and his status had achieved greater recognition. People do in an important sense work less hard today and if older people are constantly heard to bemoan this fact, they may still at the same time feel that this is both right and proper (in this context their position as ex-trade unionists often conflicts with their vulnerability as old-age pensioners):

" . . . of course the younger generation wouldn't do what we had to do . . . they wouldn't start . . . there would be very few miners today if conditions hadn't altered . . . quite different . . . more respect shown to the workers. The best thing that ever came to the miner was nationalisation . . . that stopped all this other thing . . . people being made to do what they were told . . . and that sort of thing . . . because one time you had no voice . . . today things are different . . . Nationalisation is the best thing that ever came to the working classes."

(Mr. Byrne)

If there was a pride in relation to mining it had less to do with individual feats or solitary acts of distinction, more a feeling of having "done right" in relation to others, a feeling of having maintained given collective norms and standards. This is brought out below in the following exchange with Mr. King (the passages towards the end of this extract are referring to the activity of "drawing-off", i. e. removing the supports from the waste area left empty by

the previous working of the coal face.)

"Now my idea of pit work was get in . . . get through it . . . and get out . . . forget about it shift by shift . . . you see what I mean? Whereas having the experience of me father his work was never finished . . . there was always somebody knocking at the door . . . I didn't fancy that."

You say though you liked a lot of your work . . . ?

"I loved my work!"

What were the main things . . . ?

"Why . . . difficult to explain you see, you get a man, he wants a job . . . he wants work . . . but he doesn't want to use the energy so as to speak to make money . . . you see . . . and he's the type who's just satisfied to tap-lucky on . . . Now when I went to work I went to work to do a job. Now the better I did that job the more I liked it . . . If I wasn't satisfied with the job I wouldn't leave it . . . I had to be satisfied before I left it . . . you see what I mean? You came out of a place . . . if I came out of a place . . . and I say well that's not safe . . . I don't fancy it . . . I wouldn't be able to sleep . . . I had to make that place safe before I would come out of the pit . . ."

Douglass' view that regardless of the conditions underground the miner still classes himself as better off than any factory worker, is difficult to evaluate. Many of the miners interviewed here, in response to a question as to whether, if they were starting again, they would prefer to work in a factory, made the point that since they'd never been inside a factory it was difficult for them to answer this. And for those that had been inside a factory their views did not confirm that of Douglass. Mr. Keithley, for example, who spent "three good years" in a steel factory in Hartlepool, after the pit closed down, notes in response to a question about whether he had ever considered leaving the pit earlier:

"No, we couldn't leave the pits . . . there was nothing else for us really . . . I went in as a kid . . . that's the reason we stopped. We got the impression there was nothing else, which was wrong which I proved when I went to Hartlepool . . . I think you just get yourself set . . . then you get married . . . and you feel you more or less have got to keep going there see. I think it's . . . you get

fixed in your ways you get fixed in your work . and about leaving your village all that sort of thing to prove you can go somewhere else to do as well as you did in the pit perhaps better. "

Mr. Keithley undoubtedly makes a strong point here people do get fixed in their ways, into a certain way of doing things, into a certain routine. Ultimately, however, and for these men it came with the closure of the pit, part of the routine is broken - lives have to be re-cast and futures re-defined. In this group some men went off to other collieries, others to factories, most took an early retirement. But for all these men, and particularly for those who retired straight away retirement was entered in a rather different way than is usually the case - incorporated as it was into a collective experience of economic and social change (rather than an individual burden which the individual had to carry all for himself). On the other hand, there were also considerable strains and pressures on the individual which cannot be minimised. Of the 25 interviewed all had married but 6 had been widowed either not long before, or during retirement. Here, undoubtedly, there was a major change to adjust to - a change which would mean increased social isolation in many communities. Health was an important factor as well. For those with pneumoconiosis, advancing years usually brought a worsening of the disease, and an increasing restriction in physical mobility, for those affected by injuries, old wounds may have aggravated arthritis or some such complaint. What must be explored now is how, overall, all these changes were responded to? How was retirement experienced? How did it affect domestic and social relationships?

5 4 INTO RETIREMENT

The closure of the pit brought immediate retirement for 19 out of the 25 interviewed, the rest going on to other collieries, or to industrial work. The average age of the former at this point was 61.5 years, that of the latter 57 years.

The general policy of the N C B was to find jobs only for those below 60, so most of the 19 who retired had very little choice but to accept early retirement - though for many, as noted earlier, increasingly poor health often made it a welcome release

Over half of the 25 (14) felt little surprise when the closure of the pit was announced and rumours appear to have been going around for some time suggesting that closure was on the cards. However, the swiftness with which the decision was implemented still surprised many

"Well we did hear for months and months that it was going to close but we didn't think it was going to be as sharp as when it did come "
(Mr Calder)

"I was down the pit at the time doing me rounds and a chap in the power station at the bank told me as I was going around that the pit was finishing. I says 'When?' 'May 3rd', he says so I just went back and told the men they wouldn't believe me. Me marra came in about 10 00 on his shift and he told them but the date hadn't actually been fixed it was fixed during the week "
(Mr Foreman)

Most of the men, however, had realised that closure was likely given the increasingly difficult conditions being encountered underground¹⁶

"I could see it coming everyday we had a lot of faults seam faults and where we were working it was about two miles in-bye "
(Mr Ridley)

"We knew sooner or later it was coming our way because these old collieries here some of them were working very low seams the new modern machinery that was coming into effect couldn't be adapted so we knew sooner or later it was coming "
(Mr Byrne)

The announcement of the decision and eventual closure was carried out in the space of a few months, thus, whether expected or not, the swift chain of events leading - for the majority - up to retirement, might have been expected to produce some problems (especially as few had made any plans or thought very much about retirement, and most had been expecting to go on until

they were 65) For the majority, however, adjustment problems were not of great significance with 14 out of the 19 who retired straight away encountering either no difficulties, or only minor ones in the early stages of retirement. Taking together those who retired straight away and those who retired later, there were 17 (68 per cent) reporting no difficulties or very minor ones, with 8 (32 per cent) reporting initial difficulties in adjusting to retirement - virtually all of these eventually resolving the problem they had encountered. There were no examples of the retirement pattern found amongst some of the retirees in the Benwell sample, where an initially favourable experience of retirement was changed because of feelings of boredom and/or financial difficulties (though health problems did of course bring increasing difficulties for some). The average age when the pit closed for those with adjustment difficulties was 59.2 years, and 60.3 for those without. This may be significant in the context of the redundancy payments scheme, where the younger group will have experienced quite a long period on unemployment benefit or social security payments in between the ending of the redundancy payments and the beginning of the pension.

One important reason for the generally easier entry into retirement was what might be termed the "collective experience" of retirement for the miners, with the continued presence of friends and former workmates within the immediate vicinity of the village. Retirement was not, for this group, an isolating event, cutting individuals off geographically and socially from valued relationships, rather, it allowed a continuation of these relationships right into the post-work period. The majority of the group were in regular contact with former work-mates (many of whom were personal friends as well), and the problems connected with friendship formation in retirement were not as apparent for this group as they had been for many in Benwell. The only rider

necessary here is that for those who were severely affected by pneumoconiosis the consequences of the disease did - at the upper levels - impose an increasing social isolation with restricted physical mobility and the side effects of drugs exerting a considerable impact

Eighteen (72 per cent) had been, or were members of one or both of the local workingmen's clubs, and these remained important not simply as drinking clubs, but also as meeting places for discussions, playing billiards, dominoes, reading newspapers, etc., five in the sample mentioned that they had had to stop going because of ill-health. A total of six said that they had reduced social activities since they retired. These included the above five and one man whose wife was disabled and in need of constant care.

As regards the main hobbies of the group gardening was a dominant activity, and one which became relied upon a great deal in retirement (greenhouses being especially popular, providing as they did an activity for the long winter months). Even some of those heavily burdened with pneumoconiosis retained an active interest in their gardens adjusting the type and amount of work they did, in line with their increasing incapacity. Twelve out of the 25 mentioned two or more hobbies and spare-time interests, and the apparently innocuous item of walking has been included here - an activity which many of the miners mentioned with an enthusiasm which suggested it was rather more than just an activity undertaken when there was nothing else to do.

Family relationships will be discussed in more detail below but a few points are relevant here concerning the migration of children. The 25 in the sample had all been married, and all had had children, producing a total of 64 (nearly 2.5 per family). Of these, 15 still had a child (usually just one) still living in Wheatley Hill, with four having one child each living in one of the nearby

villages. Nine children had made relatively short distance moves to the New Towns of Peterlee and Newton Aycliffe. A further 16 had moved to various places within the North East (Teesside in particular). Eleven had moved to other regions in the country and three had gone abroad. So the general pattern was for most families to have at least one child within very close range (occasionally living in the same street). Nonetheless, the importance of the general trend for children to settle away from the village (as 73 per cent of the 64 had done) should not be underestimated. Given the relatively poor health of many in this group, and the likelihood of early widowhood for many wives, considerable strain may come to be placed on the remaining child - and this at a time when he or she will be married and, possibly, in the early stages of parenthood. Given the aims of this study the composition of the sample concentrates upon the "young retired", thus the effect of the migration cannot be gauged to its fullest extent. However, one consequence that will be noted is that with just one child remaining in the village, and with poor health affecting either himself or his contemporaries - the conjugal relationship often became of increased importance to the miner, and was often explored with heightened intensity.

One major factor which must be singled out as assisting the entry into retirement was the financial circumstances of the group. The redundancy payments of nine tenths of previous earnings for three years was undoubtedly crucial in "softening" the impact of early retirement, preventing a sudden drop in living standards. The incomes of people in this group varied quite widely, however, mainly because of the diverse sources from which income might be drawn, e.g. the state pension, pit pension, superannuation, compensation for pneumoconiosis, unemployment benefit. The range of incomes varied from a widowed pensioner living on his own, with just the pit pension, with an income of £17.80 (1976 figures)

per week, to a married man receiving compensation for pneumoconiosis (70 per cent) with an income of £45 00 per week, the average income received (pre-tax) for the group was just over £29 00 per week. Few of the 25 felt that their living standards had dropped in their retirement, and most felt that they had a reasonably secure future ahead - financially at least (though of course particularly for those with pneumoconiosis income security had been bought at an often ruinous cost to health, and some at least would regard their victory over material want as a somewhat pyrrhic one). Seven out of the 25 had pneumoconiosis, including two at 70 per cent and one at 100 per cent, six others had major health problems with arthritis and bronchitis being chief amongst these. The considerable health difficulties encountered by just over half the group had undoubtedly placed some severe restrictions on their retirement, though at the same time many (including some who were not so incapacitated) commented that early retirement had undoubtedly helped them from a health point of view. Two comments can be quoted to illustrate this point.

"I've never regretted retiring at 60 because I wouldn't be in the state of health today as I am. I'm enjoying good health and if I'd kept on till I was 65 I wouldn't have had that see."

(Mr Cooper)

"The lads said well three years this side of 65 is better than 3 years the other side. It will help you that three years and it has helped us. I mean if I had had to go on until I was 65 I wouldn't be here now."

(Mr Bell)

It is interesting to note - in contrast to the Benwell group - that 19 (76 per cent) mentioned more free-time/leisure time as the principal advantage of retirement, and an equal number could think of no disadvantages at all to retirement - this after an average of 6.7 years in retirement (the average age of the group when interviewed was 68.1 years). As the above suggests time, and the problems of assisting its passing, whilst a constant concern for many in

Benwell, did not appear such a problem in this particular community, on the contrary, the familiar refrain was that the days were not long enough and the question people would more often pose was surprise that they had ever had time to go to work

One final comment Given the usual association which is made between the closure of the pit, and the deterioration of community and social life, it is interesting to note that only five out of the 25 expressed any firm view that the village had changed for the worse since the pit had closed, eight felt the village to be unchanged, three felt that whilst there had been changes, these had not really affected them personally, four felt the village had changed for the better - particularly in respect of material and social conditions, finally, five had no opinion on the question This finding undoubtedly reflects the view put forward earlier that this group of "young"-retired miners is the least affected by changes within the village Friends, children and relatives were still around in enough numbers and providing enough contacts to give a firm foundation to the retirement period Few of the miners interviewed had had to undertake any painful search for new friends and relationships the old ones had stayed - if not the same - still there to be relied upon, and providing, very often, much pleasure and enjoyment

5.5 'COMING UP FOR AIR'

It would seem a reasonable proposition that miners should enjoy their retirement, especially given what is known about their working conditions and their relationships outside of work, and, from the evidence of this study, this would appear to be the case (at least in the early and middle stages of retirement) But there are some interesting questions to ask here are there aspects to the miners' retirement experience which might help others who find retirement both

isolating and disorientating? How are problems of poor health and widowhood faced up to? How does the occupational community respond to these changes? Does it fare better than others in providing solidarity when work is no longer a central, unifying focus? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, if these people are enjoying retirement, what does it feel like? How different is it? Why do people like it so much?

First, let us take the general comments some of the miners had to make about retirement, looking at some of the things they had appreciated about being retired as opposed to working

"Well as regards retirement when a person has been underground for so many years it's a new lease of life a new life . I've found a complete change in everything You're not run by the clock - doing this or doing the other you really feel as if you've been born again "

(Mr Byrne)

"Well I couldn't explain it it's just a grand feeling that's all as far as I'm concerned you know no worries about anything "

(Mr Whittle)

"Well I don't know you haven't to worry about going to work As I say I've been fortunate in my income I had no worries there when you've worked all your life it's a satisfactory feeling to think you don't have to worry about getting up at half-past one in the morning to start work at three that sort of thing "

(Mr Harvey)

"Well there's no worries about going to work having to get up and go now I can go where I want to you can make an appointment where to go now whereas before you couldn't promise well in fact you were too tired at times "

(Mr Thompson)

"The thing I like about retirement the way we are now if we want to go away we just put our coats on and go and we have a day out wherever we want to go It's a big change from (working) 7 days a week "

(Mr Cummings)

"Getting over the fields tha' knows and sitting down tha' knows away from the roads and knowing I haven't got to go down there again "

(Mr Ridley)

"I'm happier definitely definitely happier and I think the wife is more content I was bad tempered when I was at pit "

(Mr Bell)

So there were no "worries" about work about the conditions, about the dangers, about the pressure to keep up the pace set by the younger men. But there were very few worries about retirement either, few worries about being alone, or having too much time on one's hands - worries which had so concerned many of those in Benwell. For the miners where these concerns did show themselves, there were important relationships to fall back on - relationships which would place the individual's own private worries and doubts into a collective context, things could be argued over and discussed in the club, walking over the fields, or around the roads or in the privacy of one's own home.

"I was a member of the workingmen's club. I had a friend there, well he had a big greenhouse going over Thornley Bridge me and him we used to go down there and have a look at the greenhouse and then we used to walk up the club put a couple of hours in the lounge you know well there was quite a few in a lot of redundant men talking and all that."

(Mr Irwin)

"I think at the finish I was looking forward to it coz I knew I would be alright here working on the garden having me mates when I wanted to see them."

(Mr Keithley)

"I clean up of a morning I go out shopping well it's nearly the morning gone. Of an afternoon if I feel like it I go to the club at 1.30 and have a couple of drinks have a bit of argue and that bit of discussion."

(Mr Spencer)

"In the afternoon I usually pop along to my pal over there sometimes we have a couple of hours chat over there discussing how queer the world is at present."

(Mr Richards)

"there used to be 5 or 6 of us used to meet at the corner well say we had a walk and went around the fields well that was . . . [in the summer] you can have a walk around the road I've seen me walking miles meself just by meself just jogging around but still you generally meet somebody like .. what you know . . ."

(Mr Thompson)

Few of these miners had had to face retirement alone, retirement, in fact, was incorporated (as with other age related changes) into an existing network

of relationships and - at least in the early stages - adapted itself to that network (rather than vice versa as in the case at Benwell). In this context the occupational community was a powerful mediating force - controlling and sustaining interests and relationships, and providing a high degree of continuity from the work to the post-work period. It is this which perhaps accounts for the confidence expressed concerning the utilisation of time in retirement - a confidence crucially lacking amongst many of those in Benwell. Whereas the latter were highly conscious of the passing of time and of the effort required to "waste" and "fill in" given amounts of time, the miners rarely made self-conscious references to such problems. Indeed, where these were made they were much more likely to refer to a shortage rather than an excess of time available.

"I just find now that I've got that many commitments I just haven't got time for holidays. I'm not afraid of time as you might say. I know I've got plenty to do and there's many a time time gets the better of us. I don't seem to have plenty time to do what I want." (Mr Cooper)

"I'm more than surprised. I thought I'd have all this spare time. Now I never have a minute." (Mr Keenan)

"Well to tell the truth the first few months the days didn't seem long enough for us. Busying about in the garden and this that and the other." (Mr Harvey)

Behind these statements a particular mental attitude to retirement can be discerned - one which was highly assertive in responding to the break-up of the old routine of work. People had definite ideas and opinions about how to re-cast their lives. Definite ideas about the right and wrong way of doing things.

"It's a day to day thing with me. Can you understand that? To me coz sometimes if it's a nasty morning you know it depends. You've got to find something to do, it's no good just sitting about looking at the rain. You've got to be doing something. You've got to be looking for something and trying to enjoy what you're doing. Without doing something that you didn't want to do forced to do like sometimes was the case in the pit." (Mr Keithley)

"Well, I'd never really thought about it I'd been working all me life, I didn't know really what retirement was going to be like but I knew I wasn't going to sit about coz I've known fellas who have worked till they were 65 and then they were put on the scrap-heap Well, those fellas didn't last two years they had no hobbies they didn't know how to put their time in the pit was their sole interest So when we finished I just went straight out there . used to go for walks every afternoon . or go out, do a bit of gardening or take the car and go out down to the sea, all depends on what sort of weather it is really oh know we don't lie about I find it better that way "

(Mr Foreman)

"I just let it come automatic when it come it come Then I would have to sort meself out I converted the garage into a greenhouse That (the greenhouse) gives you something to think about all the time It's just like . when we're on there it's just like a job to do If you can get that frame of mind you're right, you're happy a frame of mind that you've got this thing to do all the time it's like going to work There's one thing about it if you don't feel like it you can lie back in bed that's the beauty of it "

This element of confidence and assertiveness comes through in the following exchange with Mr King, someone who in fact had taken a couple of years to get completely settled into retirement

"The only thing I miss is a little bit of hard work now and again that's filling my time in at present (re-laying the garden), but when that's finished I want to know where I'm going to put my time in you see?"

So there's still that uncertainty for you?

"No there isn't I'm going to build myself a greenhouse . I'm going to put my time in there There's a lot of things you can do "

Given these orientations by the group, what consequences did they have for everyday living in retirement what did people do on a typical day? Here, first of all, is Mr King again

"There isn't such a thing as a typical day for me because I might be up at 7 00 in the morning out in that garden just pottering around down that bottom end now I've been er for tnight ago I did it and I was in that garden right up until 7 00 at night But more recently I usually get up about 5 30 you see

cup of tea slice of brown bread, out into the garden and I'll be there until dinner-time After dinner I will go out there again but when it's seven o'clock I go out that way (front door) I might have an hour at the housey (bingo) and an hour at the club and I'll be in here at 11 "

"I'm off walking in the morning this weather . when it's like this I get up at 7 30 out with the dog down to Cassop Road End just meandering just walking around with the dog no hurry . just taking me time I sit down on a seat and then come back and get back maybes about 12 00 of a dinner-time Then have me dinner and get started on a few jobs Then have me tea and go for another walk I can fill me time in I never have I could never sit and worry about it or owt like that tha' knows . I never felt 'what am I going to do when I finish?'"

(Mr Ridley)

"I get up about 8 30 see I have no complaints as to the way I'm looked after mind (reference to his wife) that's one thing I couldn't do better Well I get up and get me breakfast, I have to look at the paper see a matter of 10 minutes, quarter of an hour, then I'm into the garden and I can potter about in the garden until dinner-time and then I'm called in for me dinner Then I get me dinner I get washed, changed and I go to the bowls why you see you spend the afternoon on the bowling well you meet 20 or 30 men in the afternoon why, you're there till four then back home for your tea On a Monday I'm down to the bowls I'm on the selection committee - we pick the teams for the week and then we have a game of bowls back home and then I go to the whist drive at night see and you meet fresh people at that maybe another 30 - 40 people there "

(Mr Cooper)

The position of the widower in the mining community will be examined in more detail below, but it would be useful here to include two descriptions by widowers of how they spend a typical day The first, Mr Watson, lives with his brother-in-law, who is himself a miner, and hence a lot of his time is now spent in organising meals for the household, the second, Mr Downie, has close ties with his next-door neighbour and this is reflected in the extract quoted

"Well I got up this morning about 7 30 got me breakfast . washed the carry-ons swept this out (the kitchen) . got me overcoat on and went down the street to get some meat .. see I hadn't that to do at one time I went down got some meat then I came back I went into the garden and I've been setting flower plants around here When I got them set I thought

he's not due yet that was you so I thought I'll just go down and do some more jobs in the garden and I was just going up to put the meat on for half-past four when you knocked at the door so I timed it exactly see Now I've got the dinner ready coz he'll be in about half-past four, I don't have a dinner until he comes in After that I watch that (T V) unless somebody comes sometimes me sister might come from Sunderland, if she has a day off she'll probably come through so when she comes I get ready and we go to Sunderland or we might take a ride up to Newcastle come back and we might have a couple of pints and that's a typical day "

"Why I sort of keep to me routine If that's what you mean I get up and first job I do is clean and light the fire and then I make me breakfast This time of year I pop across the garden and see if everything is alright as I say I have a bit of routine, downstairs one day, upstairs the other day sometimes I have a walk along the top road I don't really settle myself to a lot depends on the weather If it's a nice fine day and I see a bit of job wants doing outside I'll say right I'll have that done If it's raining I find myself a bit of job inside Then I generally get the ladder out of a Friday morning and do the windows outside I haven't got a ladder myself and I borrow one from four doors down so if I borrow the ladder I clean their windows and then I clean the ones who do my dinner and then me own "

A number of impressions come through from these descriptions

Perhaps most important of all is a sense of activities taking place within a social network (one which had rarely been constructed because of retirement), a network which provided a social foundation to the retirement experience This, in contrast to the Benwell group, where activities had often to be organised to take the place of a particular set of relationships - relationships which retirement (within that particular sort of community) had to some extent dissolved Further, many of the activities within the mining community were seen as enjoyable in themselves, rather than a means towards filling in a time vacuum Finally, as implied earlier, activities took place within a considerable range of relationships - wives, children, relatives, friends and neighbours - and this undoubtedly reduced any tendency for dependence on a particular person (a tendency which retirement may often give rise to) At the centre there usually

remained however, the conjugal relationship itself - a relationship which became more important and was explored with often greater intensity, in the retirement period

5 6 DOMESTIC LIFE IN RETIREMENT

The findings on the domestic life of miners came as some surprise - given some of the comments made by researchers in this area. In particular here the work of Dennis et al had suggested that relationships inside the home might be a major "flashpoint" in the retirement period. These writers presented a picture of a home life where a strict sexual division of labour (combined with, and following on from, the nature and organisation of the miners' work) fostered an emotional shallowness in the relationship between husband and wife. Indeed, apart from a brief development of intimacy in the early years of marriage, thereafter it was a down hill run, with an increasing separation of interests and activities between the sexes. Thus it is argued:

Because of the divisions in activity and ideas between men and women, husband and wife tend to have little to talk about or to do together. It is, therefore, a common feature for no development or deepening of the husband and wife relationship to take place after the initial intensive sex life of early marriage. Indeed those couples which seemed happiest were in the first year or two of marriage when most problems were solved by going to bed. Apart from these (and perhaps a few highly exceptional cases though these were not discovered) marriages in Ashton are a matter of carrying on pure and simple. So long as the man works and gives his wife and family sufficient, and the woman uses the family's wage wisely and gives her husband the few things he demands the marriage will carry on
(p 228)

The writers go on to argue the view quoted earlier

Just as most women see further than the home and the tasks of its maintenance on only one or two occasions each week, the husband is very often a comparative stranger to his home. One wife of 30 said of her husband, 'The only time I see anything of him is in bed'. Her neighbour described her husband as always being 'at work, at the club, or in bed'. Other men spend all their non-working hours in the garden or, a very small number, silently pottering about the home. (p 204)

Given this degree of role segregation, and the imputed emotional shallowness which flows from this retirement would appear to be an area fraught with the likelihood of domestic conflict. Miners, judging from the above analysis, appear to have all their emotional reserves exhausted by the tensions inherent in their work situation. Rather than the home becoming a haven of rest and peace from the anxieties of working underground, in reality, it figures only as a servicing point for clothing and food, a temporary halt before leaving for the workingmen's club or retiring to bed. How true this was of Yorkshire miners in the early fifties one can only speculate, but the question here is how true is this of miners today? And, in particular, those miners who are retired? Does the domestic situation remain unchanged notwithstanding the release from work? Does it also remain immune from the changes within the community as a whole?

The information on the domestic situation of retired miners, from this study, does contradict a number of the points made by Dennis et al. These indicated, at the very least, the likelihood of some initial trepidation about spending more time in the home, and some early conflict vis à vis the organisation of the domestic routine. However, none of those interviewed for this study had had any worries about spending more time in the home, and there were no reported instances of domestic conflict because the husband was "in the way" or "intruding". Ten husbands reported that they now helped their wives more with the housework (this includes here papering and decorating, an activity usually carried out by wives - in the Wheatley Hill area at least). Six husbands felt they had definitely become closer to their wives since they retired - the rest felt that their relationship was basically unchanged (certainly none expressed any feeling that their relationship had actually deteriorated).

None of this is to say that the sexual division of labour described by Dennis et al was non-existent. On the contrary, most wives retained their control over domestic affairs and many husbands would still go out to the workingmen's club alone, or with a male friend. But retirement (interacting with an undoubted improvement in the social position of women in mining communities) did lead to a "softening" in the more extreme examples of conjugal role segregation: the organisation of domestic life becoming more flexible and the division of labour within the household undergoing some modification. The domestic situation of the miners was thus very different from that found, for example, by Peter Townsend in Bethnal Green, where an existing sexual division of labour was reinforced in retirement, and, further, where the relationships between husband and wife became increasingly strained.

Retirement produced frustrations in men, because they could not fill their time and because they felt they were useless, and it also produced frustrations in women, because they had been used to a larger income and to a daily routine without interference from the husband. Friction could not always be dispelled by a new formulation of the division of occupations. A wife said of her retired husband, 'It's difficult with him at home. Because he's at home he wanders what you're doing. Before that he wasn't here and you could get on with things. Now he's asking you what you're doing this and what you're doing that for.' (pp 89 - 90)

In contrast to this here are some comments made by both miners and their wives on how they have found retirement.

"I'll tell you something about retirement. Retirement draws you closer together. Yes, we've been close all our lives, but since I retired we couldn't be any better than we are now." (Mr Cummings)

"I think we've come closer definitely. I think it's because we are more together and that. I mean I never used to bother with the garden but I'm interested with the garden now. He never used to paper or anything like that, but since he finished work he helped me do the staircase and all that, and nearly pushed me downstairs into the bargain." (Laughs) (Mrs Holmes)

"You're more together aren't you? I go down now and help her with the shopping which I never used to do "

(Mr Ridley)

"Since he's been retired he's took more interest . the way of living in the home he knows when this has got to be paid and one thing and another and he sees to things like that whereas before he never used to do anything like that " (Mrs Alderson)

"It makes you closer you seem as though you need each other more I think " (Mr Keithley)

This re-orientation towards domestic life is illustrated further by four men who all had wives who were very ill when they retired, for these men being able to help their wives more gave a decided advantage - as they saw it - to being retired as opposed to working Mr Berry, for example, whose wife died 5 years after he retired and who had been an invalid throughout this period, commented "I thought twelve months with me helping her might pull her together " Mr Richards whose wife died 3 years after he retired, suggested that

" probably the main reason why I decided not to keep on working my wife had pains see they were really severe . she was going to hospital twice a week for injections I saw the advantage of me being able to help her to a certain extent if I finished work. . which I wouldn't have been able to do if I'd kept on working That was a decided point in retirement It made things a bit easier for her the last few years she lived "

A similar point was touched upon by Mr. Harvey

"I had no plans for doing anything special coz the wife was having a rough time with this arthritis in and out of hospital but as I say at least I was finishing and I was at home and I didn't have work or anything like that to think about "

Given that miners' wives have a higher mortality rate than those of other workers,¹⁷ it was unsurprising that the health problems of the wife, and possible widowhood were influential in the retirement experience of many of the miners interviewed - representing, as well, an important component in the re-orientation towards domestic life Two other factors which would seem likely to

assist such a re-orientation were the migration of children and the death or illness of close friends. Thus the social network which the miner could draw upon - though larger perhaps than for other groups - was a contracting one (and one which was shrinking faster - because of migration and high mortality rates - than for other groups). Thus, using Bott's analysis again, what seems to be happening here is that a highly segregated conjugal relationship, with a close-knit network, is modified in the retirement period, with, given a contraction in the separate networks enjoyed by each couple, a resulting tendency for couples to share more activities with each other. The important aspect here is that the structure of the conjugal relationship is flexible enough for this change to take place - a flexibility which could not be "read off" from the account by Dennis et al.

5.7 RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN

Despite the migration of children from the village they still remained important at a daily level for many of those interviewed. As noted before 15 had at least one child still living in the village, a physical proximity which assisted a variety of contacts between parents and children - particularly where illness, widowhood, or the birth of grandchildren had occurred. Ten of the men were involved in regular (sometimes daily) activities with at least one of their children, activities which ranged from looking after grandchildren, doing odd jobs for a married son or daughter, to, on the other side, being taken out by a son for a drink, for a car ride, or having a regular Sunday meal provided (these latter examples being associated with widowers in particular).

In terms of the frequency of contact with at least one child, ten were in daily contact, six in weekly contact, and eight in fortnightly contact. Inevitably certain crisis periods such as widowhood would change the frequency

and the type of contact, though even here friends and neighbours would be of some importance as well

Even with children who had migrated long distances important points of contact remained (cars and telephones obscuring the extent of separation) As noted before homes in the Midlands and the South provided new and relatively inexpensive sources for holidays - holidays which might stretch over for a number of weeks In return, of course, children would themselves come back for holidays, and homes would be filled once again with the chaos and confusion of family get-togethers - compounded of course by the extra numbers arising from the birth of grand-daughters and grandsons Mr King, below, describes a typical scene, and expresses, perhaps, a typical sentiment

"Malcolm will be up this next week or two he's hired a caravan at Crimdon you see Oh I never miss seeing them Keith comes every year. Malcolm he got up last year for a couple of days that was all And as a rule I like to see them I like to see them come and I like to see them go away Because it's bedlam they landed up the lot of them landed up we had Keith and his three five of them there and Malcolm and his two bairns that's four There was nine of them planted here in a two-bedroomed house here we were working out where to put them but we managed "

So the turn towards domestic life has still to be placed within the context of a considerable range and variety of relationships For some, of course, this re-orientation would be "cut-off" by the death of a wife (there were six widowers in this group), and in exploring aspects of the domestic lives of those interviewed it is to a consideration of these that attention must now turn.

5 8 WIDOWHOOD IN A MINING COMMUNITY

Widowhood will have a variable impact depending on the age, sex, class and community locations of the people concerned, for some it will lead to a withdrawal and isolation from friendship and social activities, for others these latter may remain virtually unchanged In America, Blau (1973) has

argued that widowhood appears to have an adverse effect on social participation only when it places an individual in a different position from most of his age and sex peers. Thus, in an American study she quotes from, whilst widowhood seemed to have no detrimental effects on the friendship participation of people seventy and over, it did have detrimental effects on the friendships of those still in their sixties Blau comments

People tend to form friendships with others in their own age group, and to the extent that this occurs, the widowed individual under seventy is likely to be an 'odd' person at social gatherings, since most of his associates are probably still married and participate with their spouses in social activities. His widowhood, then, may have a detrimental effect on his participation. But after 70, married couples who continue to participate jointly in social activities become the deviants since most of their friends in this age group are likely to be widowed (pp 80 - 81)

Given the high mortality rate in the mining community this relationship between age and friendship participation is likely to be different from that in other communities. Looking at age, sex and marital status in Wheatley Hill one notes that widowhood has begun to take effect that much earlier than might be expected for other groups and communities, with loss of a spouse between 60 and 70 less "deviant" than it would be in other areas. Further, the consequences of widowhood in a mining village such as Wheatley Hill may be different again from what might be expected in an inner city area, or in a suburb - with isolation and withdrawal being perhaps less marked. Was this the case amongst the group of six who were widowed in this sample?

To test this out let us look at the kind of relationships people were tied into with whom did they interact? What sort of things did they do? How had the support system of friends and relations operated in this period?

Three had a son or daughter in Wheatley Hill, one had a son in a nearby village, the other two had children still in the North-East, five were in at least weekly

contact with their children and in one case - where the daughter and her husband had moved in with her father - there was daily contact, one man saw his son just once every fortnight

In terms of support from other individuals, widowers in Wheatley Hill seemed to draw on a wide range of relationships in some cases, children and relatives were most important, in other instances it was neighbours and friends. Let us take some examples to illustrate the kind of relationships people were involved with, concentrating, in particular, on the help people received from others, and the sort of things they did in return

Mr Downie had most of his meals provided by neighbours next door, for whom, in return, he did most of their gardening (work which they were getting too old to do), he also re-decorated their house for them and took them out for drives in his car. Mr Thompson, who had been an active trade unionist and who was now heavily involved in organising activities for the elderly in Wheatley Hill, had struck up a friendship with a widow, and he went to her house for most of his meals. Mr Harvey had a sister in Wheatley Hill who brought him a hot meal every day, Sundays being the exception when he went to his son's for a meal at mid-day. His daughter-in-law had recently helped him to redecorate his house and also - with his sister - occasionally helped him with the cleaning. (Note here that these examples illustrate how it is women who have often been relied upon to cope with the increasing range of dependencies arising from the ageing of the mining village)

Two widowers had had children or relatives moving in with them. With Mr Richards, it was his daughter, with Mr Watson, his brother-in-law. In Mr Richards' case, with both his daughter and son-in-law working, he looked after his grand-child when she came home from school in the afternoon,

as well as seeing her off in the morning. In Mr. Watson's case, with his brother-in-law working, Mr. Watson did all the cooking for the household as well as organising the general domestic routine. Finally, one widower, Mr. Berry, had lost his wife relatively recently, so it is more difficult to see what sort of "alternative relationships" were being developed. However, he did have a grand-son who came over every weekend to stay with him to keep him company.

The average length of time the six had been widowed was just over 5 years, so it is clear from the above that in this time all had developed or received a variety of sources of informal support. Further, the effect of retirement and widowhood combined did not lead to any withdrawal from social activities, most who were members of workingmen's clubs or other organisations continued to attend them, the rest continued the informal pattern of activities which they had been engaged in since they retired.

There were, of course, many problems - organising the household and a domestic routine being chief amongst these.

"The worst thing is shopping to me coz it doesn't matter when you go down this has gone up that's gone up I used to go down with her just to carry the things up but that was me lot because I've seen her go like this [mimics his wife's grumbling about the prices] it's hard that way you see she used to do all such as that, shopping, clothes and all like that. If I picked out up I used to have to fetch it away whether the bugger was right or wrong I went down to buy an overcoat Oh, I says 'Is that the price?' . anyway I'll buy it . Now she wouldn't have bought it, she would have got something cheaper that's one of the hazards you see of not knowing not being used to it, I should say."

(Mr. Watson)

In Mr. Foster's case his wife had died very suddenly of a heart attack. For the rest of the group, however, death had followed after a long illness, and this meant a period where - often with the wife's guidance - the husband had stepped in to take over some of the household tasks.

" In the latter few years the wife was not in the best of health .
I had a lot to do I think that learns you mind a man's silly
for not learning you know " (Mr Thompson)

Others recalled some experience of housework from their childhood

"Well I had quite a lot of experience of that sort of thing when
my Mum died My Dad and I lived on our own I was always
pretty handy at housework I could even make Christmas cake .
anything like that it's no new thing no chore to do it "
(Mr Richards)

At some stage, of course, the already weakened informal support
system may become inadequate and recourse to home helps and meals on
wheels will be necessary, for this younger group of widowers, however, it
was the support provided by friends and relations that was crucial.

5 9 "ONE DAY IS JUST THE SAME AS THE NEXT"

The implication of what has been said so far is that despite events
such as retirement and widowhood few people had "disengaged" in any way
from the social life of the community On the contrary, retirement was more
often to be viewed in terms of the opportunity it allowed for more time to be
spent in domestic and social affairs areas which hitherto had been compressed
and restricted by the exigencies of work and the shift system But there were
exceptions to this optimistic trend There were men who had, in some ways,
begun to withdraw from social life in the village, men who had begun to retreat
from old activities and - in some cases - friendships Where this happened
it was almost invariably a consequence of worsening health and, in particular,
the worsening of pneumoconiosis¹⁸ There were three individuals in the upper
percentage levels of the disease (two at 70 per cent, and another at 100 per cent)¹⁹
and the effects on their personal and social lives and their overall experience of
retirement were considerable.

Even at 10 per cent pneumoconiosis wind will be short, "certain jobs you do you haven't got the wind and you've got to keep stopping " At the other end of the scale walking and movement itself becomes a strain, a burning sensation racks the chest after a short distance has been walked, bringing the victim sharply to a halt There are many other problems besides

"Well I sleep badly during the night and then I get up and I'm sitting there for the first hour here and the missus makes us a cup of tea I tell you what I have for breakfast a slice of jam and bread that's all I have and I'm sitting here coughing trying to get me chest clear and it's horrible . and then I pull meself round about 10 00 and then I have to take water tablets and all that me chest tablets well I'm trotting up and downstairs until dinner-time I go out in the garden and have a chat with him next door have a look round the greenhouse . open the door when it's hot weather and sit out on the front step and watch the traffic go by and then it's just a matter of pottering around the garden waiting for the son to come home and have his dinner ... coz his missus is working and then it's just like now in the afternoon ... I mean I'm just pottering around that's all . One day is just the same as the next ... just one long day . and yet the week seems just to fly for all that ... some days you think are never going to end. I say 'Oh .. I'm away to bed' and then you sit lying in bed coughing before you can get off "

(Mr Irwin)

"Well more often than not I'm waking between 6 and 7 in the morning . If I get 4 or 5 hours sleep .. 5 hours at the most I'm doing well. I've seen me sitting up in bed after I've been to the toilet and everything I couldn't lie down again I'd start coughing and spitting and all the rest of it to clear the throat I'm just sitting there until just turned 8 now we have one of these Teasmaids beside the bed that's set for 8 30 well we have our drink of tea then she might come down sometimes draws the curtain back and brings the paper up I sit reading the paper right through until about 10 Then I get up get a wash and get a shave I don't rush now not as far as that is concerned, and then do a little bit out there (in the garden) before dinner then out again But there's times I might ... well maybe about once a fortnight I might get into town . . well after walking around there for maybe 2 or 3 hours I'm finished me legs are starting to go then I'm pleased to get back. "

(Mr Holmes)

While pneumoconiosis at this level inevitably imposes an immense straitjacket around the individual in retirement, forcing him to give up many interests and activities, there are still considerable efforts to retain some level of participation - even

if only at a minimal level, and even if requiring immense efforts in the process

"If I'm out walking like that it seems to take a bigger pull on the body to keep walking to what it is if I'm just standing down like a little bit towards like that Now I can go in the garden get the spade now I dig 2 or 3 spades then I'm stopping see to get more wind then I try again just carry on like that just a little bit at a time "

(Mr Holmes)

"I got the greenhouse in 1968 . and I thought I'd extend that so I got the wood I'd never done anything like it in my life before and made a 6 ft extension "

Inevitably, however there are days when this isn't enough and when the individual feels trapped between either staying in the house or looking around a garden he has seen many times before

"Well it's when I do try and go out and it's not having breath for to go anywhere it makes you sometimes want to kick the cat out you know what I mean? If you could get out around I mean the time would pass easier if you could get At first I felt not being able to go out anywhere that I wanted but you just have to put up with it that's all I mean I'm bored to tears many a time I tell the doctor bloody browned off I am you do, you get browned off and I mean you can't make any better of it You wander to the gate and you wander back . have a look round the garden. I mean you've looked round the garden before see that's the sort of thing when you're like this ... you're bored to tears, that's the trouble . and then you get sometimes you see someone coming in and you say 'Oh, I don't want them coming in ' You just seem as if you cannot be bothered with em "

(Mr Irwin)

Mr Holmes also has these feelings at times but he stresses the importance of not dwelling too much on them, of "making the best of things", "keeping your mind occupied"

"You have to get it into your mind that you cannot get any better from it it's there just make the best of it because the way such like as us is you might be here one minute and gone the next, see it means you can't live for ever so you have to make the best of it No, when you start studying up . if you sat down and started studying that much you'd get that depressed well you'd pack it up altogether the best way is keep your mind occupied and just carry on not to dwell too much on it If you dwelt too much on it well you'd go wrong in the mind, see "

At 100 per cent pneumoconiosis the individual has only a short period ahead of him before death. The one example here, Mr. Poole, still recalled the early period of his retirement with some affection.

"I was tired. I was really content to retire. I was the happiest man in Wheatley Hill. That first period I used to sleep like a baby knowing I didn't have to get up in the morning. I was really content."

This lasted three years before the pneumoconiosis became so bad Mr. Poole could hardly venture out of the house. He had not been out for six months when interviewed, and the hot weather was adding to his discomfort at the time, preventing him from even sitting in the garden. His face was badly swollen as a result of side effects from the numerous tablets he was now having to take, and he felt people had begun to laugh at him as a result. He does not see very much of his friends now since he no longer goes down to the club. As regards walking any distance he now has difficulty getting from the lounge in his house to the downstairs toilet. His wife commented

"That's his retirement (pointing to his tablets). That's all I can remember."

5 10 CONCLUDING COMMENT

Retirement in the mining community has appeared rather differently from the experiences described in Benwell. The problem of a divergence between a work-based and a non-work identity, of fear concerning the new activities and relationships which must be sought after in retirement, of trepidation concerning the changes within the community and their repercussions for old age—all these issues appeared in a far less acute form in the community studied above. Retirement rarely involved breaking from a valued set of relationships; rarely was it the signal for disengagement from an existing

social network. Certainly there was a complete and speedy withdrawal from work, but since the latter had often been an unwelcome burden anyway, few came to miss their activities as labouring men, and - for these men - important strands of continuity were carried through from work into retirement, lessening the impact of the latter, making it less of a 'shock', less of a time of anxiety.

So retirement was experienced in a very different way in this community. Less of an individual burden, and much more a collective experience. Men experienced retirement together, not in the isolation of their own homes but in innumerable "discussions" - walking through the fields, around the roads, in the club. But retirement was incorporated not only into an existing structure of relationships, but also a specific consciousness about one's identity and place in the world. In this context the occupational experience had struck very deep roots indeed. People did not walk out of a mine and "forget about it" in the way in which many of the labourers and factory workers in Benwell seemed to. The occupational experience of the miner was, in many respects, "unforgettable". A brutal form of labour had been endured, labour which had often left the individual with crippling illnesses and injuries. Those without thanked their good fortune, rationalised their worries, compared themselves with others who were worse off than themselves and declared "I'm lucky". And indeed they were, understanding of course the relative sense in which the term is used.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 In 1951 32.1 per cent of the total occupied male population were involved in coal-mining. By 1971, this had dropped to 10.6 per cent (see Table 2.2 p. 22 in Bulmer (Ed) 1978). Bulmer's essay 'Social Structure and Social Change in the Twentieth Century' provides a useful over-view of the economic and social changes taking place in County Durham.
- 2 For a description of mining villages by a local writer see Sid Chaplin, *Durham Mining Villages* in Bulmer (Ibid.).
- 3 Taylor R.C. (1966) p. 253.
- 4 Ibid. p. 251.
- 5 Ibid. p. 265.
- 6 Ibid. p. 260.
- 7 Bulmer (op cit.) in 'Change: Policy and Planning since 1918' has provided a broad description of the planning context.
- 8 Quoted in Bulmer (Ibid.) p. 182.
- 9 A local resident has provided the following description of the development of social facilities in Whetley Hill:

'In the early 1900s the villagers had to make their own entertainment. The game of fives was played at a Ball Alley which was built outside the Railway Tavern in Lynn Terrace. Quoits were also played quite a lot and there were also football teams and a cricket team. Now we have a recreation ground covering 5 acres of ground in which there are five tennis courts, two bowling greens and a children's playground. There is also a Welfare Hall with a billiards room, reading room and facilities for other games and a dance hall.

At one time the only thing in the way of a cinema was a show of lantern slides in the Temperance Hall given by a Mr. William Grant at which a charge of one penny was made. Now there are two very good cinema theatres.'

From 'A History of Whetley Hill' written by Mrs. Alice Armstrong for the Whetley Hill Women's Institute. A copy of this may be found in Durham City Public Library. Date of compilation

- 10 For local press comment on the closure see the Durham Advertiser
23 February 1968 p 8 column 1 and p 5 column 7
- 11 Dennis et al's (1956) 'Coal is our Life' is still the standard sociological
text. Zweig's (1948) 'Men in the Pits' is an earlier and less satisfactory
sociological view of the miner.
- 12 Quoted in Blackburn (1976) p 17
- 13 From a sick pay certificate for John Samuals dated 22 December 1928
one of the conditions for benefit is described as follows
- 'If a member in receipt of sick benefit shall go beyond three
miles from his residence without leave from the
Secretary and Surgeon or shall leave his home at any time
without word where he may be found he shall be fined the
amount of one week's sick pay
- 14 For descriptions by miners of their work see in particular 'These
Poor Hands' Coombes B L first published by Gollancz in 1939
and re-issued in 1974 for a description by a Durham miner see
Jordan T, in Burnett, J (Ed), 1977
- 15 The Deputy is the miner's immediate supervisor with close day-to-day
involvement with a team of men. The overman is third in the chain of
command below the under-manager and the manager of the pit.
- 16 Bulmer found a very similar situation in his study of Spennymoor
see Bulmer (Ed) op cit
- 17 Lock and Smith (1976) p 145
- 18 Coal-miners' pneumoconiosis seems to be caused by pure coal dust
and has become particularly common since machines have been used
for cutting the coal and not by silica or some other material present
in the coal. Most cases affect coal-face workers but it also occurs
in people such as dockers who handle coal for this reason it is also

called coal-workers' pneumoconiosis. With 626 new cases (2.3 per 1,000 men employed) in 1972 the incidence is now falling, but 10,000 of the 280,000 coal-miners in Britain receive benefit for chest troubles attributed to their work by the Pneumoconiosis Medical Panels and the disease still causes 990 deaths a year. (Lock and Smith *ibid.* p. 144)

19 "Miners with pneumoconiosis are compensated according to the degree of disability they experience. X-ray films being used only to diagnose the condition and not to assess its effects. Even so, these judgements are often extraordinarily difficult. The Pneumoconiosis Medical Panels have to decide what proportion of a man's disability is due to pneumoconiosis, bronchitis and emphysema. If a miner is judged to have at least 50 per cent disability than any disability due to chronic bronchitis or emphysema is taken into account in the amount of compensation awarded. But if this disability is less than this amount, then added disability from these conditions is inadmissible. Understandably this ruling is attacked by some doctors and most miners. (Lock and Smith *ibid.*, p. 146)

CHAPTER 6

CAR WORKERS IN RETIREMENT

6.1 THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

Strike is Birmingham's other name This is the battlefield. What Manchester was to the nineteenth century, Birmingham is to ours. What people spend the lowest proportion of their wages on food and the highest on household durables? Brummies. Brummies What C. of E. diocese has the lowest % of Easter communicants? Birmingham Birmingham is ideasville taking shape, only like coitus interruptus it's not very satisfactory.

(Ray Gosling, *The Listener*, 31 October 1968)

Ray Gosling's unflattering description of Birmingham, whilst idiosyncratic in content, reflects perhaps a more generalised feeling about the city and, indeed, about post-war changes in general More money, better housing, better health, holidays abroad - all these components seem to centre on the Midlands as the leading area in the movement away from the old insecurities and inequalities That there would be social and individual costs to this process was noted early on in the boom Thus, in 1955, Trevor Philpott gave the following description of production-line workers at the Longbridge car plant¹.

Being a 20,000th part of such a vast machine, working at the remorseless, unchangeable pace of the conveyor and with a spanner which is driven by compressed air and which screams at you when the nut or screw is tight enough, must be a crushing experience for a human being. Perhaps the walk-outs can be interpreted as cries of anguish When the whistle blows at Longbridge the men swarm through the gate like runners at the mass start of a marathon. When a man works like this for money, money can become very important indeed

Certainly, if the working classes did have greater prosperity after the hardship of the thirties, the Midlands was the place they were likely to earn the better money, as well as being where they were likely to spend it. And of course, it was the car industry itself which was seen to be the moving force in the material and social change of the fifties The car industry with its thousands of geographically and socially mobile employees, these - so it was

thought - being the exponents of a style of living (or spending) which marked a radical break from the restrictions and limitations of the 'old' working class communities. Graham Turner's (1964) description of two Coventry car workers illustrates this thesis in a direct and personal way.

The first, who lived in a council house, asked whether I would like a glass of sherry before lunch. The second (a sort of sub-chargehand) told me that his wife was just starting riding lessons and that he counted himself a member of the middle-class, though it rather depended on the company he happened to be keeping. He came from a Lancashire mill town and admitted that he used to be afraid of going into restaurants because "I thought everybody was staring at me", but now he prefers to take his wife to the most expensive hotel in Coventry. Asked what he thought his fellow workers did in their spare time, he said that golf and rally-driving were as popular as anything else. (p. 98)

Critiques of the 'new working class' thesis are not hard to come by (see, in particular, Cousins and Davis, 1975), and even its adherents have been willing to acknowledge contradictions and limitations to their case. Thus Turner, in the same work from which the above extract was taken, drew the following comment from a shop steward in a car-plant

I've seen the change in blokes . . . a change in their political thinking. The system forces them to buy houses and then they identify themselves with a group higher than the workers. Mind you . . . they're only middle-class through overtime. Their earnings could burst anytime. Don't forget that overtime also deprives our fellows of those delightful leisure time pursuits - freemasonry, rotary, tennis and golf, though I must admit we're making some headway down at the Golf Club. (p. 136)

Even if the full implications of the 'new working class' thesis are rejected, however, there are still some important issues stemming from it which might be considered from the standpoint of this study. Thus, the reasoning behind selecting a group of car workers to evaluate alongside the groups discussed so far (as well as for choosing the Midlands) was the growth and prosperity as compared with the economic decline of the North-East. For example, whilst the Durham Structure Plan (1976) records high levels of

outward migration, above average levels of unemployment, below average spending on consumer goods, the Birmingham Structure Plan (1973) records an opposite trend on virtually all of these variables. In relation to employment it comments "Economic activity in the city, as expressed by activity rates, has been among the highest in the country";² and in relation to earnings it notes that "Average earnings of Birmingham male residents have been above both the regional and national earnings in all years since 1964-65, except for the year 1967-68 when the national figure exceeded the Birmingham and regional average."³

Arising out of these material and occupational changes many commentators identified fundamental alterations in working class life, with a movement away from its more communal aspects, towards a more individuated family orientated existence. For Goldthorpe et al (1968) the consequence of this move towards what has been termed the "companionate family" seemed likely to be closer and more rewarding relationships between husband and wife and between parents and children: much more rewarding, they suggest, "than could generally have been the case under the economic and social conditions of the traditional working class community."⁴

The researchers go on to argue that

If workers are better able to satisfy their expressive and effective needs through family relationships, it may be anticipated that those men at least who enjoy no specific occupational skills or responsibilities will less commonly regard their workplace as a milieu in which they are in search of satisfactions of this kind. Rather, time spent in work-based association will more probably be seen as detracting from time available for family life and thus as representing a social cost. Correspondingly, work-linked obligations or social attachments, beyond those essential to retaining employment, will tend to be avoided. (pp 175-176)

The main issue here is how much these differing material/environmental contexts change the way a period such as retirement is experienced. For

example, has the experience of greater material prosperity led to more security within and more expectations about retirement? How does the "break-up" of the traditional (so called) working class community, and the turn towards the family, relate to this period? Has a financially more prosperous, family and leisure orientated car worker, better prospects for retirement than workers in more "traditional" (and poorer) types of communities?

Simple as these questions may appear, these were some of the issues running through the researcher's mind when the selection of occupations and areas was being considered. One possibility considered at an early stage of the project was that amongst the car workers there might well be the outlines of a retirement ideology, an ideology built upon a view of work as a "cost" and a view of leisure as a central component in living. On the other hand, there were some features of car work which it was thought might have harmful consequences for retirement. The individual car worker would probably be retiring from a vast factory with workmates being spread all around Birmingham and the Black Country - rarely would they be in his immediate community. The question here was how much would this separation appear as a problem in retirement? Alternatively, to what extent would the individual be able to draw upon or build up community-based friendships in the period after work? Then there was the question of income replacement in retirement. The car workers were a group with above average earnings for their class, finishing work would thus be a greater financial cost for them, with a substantial drop in income to be faced. How would this be adjusted to? Would the individual have secured enough resources to cover for this drop? Would this have been done as part of a conscious process of retirement planning?

Following on from these general questions there were more specific issues relating to the selection of the sample and the area from which people were to be drawn. Detailed information on these points is given in the appendix. However, a number of comments are necessary here.

As regards the car plant from which the sample was drawn it was decided to take the British Leyland Longbridge factory, a choice based on two principal considerations. First, it is an old-established factory, starting life as a car-plant in 1904; this, plus its size (it employs over 20,000 people), suggested that there would be a large group of ex-employees (some with long periods of service) from which to draw up an adequate sampling frame. Secondly, the residential area surrounding Longbridge (Rubery and Rednal) suggested itself as a good place to interview retired car workers - principally because of the contrasting environment it provided in comparison with the North-East.

The two communities of Rubery and Rednal have seen their biggest growth occurring in the post-war period with major council housing developments and some substantial private ones. This growth has yet to reach its peak, with the building of the new Frankly Estate which will provide accommodation for 8,000 families still in its early stages. Much of this population growth has been drawn from families moving out of areas closer to the centre of Birmingham - usually those couples at an early stage of the family life cycle. As a consequence the area has a low percentage of people over pensionable age (10.6 per cent), a population which is primarily concentrated on the inter-war property, around which the post-war additions have been built.

As a result of the above, the question arose as to whether the social relations of the retiree would be affected not only by his withdrawal from factory based ties, but by his return to a community undergoing rapid expansion;

the position of the elderly being that of a minority within a youthful and family orientated community. To balance against this there was the point that the area had definite attractions (particularly as regards the physical environment) for elderly people. Despite the age of some of the properties the level of amenities in them was high, and their location (Rubery and Rednal lie at the foot of the Lickey Hills - a favourite local beauty spot) seemed to have virtues for the retiree.

This, then, was a very different environment from the often squalid and depressing conditions encountered in Benwell, and a different one again from the mining village with its ageing and declining population. In what follows two main issues are explored and discussed. First, given what is known about the instabilities attached to work in the car industry - the consequences of shift and assembly line work⁵, the separation between occupational and social lives⁶ - what impact will such features have on a period such as retirement? Secondly, given common assumptions about the increased prosperity of car workers and analogous groups, to what extent will this financial security spill over into retirement? Or, to put this another way, is a more secure and prosperous retirement one outcome of work in an expanding and prosperous industry?

6 2 WORK CAREERS AND OCCUPATIONAL EXPERIENCES

To move from a discussion about miners to one about car workers is to move to a vastly different occupational and social milieu, and to a very different industrial and work experience. Whilst the miners were reaching the peak of their struggles with the mine owners and experiencing - in defeat - the structural decline of the industry, the car workers were some years away from their great battles, the industry being one which was to expand throughout

the twenties and thirties - an expansion carried through with the repression of any union activity⁷ Indeed, at the climax of the miners' struggle in 1926 Lord Austin's biographers stressed the relative stability of the car plant chosen for this study⁸.

The trouble and unrest which had been gathering momentum in the country since the end of the war, resulted in the general strike in 1926. Longbridge was fortunate, during this dispute, to have only a small number of men out on strike, and work continued almost at full strength during the whole period

An additional difference between the car workers and the groups in the North-East is that whilst the latter had been mainly born, and had opted to stay in that area, 44 per cent of the car workers interviewed had migrated to Birmingham from other regions (most of this migration taking place in the thirties). There were, amongst the twenty five interviewed, a group of non-migrants who came into Austins in the 1920s, and a group of migrants who came at a slightly later time, a group who had often experienced quite lengthy spells of unemployment elsewhere (in the sample as a whole just over half (14) had been unemployed for longer than three months during the 1920s and 1930s) The average length of time spent at Longbridge had been 33.9 years with nine having started at the factory in the 1920s (ten having been employed continuously for over 40 years at the plant) Of course, as most were quick to recall, the environment in that early period was vastly different to what it is now, both in respect to technology and in relation to workers and management.

"I started work at the Austin in the October . I left school when I was 14 in 1922 . that was the beginning of the old Seven the very first made. I believe they showed them . that was the first show the Seven went to . the October show in 1922 . and then they were only doing one or two a day or probably not that still in the experimental stage of course. And . . er, it was nothing like the present day of course jobs were only dribbling through the bodies were on tressals you know . tressal at the front . tressal at the back and you man-handled

them Then about 1920 as the job progressed the output went up and they went on to tracks ... they were pushed along on tracks."

(Mr. Birch)

"The Superintendent says I could have a job down there provided I could do the job and he gave me a month's trial. If I hadn't been able to do the job within that month I would have had the sack. And jobs were very hard to get . once you were out of work that was it . there was no such thing as redundancy I've seen them come down of a Friday night .. they'd be working .. It might be at this time of the year and all of a sudden .. come down on the shop floor, you . you . you . . you ... finish tonight . No week's notice . that was the Austins If anyone as late as 1939 . mind you it was going about in a very small way ... the union .. but it was more or less 'choke d up' . because if anyone ... like yourself at that period of time . if you were in any union or anything like that you would never have got to the Austin ... never .."

(Mr. Carney)

"Unions were non-existent We had union chaps came from the Met. (Metro-cammell); see they was on contract work ... when they'd done a row of coaches for the railways they'd got to get another job and they used to come to the Austin. All union men they was .. they kept that to themselves. And we used to hear about late Friday afternoon: 'they're going to suspend us', and he'd come round ... you, you and you out next week ... blokes used to dive in the toilets but he waited for them .. 'out next week' .. 'suspended till we send for you'. I tell you one bad year we maybe had a little bit of work August and September - they may be had a new model, then after the show ... oh ... they registered cars on the 1st of January so we'd be busy around there .. people wanted them. Then it used to tail off in February ... in and out ... that's how we'd be."

(Mr. Darby)

It is undoubtedly true that this first generation of car workers entered the industry in quite different circumstances than their post-war counterparts. They entered an industry which was still seasonal in its demand for labour, and, to a large extent, unfettered in its autocratic handling of that labour - both in relation to fluctuations in demand and in the organisation of production itself. It was an industry, too, in which technological changes were rapid, changes which would make obsolete the skills of many trades and crafts. Finally, it was an industry located in a general environment of mass unemployment, an environment which, whilst hitting the Midlands less hard than other areas still

entered the minds and experiences of workers (and not just those who had been uprooted from their original communities).

Yet, juxtaposed to all this was the modernism of a vast factory, a factory with its own railway station, a canteen serving 20,000 meals a day, a system of staggered hours and annual holidays, and - quintessentially - music while you worked¹⁰. Even still, this modernity in form and style (though more than a veneer) had the 'old' capital and labour relationship at its base (a relationship which at Wheatley Hill in the 1930s had yet to come up with baths at the pit head or much in the way of paid holidays), a relationship which despite differences in content in different milieux, still had workers recalling very similar experiences

"When you did get a job . . . don't matter what job it was we was pleased we was working . . . We was always terrified . . . you'd see the boss come round and you know you'd think, oh, I hope I don't get me cards like . . . it used to worry us stiff . . . In those days they could give you the push for no reason whatsoever, that's why you was always terrified . . . in other words if the gaffer didn't like your face he just pushed you out . . . you were always terrified of that. "

(Mr. Fowler)

" . . . it was terribly hard work. I was on the filing to begin with . . . then I wanted to give it up . . . I wanted to get out of it . . . but I thought . . . well jobs are so hard to get . . . the only time I'd been out of work in my life was just before I got that job. I'd been out of work 6 weeks . . . and I thought of that . . . I thought I don't want that to happen again . . . No . . . I've got to fight this . . . and I thought there's other kids in there . . . I'm as tough as they are "

(Mr. McLean)

"Well . . . there was nothing else around here . . . it was as good as you could get . . . times were bad then by the way . . . very bad . . . well . . . I don't know what proportion it was in figures out of work but you were lucky to have a job . . . and to get a job at the Austin at that time . . . you considered yourself fortunate "

(Mr. Birch)

". . . You daren't leave . . . I thought of going to look around Coventry but I'd got two kids and money was scarce . . . if owt had happened . . . where was I . . . nowhere' Nobody would want to know yer. I know one or two who tried . . . course they might have them back when they were busy . . . grim it was . . . they had you where they liked "

(Mr. Darby)

The similarity of early experiences between the car workers and the workers in the North-East eventually became overlaid by the location of the former in a growing and expanding industry: one which had the potential to provide the money and security which the industries in the depressed regions were clearly unable to supply. Despite this common location, however, there was some variety in the type of work careers people had had at Longbridge. First, there were a minority of people (4) who had stayed at one particular job throughout their career in the factory, this group was composed of a welder, a sheet metal worker, a toolmaker and an electrician. Secondly there were a small number subjected to job changes because of the obsolescence of the particular skill they had come in with. John Henderson, who had been trained as a cabinet maker, and who had been given a month's trial at Longbridge in the late twenties, describes this process as follows

"I started at B.S.A. first . . . making side-cars . . . then we got stopped at the B.S.A. . . . and I went to the labour exchange and signed on there. They said the only thing we can do is put you on a training course for a new trade . . . so I thought well I don't want that . . . so I took a walk up to the Austin . . . that was in 1927 . . . they asked me what I was used to . . . you know, woodwork and that . . . and they said, well we'll give you a trial. I went and worked on the little tourers. I went on there on to the saloons . . . and I stayed over on that side until 1959 . . . that was on the West Works

I was making the wooden frames . . . like the Windsor - that was a tourer - had wooden sides to fit in the panels . . . and they had wooden bucket seats . . . and we'd make all the frame for them see. Then after that . . . we went on the saloon making the wooden doors and . . . er . . . they brought out a fabric job . . . that was all wood the body was . . . and covered with leather. Then from there I went into the lorry shop . . . doing lorry cabs and that . . . I moved onto metal with the lorries doing the pockets and all the door casings . . . screwing them on "

The majority of those interviewed, however, came in with no particular skill at all, hence the degree of choice they had over the type of work they could do was very limited. Before the war they would have to

go where directed; in the post-war period they might be given a maximum of two or three refusals - either way the constraints were considerable. Most in this group had carried out a wide range of jobs in the factory, with the introduction of a new model or the re-organisation of a particular job often being the signal for a change. Age would itself be an important factor precipitating a career shift, 8 out of 25 moving on to a new job (usually lighter than their previous one) in their late 50s and 60s. Even here, however, there were no formal arrangements to help the older worker. Luck playing a large part in whether an individual secured less arduous work in the run-up to retirement.

Let us examine here some typical work patterns amongst this group before going on to examine comments about the work itself. Dick Sutton started at Longbridge when he was 17 years of age first fetching material for men working on the production line and then going on to do various work on the production line itself, during the war he went into the machine shop working on gun magazines, after this he went on to the lorry side doing various types of machine work including milling and drilling, after 16 years there he moved on to a transfer machine, drilling, tapping and counter-facing on the engine block - a job he did for 11 years before retiring. Frank Rowe came to Longbridge in 1938 and worked briefly on engine testing, then, during the war, on air frame construction, after the war he went on to door hanging, then to carpet laying, finally finishing as inspector in the car bodies section - a job he did for 5 years before retiring. Mr Phelps worked at Longbridge for 44 years initially starting as a plisher and also doing detail work on the bench, he was subsequently moved to the experimental shop working on new models of cars and then, at the late age of 46, went over onto assembly line work,

his last years at Longbridge were spent on final rectification. Mr Bloomfield, who had been in and out of Longbridge up to the start of the war (doing mainly machine work-drilling, milling, etc.) started on axle assembly after the war (for 11 years), then went on to engine assembly and, after a few years, into the paint shop, with cut backs in staffing levels in the shop for his last 12 months before retiring he was sent on a variety of jobs on a day to day basis. In contrast to the above, Mr. Shaw worked at Longbridge for 25 years receiving goods in a store, Mr. Southerton for 18 years on machine work, Mr. Stokes for 24 years on engine assembly

6 3 ATTITUDES TOWARDS WORK

Most of the research on car workers suggests that people remain in the work mainly for the financial gain and because of limited opportunities elsewhere¹¹ On the one hand, there is a picture of geographically mobile individuals moving in search of work which will expand material horizons, as well as provide a measure of security (see, for example, Goldthorpe, et al, 1968) On the other hand, there is a picture of individuals manoeuvring within a limited range of possibilities - these liable to contract with their own ageing, an industrial slump or the collapse of particular markets (see, for example, Beynon, 1975). In the end most researchers - both from the left and the right - usually emphasise the 'cost' of working in a car factory - a cost which is often seen to outweigh any temporary material gains which are made Here, for example, is Beynon's (op cit.) vivid description of Ford workers at Halewood.

The men who work as operatives, five or six days a week on the assembly line at Halewoods ache by Saturday night They have a grey-blueness around the face. Especially after a week on nights By the weekend they need a break If only to sleep. Many men spend more of their leisure time than they care to know with their eyes shut Working at Halewood is physically tiring, it is also tedious

and boring. It's not something you want to remember. Quite the opposite in fact. Craft Unionism is held together by the skill, by the sympathetic relationship that the craftsman has with his tools and his work. Car assemblers hate their work and long to forget about it at weekends (p 202)

And here - from a writer with a very different political perspective (Graham Turner, *op cit*) - is a description of Ford workers at the Dagenham factory:

Most of the men I met at Ford looked tired and haggard. Even in repose they suggested people who were taking a brief rest before going back to a wearing grind, and this was especially true of the men who were in the middle of their stint on nights - which some have been doing fortnight on, fortnight off, for years. The wife of a man who has been working a fortnight of nights every month for no less than 10 years said, by way of explanation. 'He would have left years ago if the money weren't so good. We like to have everything there is going. Mind you he isn't the same man on the second week of nights.' (p 135)

The material calculation involved in doing car work has been summed up by Allen (1972) in a study of 50 British Leyland (Longbridge) workers, and 50 Jensen workers.

The respondents from the shop floor sample appeared very largely to have taken their jobs, not for the variety, the opportunities for initiative and autonomy afforded in more skilled work but for the highest going rate of economic return (p. 59)

For those car workers interviewed in this study whilst many recalled particular jobs they had enjoyed during their period at Longbridge (usually in the pre-war period when assembly-line operations were at a low level of development) more than one-third could think of nothing at all they liked about their work and just six (24 per cent) could identify something particularly interesting in the work they had done. For the most of the 25, money, security and 'good mates' were dominant reasons for coming and dominant reasons for staying. work itself being mentioned with little enthusiasm.

"The only thing that I liked it for it was inside and in the dry . . . different from working outside in this sort of weather . . . and it was pretty well regular you know . . . it wasn't too bad a money . . ." (Mr Kelly)

"There was nothing to like about it at all There was the din . the smoke the hard work itself and you was chained to your vice practically everybody used to fight for the good little jobs that was about You'd not only got to work but to fight for it as well any of the good jobs that was going if you was slow about it if you was a ninny then you'd be a ninny and your wife and kids would - because you was one they'd suffer You'd got to be prepared to stand up to them (other workers) and tell them . hey you've had your corner I'm having mine And you've got to be prepared to be ready for them . you'd got to fight for the decent jobs so you would get some money out of it as well "

(Mr McLean)

"Just a job . I just went in and did my day's work .. of course the money was pretty good there " (Mr. Allen)

" . it was a really lousy job there was nothing to like about it at all . . some days ... especially in the earlier period I would come home literally shaking . . I wouldn't even be able to read the paper ... the print would just dance about in front of my eyes. As I say when I first started it (engine assembly) I thought: 'Oh God, I'll never be able to stick this I must get something else ..' But .. well ... the trouble was by then I was in my early forties . it was more a question of having to stick it out . ."

(Mr. Stokes)

"Well down the Austin there was no variation at all, none whatsoever really When I was working down the Metco-Cammell you'd got overhead welding . vertical welding . horizontal welding but there it's just vertical welding there's no variation at all . ."

(Mr. Fowler)

"I didn't enjoy it at all as a matter of fact I went to the Rover and got a job but I thought well I've got to travel, if I go up to the Rover means getting up earlier in the morning that sort of thing so I got back here . and I stuck it I knew it was pretty rough in the body shop it was a slave shop prior to this take-over by British Leyland, the body shop . it was .. it was a slave shop real graft You got decent money [but] you really earned it. When I say I perspired I could wring my trousers out nearly round my waist The conditions were bad .. it was a big shop . they use it today . it must be 50 years old, low ceiling low overhead drab stunk of oil - oil on the metal and that sort of thing And not a bit of colour in the shop at all British Leyland have improved it in that respect They painted it I believe and psychologically it gives you a bit of life when you see it to what it was It was a real drab hole . like going into a mine apart from the lights and . er .. it was cold too in places "

(Mr Birch)

Two important factors influencing these responses were: first,

the technological developments in the post-war period with - for some - their first rea

experience of assembly line work, secondly, the interaction between the changed industrial environment and the ageing of those who had come into Longbridge during the 20s and 30s. We know from some of the research on car-workers the difficulties faced by the older worker (particularly those still on the assembly line)¹² Thus Chinoy (1965) notes in his study that

Older workers face an uncertain future in the car plant. As they lose their capacity for sustained strenuous effort, they may have to take other jobs in the factory which pay less and are held in some measure of disrepute, for most jobs do require considerable physical exertion. The only alternative being dismissal because they actually cannot do the work. . . a 40 year old line repairman commented, for example 'You see the fellows who have been there for years who are now sweeping. That's why most of the fellows want to get out. Like you take Tim, he's been here for 30 years and now he's sweeping. When you aren't any good any more they discard you like an old glove ' (p. 84)

Unfortunately there are no detailed studies on precisely what happens to older assembly line workers (or indeed those on other heavy jobs in the car plant) - though at least three possibilities suggest themselves. First, people may move on to lower grade jobs such as sweeping or rubbish collecting, if luckier they might find work supplying the track with components or alternatively going on to machining or sub-assembly work. There were no examples of the former in this study though work histories of retirees in the factory magazine were suggestive.¹³

Mr Glasson came to Longbridge 26 years ago and joined the heavy maintenance staff working on scaffolding, roof repairs and outside painting. It has only been in the last 9 years that he has worked and walked collecting tons of salvage from waste-paper baskets at the 'top-end' of Longbridge

Mr. Rossi retired last month from the plywood stores in the West Works, and his 30 years at Longbridge have seen him working in sheet metal, coach smithing, and, more recently, with retirement not far off, the lighter work in the stores.¹⁴

Of the latter work there were a number of examples amongst the group interviewed including two men who had been doing heavy and arduous

work in the press shop at Longbridge and who had moved on to machining in the case of one and to operating a transfer machine in the case of the other, there were also 5 men who had been on assembly line work and who had moved off it in their fifties - mainly to inspection and rectification work.

The second possibility for the older car worker is to leave the car plant altogether and to look for lighter work elsewhere. About the fate of this group little is known and there are some important questions here concerning factors influencing people in the decision to move, the kind of jobs they go to, effects on living standards, etc., which need to be examined.

Finally, there are those who stay on the assembly line until they retire - a small but significant group. On the whole assembly lines at Longbridge - as with car plants elsewhere - have an age composition skewed towards the younger age groups (particularly those in the 30 - 40 age category), and a policy of restricting assembly line work to younger age groups is usually operated when a new assembly line is opened. Thus Allen (op. cit.) commented in his study that:

Cab 2 was a comparatively new shop at British Leyland where the tendency .. was to prefer younger and apparently more adaptable personnel (p 6)

It should be noted, however, that there also seems to be a policy of selecting some older workers to help start a new line going - possibly to provide a stabilising influence. Mr. Phelps recalls that when production of the Mini was started:

"They'd got one track going and they wanted another one. they said to sweeten the pill. 'We want some of our old chaps we can rely on to get this track going. you won't be on the track forever I just want one or two to get it going. show the chaps how to do the different jobs ..' But I never got off the track again."

In the group of 25, 7 had stayed on the assembly line right up until their retirement (despite efforts in some cases to come off it), and it is noticeable that 5 out of the 7 commented on increased weariness and tiredness in their final years at work

" . towards the end I was just counting the days. Some days I could just about manage to walk home . I was so exhausted . . ." (Mr. Walker)

"I found you did get more tired as you got older, and, in addition, I was one of the oldest on the section and you found it increasingly hard keeping up with the younger ones " (Mr. Stokes)

"You didn't feel yourself getting any slower but you got tired like when I come home I used to sit in the chair and fall asleep . and I worked nights for over 8 years; and I'd come home of a Friday morning wouldn't I? (to his wife) .. get in that chair . and fall straight asleep ." (Mr. Henderson)

Yet for the 5 who had moved off the assembly line although this had meant generally better working conditions in the run-up to retirement all of these men still reported some problems in their final years at work; though these were of a more varied nature than the above, with the strain of working night shift and problems connected with adapting to a new pattern of work being the difficulties most often mentioned. In general the group who reported few problems in their last years at work were precisely those who had stayed away from assembly line work. Thus 14 (56 per cent) out of the 25 reported no real changes in respect of tiredness, etc. in their last years at work, and of these only 2 had ever been on assembly line work. By contrast, of the 10 who did report increased tiredness in their final years, 9 had been on assembly line work. This pattern does suggest clear differences between those who had stayed away from assembly line work and those who had been on it right into their fifties or up until they retired. The question here is whether these differences will have any effect on perceptions and experiences regarding retirement itself.

6 4 THE SOCIAL COST

Earlier, the question was posed as to what advantages for people's personal and social lives had been gained by the experience of being both in a more prosperous industry and in a more prosperous region, and, crucially, were there aspects to these advantages which would give people greater security and choice in the last years of their working lives and retirement itself. About the last years at work the evidence is equivocal with luck playing a large part in the workers' ability to secure easier jobs - jobs which were more tolerant of age related changes. For many, in fact, work became an increasing burden, with the strain of night shift and assembly line work being the main problems encountered. However, if work itself was a cost the immediate or potential benefits accruing from it were not at all clear. There was a material security and certainty which many mentioned as being crucial: knowing your money would be there, knowing your job would be there - these were important virtues to a group who had lived through the thirties, some of whom had seen the depression at its worst in the North-East and in Wales. Mr. Thompson, for example, who had been unemployed for 10 years in Liverpool during the 20s and 30s, and who came to Longbridge in 1954, explains some of his feelings about work as follows:

"It was very bad in the 20s and 30s . that's why it made me more keen for work when I did get it cos I'd had enough . I'd had enough of this out of work business, and as I say .. I didn't like the strikes I used to go wild inside meself when I see them all walk out who's for out and all this business and their hands would shoot up in the air . you know what I mean? The gaffers didn't have a chance to talk to them .. their hands were up in the air wanting to go home I used to say to meself it would have done you good to have a dose of that unemployment they didn't know what unemployment was these fellas . they'd always worked in the Midlands "

And from another perspective, from a man who had come to Longbridge when he was just 17 years of age and who had worked continuously throughout

the depression, there is the comment:

"I've always got on alright ... as long as you work to your ability ... I can't run the place down .. they've always treated me alright. The foreman and the supervisor both gave me the same answer: 'George your money has always been there' .. I says, Yes. 'not once in the 48 years have I gone home with no money.'" (Mr. Sutton)

But what has been the product of those 48 years (or 33 9 years for the group as a whole) of regular labour and regular money? had the individual himself developed as radically as the industry he worked for and the region he lived in? Of course, to answer this we have the problem of measuring well-being and personal growth, and there is also the problem - assuming one could measure these - of relating such criteria to industrial prosperity and regional development. Unfortunately, there were no subjective indices of psychological health developed for this study, so a definitive answer to these questions cannot be made. There are, however, some important observations that can be made about the group interviewed. For example, some material gains - over those in the North East - were clear to see: particularly in respect of house ownership, car ownership and consumer goods in general. But, at the same time, whether because of the nature of the work (with most of the men doing shift work) or because of the nature of the group (nearly half were migrants), external interests and activities appear to have been minimal; social ties and hobbies being cut away in the context of the demands of family life (all had been married), in the context of adjustment (particularly for migrants) to a rapidly expanding community, and, finally, in the context of work relationships which rarely spilled over into social life outside.

"We never met outside work the relationship was at work, that's the trouble with the Austin we weren't all locals." (Mr Darby)

" , when you go to work you're friendly with the people you work with but there you see in an organisation like this they come from all over the place they don't just come from one little area.

all over the place . well you never get to know them socially
You might get 1 or 2 locally that you know " (Mr. Aston)

"Well most of them lived in the Black Country or somewhere like
that . It wasn't like they could be your neighbour or anybody
down the street you could pal up with " (Mr. Phelps)

This contrast between work and social relationships has been
commented on in most studies on or including car workers (see in particular
Goldthorpe and Lockwood, op.cit. , Allen, op cit.), but its most important
implications have usually been ignored, namely that whilst this division may
be tolerable within the context of the working life it may result in acute
problems in a period such as retirement· a period where the individual
has to rely heavily on resources inside the community, resources which may
not easily be found either in the milieu or the material circumstances in which
the individual finds himself We can perhaps ask two related questions arising
from this point· had the individual built up sufficient resources to sustain
an adequate life in retirement? Or, did the absence of certain social ties
and networks matter in retirement in a way in which they did not seem to at
work, i. e. did the cost of doing car work finally appear when the individual
walked out of the factory for the last time, and when he set out to reconstruct
his life now that the routine of labour had been dispensed with?

6.5 INTO RETIREMENT

Every year between 300 and 400 people retire from Longbridge - at its
maximum just 100 short of the total number of people employed at Wheatley Hill
colliery. So, virtually every day there is likely to be a retirement ceremony
for somebody Every day somebody packs up his flask or his brief-case for
the final time, slipping in a few bottles for a farewell drink, and travels down to
the factory. In the morning the desk will be cleared, the machine operated or
the component put into place - no rush or hurry, a morning spent on reflecting

about work and workmates, and a thought too, about what they are to be replaced with in the future. In the afternoon after a short or lengthy celebration (depending on one's status) with the presentation of gifts, a chat to present and former work-mates and colleagues (with the inevitable buzz of questions along the lines of: "What are you going to do in retirement".) there's a final look around the shop or office, a glance up at the clock, a nod to the men on the gate, a final run for the car or bus, and that's the final working day over - it's then back home to a waiting and probably rather anxious wife. It's a day when even if you really hated your job you will probably still find some cause for regret - feelings about "missing the lads", missing work, all sorts of things. The men interviewed for this study had been working at Longbridge for an average of over 33 years so - not surprisingly - despite the nature of some of the work and of the factory environment as a whole, retirement day inevitably brought some feelings of sorrow.

"When I retired I had a ruddy great lump come in me throat I couldn't help it . you can't help it , when you get lads like that . that you've been with for a long time " (Mr. McLean)

"Well you're a bit jittery at leaving your work-mates . . . I went down there a week or two afterwards and had a chat with them." (Mr Haines)

"It didn't hit me until the next week on the Monday night, a lot of them come along here to go to the works and the wife and I were sat watching the television and from quarter to eight till about ten past was just one continual peep, peep, peep . . . you know the horns blowing. But on the Friday morning . as I came out it never hit me until I got here, the lad come round and he says to his mum. 'They gave our Dad a bloomin' good send off.' Of course, the missus broke down . . . it upset me as well then . ." (Mr Sutton)

And there is a sense of loneliness as well, as the individual steps out from a huge factory employing well over 20,000, steps out as someone "retired", no longer a "worker" like all the others.

"I took a bottle of whisky and some wine in and they told me, on yer last day you start work and 9 00 you finish and you can go around the factory and have a last word with yer pals "

What did it feel like on that last day?

"Well you felt . seeing as there was nobody else retiring with you you felt as though you were on your own all the while coz most of the chaps there were young ones . some of them would be retired now but at that time they'd started loads of young chaps on " (Mr Henderson)

Before exploring further the reactions and adjustments made to retirement let us first of all run through the general background to the retirement experience of the group

All of the 25 interviewed had retired at 65 years of age and the average age of the group at the time of the interview was 69 9 years Just under half (12) had thought about retirement some time in advance of its actual date and a number of this group had attended the pre-retirement classes provided by British Leyland None in this group had planned any specific thing they wanted to do in retirement and most of the attention had been given over to financial questions This left 13 who had given very little thought to retirement at all and 5 mentioned that they would have preferred to stay on at Longbridge for a few more years

In terms of variations in the reported adjustment to retirement there were some differences between the assembly line (n = 12) and non-assembly line workers (n = 13). Of the former 8 (66 6 per cent) reported a relatively easy adjustment to retirement, 3 experienced problems after an initially satisfactory period, and one reported problems straight away (all of these were either working or had investigated the possibility of work). Of the non-assembly line workers, 5 (38. 4 per cent) reported a relatively easy adjustment to retirement, 3 experienced problems after an initially satisfactory

period, and 5 reported problems immediately after retirement. Out of the group as a whole, then, 52 per cent reported a relatively easy adjustment to retirement and 48 per cent reported problems either in the early or later period of their retirement (with nearly three-quarters of these being drawn from the non-assembly line group)

It is worthy of note that a large number of the 25 (64 per cent) had either thought very seriously about or were actually doing a part-time job (9 of the total of 16 being drawn from those experiencing problems in retirement) This consideration of part-time work had usually been for a mixture of motives with financial problems, boredom and need for companionship being the most frequently mentioned.

Comparing those who had encountered problems to those who had not, in terms of social origins, work position and family structure, some interesting differences do appear. The group without retirement problems were much more likely to be drawn from the migrant group (61.5 per cent), to have a joint conjugal role relationship with a loose-knit network, and to report either an unchanged domestic situation or - in a minority of cases (4) - a greater degree of closeness. Those with retirement problems on the other hand, had a tendency to be non-migrant (75 per cent), to have an intermediate conjugal role relationship, with loose-knit networks, and to report some domestic conflict - particularly in the early stages of retirement. So there appear to be two groups under discussion here. First, a group of migrants who came to Birmingham for work, who settled primarily on assembly line jobs, who returned to the community with relatively few non-familial connections, and who placed considerable emphasis on the domestic relationship, secondly, a group of non-migrants, who had worked a slightly longer period at Longbridge (and who were more likely to have done non-assembly line jobs), who had a greater

tendency to have activities within the community and to report a more segregated conjugal role relationship at home. The large number reporting financial difficulties in this group would indicate that with material problems cutting into social activities, and with a more segregated relationship at home, the likelihood of stress in the retirement period was increased. Thus on the question of social activities it is significant that of those with problems in retirement 10 (83.3 per cent) had had to cut down on social activities since they retired (lack of money being the sole or primary reason), this compared with 6 (46.1 per cent) of those without problems (though it is important to stress here that the latter had started from a lower level of social activity).

Given that 64 per cent of the group had cut down on social activities it is interesting to note that just over half either had no hobbies or just one (usually gardening).

All of the 25 had married, though there was a relatively small number of children (1.8) per family (including four couples who were childless). The majority of the children had moved relatively short distances, with Rubery and Rednal themselves, or Bromsgrove (5 miles) being the most popular areas for people to settle. Thus if we include those children still living at home (6), 19 out of the total of 44 children had settled in the above areas (i.e. within a 5 mile radius), with a further 11 settling in other parts of Birmingham. In terms of the amount of contact, 10 out of the 25 were in daily contact and a further 8 were in weekly contact with at least one child. In all, 12 of the men were involved in a regular activity with a son, daughter or grandchild. Given the limited contact with ex-work mates (40 per cent never seeing ex-work mates and a further 32 per cent only occasionally) and the limited number of friendships men had built up in the community itself these contacts and

activities with sons and daughters were of considerable importance to the retiree - often serving as a replacement for the interest and stimulation once provided by the work group.

Financially, this was a group entirely dependent on the state pension (many were also receiving supplementary pensions and/or rent/rate rebates), with none having the addition of a private or occupational pension (British Leyland did not start a pension scheme for manual employees until 1971) There was an insurance scheme for Longbridge employees started by Lord Austin, but the maximum amount available from this was £500 and to receive this sum an individual would have had to have practically unbroken service for the company for over 45 years. Many of those interviewed had received sums of between £400 - £500 but these had made little difference in the long-term to the retiree's material situation. Given the absence of an occupational pension most of the 25 had had a very large drop in income upon their retirement (a drop of over 70 per cent in some cases) and this had inevitably provoked a considerable re-structuring and re-ordering of domestic and social life (this aspect will be explored further below).

As regards housing there were a higher number of owner-occupiers (13) than any of the groups discussed so far (two were still paying off their mortgages), there were also 7 in council houses, and 5 in privately rented accommodation (practically all of the houses in these three categories were pre-war)

Finally, comparing those who had encountered problems and those who had not, as regards the advantages/disadvantages each gave concerning retirement, we find the following for those with problems 7 out of the 12, not surprisingly, could think of nothing they liked, concerning its disadvantages two people (both

widowers) mentioned loneliness, 4 a combination of boredom and financial problems, 2 financial problems alone (58.3 per cent of this group mentioned financial problems as being important), 2 mentioned the lack of companionship in retirement. For those without problems, 11 out of the 13 reported freedom to do as they pleased a major advantage in retirement, 9 could think of no disadvantages at all to retirement.

6 6 EVERYDAY LIFE IN RETIREMENT

So far we have considered retirement in the context of the inner-city and of the mining community, contexts where the mainly working-class communities have had to face prodigious changes in their economic and social structures. Rubery and Rednal demonstrate a different type of change, being areas where the dominant trend has been toward increased population growth with extensive new housing and inward migration (all of this feeding off and stimulated by an expanding industrial infrastructure). The two different communities studied so far have also shown us different experiences of retirement. In Benwell, we found men with considerable problems in retirement, with the latter often becoming a considerable burden as a result. In Wheatley Hill, we found interlocking work and social relations supporting an often agreeable and enjoyable retirement. So, what of the car worker? How did he respond to the "loss" of the work identity and the work relationship? In phrasing the question in this way we must move with caution, since as Beynon (op cit.) has pointed out:

Often it is quite inappropriate to talk of 'car workers' in the same way as one would talk of 'miners', for many of them do not consider themselves to be 'car workers' in that sense. They see themselves more as workers who happen to be working in a car plant. They've done other jobs in the past and they expect to do others in the future. They don't want to grow old on the line. (pp 90-91)

Of course the group interviewed for this study had grown old, if not on the line, certainly in the car plant, and whilst many would reject any identity as a car worker the relationships they had built up over the years had often become an important part of their lives, hence, the question as to what happens when the individual is cut away from those relationships is still an important one. There is also another question that may be asked about the car worker. If work had been viewed primarily as a "cost" (as it seems to have been) what has been received back as a result? A better and happier retirement? More security in the final years of life? It might be suggested that if the car worker is an exemplar of a new working class a working class freed from the material and social austerities of the "traditional communities", might not a retirement ideology be a possible outcome of these changes? More time with the wife, the car, and the children: might this be the final justification for the 33 years of frustrating and often boring labour?

It may be, perhaps for the generations behind and perhaps if relationships between work and leisure are re-organised and re-evaluated, and material standards in retirement improved. But for the men in this group - as for many of their generation - insecurities within work merged in with insecurities in retirement (despite their location in a more prosperous industry). Only a minority planned or thought in any detail about their retirement, and only a small number of that minority had much hope of any plans being realised. Certainly, if car workers had few ambitions about work they had even fewer ambitions about retirement. None had given way to dreams and fantasies about the period after work, most, in fact, structured their thoughts in a highly realistic way - a way which allowed for few surprises.

"I just said well that's it I've worked for 50 years ..
that was it I've contributed enough " (Mr Rowe)

" I was looking forward to retirement but there again it's all very well looking forward to retirement if you've got some object in view like doing another job "

"We've got no ambitions no high fallutin' ideas about what we should do or what we shouldn't do just settle down to a life of tranquility I think you survive longer if you do "
(Mr Aston)

(retirement) "It's something I've just come to grips with as you . you've got to do it and that's it more or less "
(Mr Haines)

"I never really thought about it . it just seemed to fall in . doing jobs around the garden . in the summer of course . helping (in the house) in the winter "
(Mr Wilkes)

"I never thought about things that were impossible . I never dreamed about those sort of things "
(Mr Phelps)

All of the above (Mr Howlett and Mr Butt apart) had had a relatively easy adjustment, and out of the 13 in this group many had come straight off from working on the assembly line - an occupational experience which inevitably reinforced any affirmative view about retirement:

"I loved it I loved to stay in bed The hooter doesn't go now but I loved to stay in bed and hear those hooters go and still stay in bed and think of the people going to the slaughterhouse "
(laughs) The Slaughterhouse? (C P) "Yes it kills you slowly you've got to be fit to stand up to it "
(Mr Birch)

"I was counting the days . . I was relieved to get out of it It had become such a rat-race "
(Mr Walker)

On the other hand, positive views about retirement were few and far between even for this group, and descriptions about daily life in retirement had an air of routinisation about them

"Well, I like me kip for one thing. Some days I - it depends on the weather - this time of the year (winter) if it's a bad day I'm apt to stay in bed until 11 00 . get up . oh the wife always brings me a cup of tea in bed she's usually up first . . she goes out does a bit of shopping brings me a paper back. When the sun's nice I spend most of me time in there (a glass covered verandah) and er . . if there's a little job that wants doing, I do that and perhaps go out with the wife, do a bit of shopping "
(Mr. Birch)

"Well . you went up to bed .. and thought, well, I haven't got to get up in the morning ... it seemed boring you know at first. I thought, well, I've got quite a lot to do what with the house and all the rooms to go round clean up .. polish ... do me own washing . coz me daughter had been doing it for me " (Mr Haines, widower)

"Well, get up and have your breakfast . go for a bit of walk . shop papers do a bit of shopping, come back . then there's dinner time tea time, it isn't very often I go out now in the winter sit down and have a read or watch the television that's about all you can do . . mind it's different in the summer you can go for a nice long walk . or go on these trips if you like " (Mr Kelly)

"I've got me certain days where I do things Wednesday I have a good do upstairs with the cleaner, takes me well on to dinner-time, then downstairs here I generally reckon to do that on a Friday morning Thursdays, I do the main shopping and go to a friend in the afternoon Tuesdays, I do a bit of shopping in the morning . . and then I go out if it's fine enough and do something in the garden . Monday's a day I go in the garden if the weather is suitable " (Mr. Knox, widower)

Amongst the car workers the group who had made an easier adjustment to retirement was a group of men with few initial outside activities and interests to disengage from (only one third of those without problems were members of a club or association, compared with two thirds of those with problems). This was a group for whom home or home based activities had been central - activities which were built upon or added to in the retirement period:

"You see, I'm very fond of reading for one thing . and .. er . I go to the library and get four books and I've got one or two papers to read I love tinkering about in the garage helping in the garden " (Mr. Wilkes)

"I usually do some writing in the morning I'd always wanted to write children's stories and so on " (Mr Millward)

"Even by myself I can never say, I'm bored Sometimes after I've done my shopping Saturday morning I don't speak to another soul until Tuesday when I go shopping again but that don't bother me " (Mr. Knox)

"Oh, I did think about it before . I used to think I'll get up to the old Public Library there and I'll do a bit more reading . because I never had the time really (when working) .. the only time we had we could just read part of the newspaper ... never had no time Well, I never went .. I've been living up here now 37 years and that was the first time I ever went to a public library . like to borrow a book .. other times I never had no

time to go down there by the time I got home it was shut "

(Mr Davies)

6 7 DOMESTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Central to this orientation towards the home was the type of relationship which in this group had undergone much less friction or conflict (than those with problems) in the movement from work to retirement. Thus, whilst many in the group with problems commented upon how they felt or were told that they were 'in the way', this was rarely the case for those without problems - a group whose adjustment to retirement had been facilitated precisely because of a closer harmonisation and sharing of domestic arrangements. A good example of this is the experience of Mr. Gerrard, a former assembly-line worker, he describes his early experience of retirement as follows:

"It was a bit strange at first you know . you got up in the morning . I used to get up the same time . turn round and round .. it kind of takes a little bit before it actually hits you that you are finished work I felt rather strange but she helped me quite a lot and er . eventually you get down to it and settle down As I say I've got a marvellous wife and I knew whatever happened she'd be with me to talk things over I think she straightened me up more than I realised "

Mrs Gerrard: "Well, of course, you get talking to people that have retired years before your own husband and I mean they tell you things, how he does this or how he don't do that and how he ought to do the other .. he's sitting about doing nothing it prepared you sort of thing for when your own retires "

In Mr and Mrs Gerrard's case this mutual working out of retirement undoubtedly led to a greater closeness and togetherness in the relationship as a whole

Mr Gerrard: "It's kind of brought us more together . because we're in each other's company more that's probably made the difference . I mean we've always got on well but since I've retired we've kind of got closer ."

Mrs Gerrard: "I think you're more dependent on one another really .. and of course he helps me now "

This intermeshing of the domestic relationship was brought out in comments by others in this group as well.

"It's made a much closer relationship altogether .. we do more things for ourselves between us now than we ever did when we was working .."

(Mr Wilkes)

"Oh, I retired at the end of May . . we'd got the nice weather coming along and I'd got a car then and we used to go out a lot and enjoy ourselves When we got up I used to help her with the housework and then it was 'Where shall we go to-day?' "

(Mr Knox)

In this group nearly 40 per cent reported helping more with housework and domestic activities in the retirement period (cleaning, polishing and vacuuming in particular), this compared with just 15 per cent of those with retirement problems The more flexible domestic routine enjoyed by those who had had an easier adjustment to retirement is best summed up by Mrs Gerrard again:

"When you're at work you've got a set routine . you sort of get into a routine Whereas when you've retired . all the time is your own and you sort of set yourself out to please yourself .. well we do if we get up one morning and we don't want breakfast, well, we don't have it but if we fancy breakfast about 10 30 I'll turn round and get some "

As will be indicated below, it was precisely this flexibility in the domestic routine which so many of those with retirement problems clearly lacked

6.8 LIVING ON THE MARGIN (1)

To say that we are discussing here a group with a relatively trouble free adjustment to retirement should not lead us to be too glib about the difficulties they had had to face - the financial restraints encountered in retirement being the most frequently mentioned:

"Well financially . that's all miserable financially I have tried to think of ways round it but you're reluctant to take the chances If it was left to me I'd do something about it . . but I'd have to leave here to do it get a mobile home for retired people or something in that line which would give me two or three thousand quid a bigger margin to play with . a few more quid a week just to make life easier I think any couple that's worked hard

all their lives they're entitled to a bottle of whisky or a bottle of brandy you can't consider it these days you've got to think in terms of keeping warm and having decent grub and that sort of thing . they are the main items Whereas you didn't have to consider them when you were working, you had that automatically "

(Mr Birch)

"When you was working . . you had a lot more money to throw about than you have when you're retired you can't go out and say I'm going to enjoy meself . . . and go here and go there . . . and buy this and buy that . you've got to look at your money now."

(Mr Kelly)

"I'd like to do work . . . you're getting the money . . . you have the money to spend . . you can go and buy things . you haven't got to be skinny with yourself."

(Mr. Thompson, widower)

Here again - as in Benwell - there is a heightened consciousness regarding the material and social boundaries imposed by retirement, though for this group an initially lower level of participation had interacted with some psychological preparation for the reduction in activities which retirement brought about Asked how hard he was hit by the reduction in his income (from £50 when working to £12 a week when he first retired), Mr Birch commented

"Well, it didn't so much because I'd prepared myself for it mentally two or three years before you do prepare yourself mentally for these things I think And I think I prepared myself mentally two or three years before I packed up But as I say, I was pleased to pack up and you've got no choice there, you've got to make a sacrifice."

If the 13 in this group had made a relatively easy adjustment to retirement this was perhaps because many - like Mr Birch - had effectively disciplined themselves from expecting too much out of retirement, had stopped 'dreaming about things that were impossible'. There were no great plans for retirement and - consequently - no great disappointments either. Retirement was 'drifted into' or 'fallen into ' and - with some variation here and there - was just about tolerable

" it's like this we've never earned big money . so you see when you've never had a tremendous lot you don't miss it "

(Mr. Houghton)

Mr Houghton's view is an extreme one perhaps, certainly there were many who missed the 'common luxuries', and there was one wife of a man in this group who said they now avoided many of their younger friends who were still working. "We don't want them to see our poverty", she said. Perhaps there were more like this, after all it is a sensitive area, and it is difficult to come to terms with the fact that you are poor after spending many years believing you had avoided or escaped that fate. People instead preferred to talk about a 'necessary sacrifice', to feel it as an inevitability (after all who has ever heard of a profligate old age?), in darker moments they probably did ask "Why should this be the case?" "Why should I be poor in my old age?" The question is at what stage do these private thoughts become public ones? At what stage is the ideology of individual sacrifice itself sacrificed?

6 9 LIVING ON THE MARGIN (2)

If an ideology of sacrifice under-pinned the responses of those above it was sustained partly because retirement was still reasonably tolerable. For the other twelve car workers interviewed this was much less true: things had gone too far for this group, to retain the metaphor too many things had had to be sacrificed. As a consequence, conflicts at home, boredom, lack of companionship, financial problems, all became regular features of daily life, the interaction between these undermining attempts at building a stable base to retirement.

About this group a number of points have already been noted, points which are suggestive of the kind of problems encountered. This was a primarily non-migrant group with a preference for outside social activities as opposed to home based hobbies, a group more likely to have a segregated conjugal role relationship at home and to report

conflict at some phase of retirement (a conflict which was most clearly present where internal segregation was combined with the collapse of the male's external social network), this was also a group where the run-up to retirement had often been a satisfactory one and where the wish to stay on at work or to get another job was often strong As a consequence of all, or at least some of these factors, retirement was often a painful and debilitating experience

"Well son, I'll tell you this .. as far as I'm concerned .. I might say to the wife 'If you like I'll do the potatoes . I'll do the washing.' Anything like that. I might say .. I might be feeling a bit depressed which is the true word for it I have .. and I'll say I think I'll go and have a look up the town . . and this is what has actually happened. It happens periodically now as far as that's concerned. . because after you're retired like in my case, holidays and any other time it all blends into one . there's no difference to me there's no holidays anymore .. holiday time . Christmas time . it's no different to me than an ordinary day."

(Mr Carney)

"You find a relief first 12 months is like that . I took up walking well, one day you're on top of the world, next day you're dead against it, see what I mean? Up and down . that's why I took up hiking I walked to Bromsgrove I walked to Redditch I felt alright I looked at everything and kept my mind that's how I kept off work . but if I was stuck round here I got morbid that's why I went hiking keep from going morbid And one of the things that hit you not being at work, it affects yer sleep, you're not tired . you find that I have that trouble now and you wake up in the night and you can't go off again "

(Mr. Darby)

"I don't care where you go you see the poor old blighters aimlessly wandering around .. and ~~they're~~ walking around aimlessly (with emphasis, C P) . killing time and that's what we're doing to my mind, we're killing time, we're just waiting .. that's all we're doing waiting for the inevitable, and it's wrong that people should be thrown on the ash-heap ... and we have been thrown on the ash-heap .. we could be employed if only the Government would get round to us all "

(Mr McLean)

"I hadn't really /any plans/ . I hadn't got any hobbies or anything like that to look forward to or anything like that you know. If I'd had a fortune perhaps and something in mind like . I might . . it wasn't much good thinking about anything like So I just retired and had a rest quite alright for a bit but after a bit being active like on a job like that and there was only the garden to do which isn't very big like and it got very boring . you do the same thing day in and day out it's boring it's like your job really "

(Mr Phelps)

The most important aspect of retirement for this group was the extent to which it had undermined pre-retirement relationships and activities. In some cases these would be severed because of separation from the work group itself or the organisation to which the individual belonged via membership of a work group. Mr McLean, a shop-steward at Longbridge for just over 30 years, mentions both of these aspects

"... I've had to leave my Trade Union . . . to me that was part of my life . . . it was part of my life's blood . . . I had to leave that . . . in fact I was a member of the Trades Council . . . I was a shop steward . . . nothing used to be better for me than to put a kid's case forward . . . that was taken away . . . With me being involved as I was . . . being a shop steward and all the rest . . . you was more involved with the boys. I knew more about every individual one down there than perhaps he knew himself. You see I would be one blokes would unburden themselves to . . . every shop steward respected by his blokes is in the same position."

On the other hand, Mr McLean says of retirement:

"To me . . . to retire all men at 65 is wrong and no-one will know about it until they've been retired 2 or 3 years . . . then it begins to get to them just what retirement really does . . . it means nothing else but bloody boredom, worse than you had at work . . . especially with the weather getting like it is now. There ain't no old person . . . there's one or two old people in this road here . . . and I've seen them down at the hall there . . . what day is it . . . Wednesday . . . I'll bet you they're there now . . . I've seen the old people going there . . . and I've seen them walk about and I've felt heartily sorry for them and I dread the day when I ever get like that. But when you retire from work you feel like that . . . people look on you as that."

The change which retirement brings about is reinforced by the pensioners' material circumstances - the nature of the latter controlling the quantity and quality of relationships enjoyed by the individual.

"I've gone to the Woodman (a local pub) and bought myself a drink . . . and just as I was finishing one off someone might say: 'What are you going to have?' 'Oh, no, can't stop, I've only come to have a quick one.' Which I know I've told a lie see, otherwise, if I'd have had it and turned around and said I can't afford to buy you one . . . I couldn't have done that . . . it's only that excuse . . . 'Oh, no, I've only come in to have this one.' And if I'd said:

'Have one on me' and he'd taken me up on it, I would
 have come unstuck on that wouldn't I? these are the things."
 (Mr Carney)

These material constraints were undoubtedly felt that much harder by this group than the one discussed previously. This was after all a group of primarily Birmingham men who had worked a greater part of their lives in what had been one of the city's most prosperous industries. This was a group used to certain 'luxuries' - the meal out on Saturday night, expeditions in the car and caravan, the occasional holiday abroad. In other words, it was a life of 'progress' and 'change' from the more 'traditional' life-styles in the North-East. But just how much progress can perhaps be best gauged in the terms most relevant to these men, i.e. had their differing occupational and material experience given them any more security or freedom to order their lives in a period such as retirement? The answer for this group in particular and, indeed, for the group as a whole, is that it had added or given very little, the old working class austerity had returned despite the appearance of a 'new' industrial and communal world.

"You've got to face it we knew this would come up sooner or later as far as me and the wife is concerned there's a lot of things as regards that we used to have for instance . it might sound child talk to you . I used to think of nothing, you know, of going out and buying 2 lbs of chocolates and enjoy meself, eating things like that fruit and stuff and then I would think nothing about going into town and bringing a crab back which is all gone for a burton these are some of the things It's just like it's just the ordinary day to day things to live on you know and . er . the luxury parts are out of it "
 (Mr Carney)

"It's alright (retirement) for people who have got money .. who can get about and meet people and who can go here and go there .. but it doesn't apply to working class people . that doesn't at all "
 (Mr. Fowler)

"Of course, when I first retired I used all me savings up keeping a certain standard up you know .."

"Well we had to go through the larder didn't we .. cut the food down see what we could do without .. then clothes and all like that. "
 (Mr Henderson)

An extreme example of the financial austerity many had been forced into can be seen in the case of Mr. Marston. He discussed his situation in retirement warily, commenting at first "It's not something I like to talk about. I keep it to myself." A not altogether surprising reaction, given the siege economy he and his wife had imposed on themselves. They were still paying for their house when they retired and part of the £500 insurance money Mr. Marston received was used to clear the mortgage. The car and caravan were both sold - the Marstons had been keen caravanners for 20 years - because they were now becoming too expensive to run. Then, social life had itself been pared down to the minimum to keep pace with necessities such as food, fuel and clothing. Mr. Marston comments "I only keep going for the wife really. Well without the children's help we wouldn't be able to keep going at all."

For some of the above, then, it had been anything but a happy retirement. It had been a retirement where an old pattern of austerity had re-surfaced, where the social and existential costs of living without a surplus were re-discovered. But, of course, they were "re-discovered" in a very different social world, a world where solidarity at work rarely spilled over into solidarity in the community. Whilst issues concerning the former had been made public via mass assembly and mass action, issues concerning the latter were more often than not kept within narrow and more private boundaries. If it was through the mass that people became strong, started to count for something, became 'men', and not 'non-entities',¹⁵ then outside of the mass they became correspondingly weaker, more divided, and without a clear identity - for this group, this happened when they became retired. Retirement broke their contact and access to the institutions of power, and this weakening of their political position coincided with a weak social and demographic position inside a youthful and expanding community. The individual found himself

driven back inside the home as external supports disintegrated. One immediate effect of this was an increase in conflict within the domestic sphere.

"... get on each other's nerves let's be fair. Well it's a well known thing that is... wife's gone to her sister's today thank God for that. She's off today. We was alright at first, but as it got on, well, she doesn't do anything. I don't do anything. Well at least I read or something like that she just goes and does more housework. Nothing what you might call cultural." (Mr. Darby)

"Yes. Yes. She's never said anything about it, but you know I suppose being a housewife, as my wife has been, she's always been a good housewife and so forth and I suppose she's got a daily routine, well with me sitting here as though I couldn't care less. Well, it's obvious to me, you're inclined to feel you're a little bit in the road. That's how I look at it. I know she's said sometimes. 'What time are you going to get up?' I said. 'Why?' She said. 'I think I'd like to do the house round'. These are some of the things." (Mr. Carney)

"I think she likes to get me out of the way. She wouldn't like me sitting here all day." (Mr. Phelps)

The general tendency in this group was either to report an unchanged domestic relationship, or to report an increase in conflicts inside the home. These conflicts would most often appear as the individual made the transition from engagement in social activities outside, to increased concentration on activities inside the home, the ease with which he could do this being partly dependent on his own need for a male peer group or for given external activities. Thus in Mr. Darby's case the former need was particularly strong.

"The biggest bogey of being retired is there isn't enough men. I go in the Austin Old Age Pensioners' Club. It's full of women, and if we go on outings from the Club there'll be three women to every man." (Mr. Phelps)

As with many of those in Benwell there is the problem here of finding social relationships, finding them despite the handicap of being a pensioner - the handicap that is of being somebody on the poverty line. People on the poverty line have definite kinds of relationships, and the problem for the car worker was to re-adjust and re-orientate to this very important fact. To

have continued expectations of something better would have been painful and disturbing. Most did not nurture such expectations. They either turned back towards the home and set about reconstructing their marital relationship or they considered the possibility of working again, attempting to recover the old balance between work and leisure. However, even that strategy raised a number of difficulties.

6 10 JOBS FOR THE ELDERLY

Under the circumstances encountered by the twelve above, a return to work had appeared the only way out of a mounting series of dilemmas. Indeed, ten (83 per cent) had either seriously thought about work or were actually working. Yet even here their status as retired people was an important factor in determining the sort of work they would get and the sort of money they would be paid. They were no longer workers with a militant union behind them, they were individuals desperate for a few extra pounds and the companionship of fellow workers. Employers understood these facts well and distributed pay and jobs accordingly, a point which was also understood by the elderly.

" people who go looking for work at retirement age they know they've got to be subjected to being asked to do menial jobs they would never have dreamed of doing when they was in the factory " (Mr McLean)

" now I'm not toffee-nosed or anything but for me to go to a supermarket and push a trolley that's not my cup of tea . it wouldn't be anything interesting " (Mr Carney)

"What I was against looking for a job you know the jobs that was going? Cleaning lavatory cleaning and all that game and . oh working in pubs You could have a job cleaning up after it's closed but I looked down on all that " (Mr Darby)

Of the ten who had seriously started to look for work just six had eventually got started - their jobs all being of a rather similar character distributing overalls light assembly work, portering at a medical school,

sweeping up at a factory, labouring at a petrol station and parcelling up goods at an export agency. Given the lack of alternatives for this group, most wanted to keep their jobs for as long as possible. "It's better financially and socially", some would say, "You're fitter physically and mentally", others would comment. Dirty and menial jobs they may have been, but for a group of individuals faced with poverty and social isolation they had their rewards.

6 11 A NOTE ON WIDOWHOOD IN A CAR WORKERS'S SUBURB

In the group of 25 car workers, 5 were widowers, with the average length of widowhood being 5.8 years, 4 out of the 5 had lost their wives just before (between 11 - 18 months) they retired. It had been suggested from the small group of miners who had been widowed that despite the traumatic consequences of widowhood the maintenance of both familial and extra-familial ties had been key factors in keeping the individual active within the community. How far was this the case in Rubery and Rednal? Certainly in all cases family support had been and continued to be the most important source of help, but in these areas this support was isolated from any wider social network. In this respect - unlike in Wheatley Hill - widowhood was often a component in a process of disengagement, the loss of a wife drastically reducing social activities and daily social contacts.

The majority of those widowed had been drawn from joint conjugal role relationships with loose-knit networks, and in many cases retirement had been eagerly anticipated as a prelude to a more intensive exploitation of the marital relationship. Under these circumstances the coincidence of widowhood so near to retirement caused a major shock

" that altered circumstances completely. There was nothing much left to look forward to then. Even now I wonder sometimes what the point is, coming home with nothing there. "

(Mr Allen)

"Well, when the wife was here, yes we thought a lot about retirement you know like . we were looking forward to retirement when she was here we had a lot done on the house just for when we retired and, of course, it was only about 12 months before she passed away I still had 12 months to go .. course you know how you feel then . you don't care two ruddy hoots "

What was the early period of retirement like for you?

"Terrible . terrible ... for the first 9 months as I say, Well, I don't know . er . I should have gone out and looked around but I just didn't want to meet people at the time. I suppose when you're young it's not too bad but when you retire and you do need someone . you haven't got that someone and that's all it amounts to really "

(Mr Fowler)

Had you thought about retirement at all?

'No the only time we used to think about it was when the wife was alive we'd always had visions of selling this and getting a little bungalow in the country see . of course that was it."

(When she died, C P)

(Mr. Haines)

For everyone in this group the loss of their wives was to pose major questions, questions, in particular, concerning their social and financial position of being retired and single The acute difficulties faced by such persons in the inner city has already been noted - difficulties connected with finding relationships, making the right approaches, going to the right places In the car worker suburb all these difficulties were present Pubs and cinemas are expensive, and apart from Bingo Halls and Senior Citizen Clubs, there is little else in the way of facilities. Without these basic community supports making relationships can be difficult - especially after so long with one partner. It's a question of re-learning the manoeuvres and the role, though - it must be admitted - there are few guidelines for elderly lovers. In the end people manoeuvre in the dark

"I'm afraid I don't mix very well, I don't know what it is I'm alright once I'm there I go to the re-union down at the works . it's alright you meet old friends . but er I'm not a mixer at all there's one woman down the lane there , she invited me to have a coffee she's a bit younger than I am . but I haven't taken her up yet I thought she was a bit pushy at first "

(Mr Haines)

"I don't think I could ever get married again well I've only my eye for the young ones and they wouldn't take to an old man (laughs) I don't fancy other old women .. some not as old as meself or some not so old perhaps but I still wouldn't want to sleep with them . no . I can't see myself getting married again .. I've only seen one person I wouldn't have minded and she doesn't appear to be interested, not that I tried . I don't really think that I could take to another woman my own age My trouble is I forget I'm as old as I am, you know .. in me mind I'm not old "

(Mr. Knox)

Occasionally, however, there is a success and the uncertainty and lack of confidence is overcome.

"I met a girl-friend . . well . I went on one of these outings from the British Legion ... I met a lady there ... she lives at the top of the road . . and we formed a friendship up .. we see each other now about three times a week we do go out a lot in the summer and we also do a bit of dancing . . so I'm not too bad really "

(Mr. Fowler)

Successes such as these apart, what does come through from the interviews (and something which appeared to be lacking in Wheatley Hill) is people's sense of their own isolation, their knowledge of limited options, Sometimes there is a hint of despair

"Well, it's when I go to bed at nights, I get into the bed I lie down I think 'Oh I'm here all by myself again oh well have to grin and bear it ' That's what I say to meself .. "

(Mr Haines)

"No matter what you're doing, you're finding you're working in the house on your own all the while .. you do get bored, there's no doubt about it. Whereas you see, when you're at work . . you have a lot of people to talk to . your work has to be done .. even if you're only being told off by the gaffer it's something .. "

(Mr. Thompson)

"As regards going out on my own, I don't enjoy it all .. I only use it (the car) for going from here to there .. we used to go out for rides around Worcester . that sort of thing . I wouldn't dream of going there now, not by meself .. If I'd got somebody to go with me, yes ."

(Mr. Knox)

"You have to manage the best you can and that's about all there is to it really "

(Mr Allen)

"When you're on your own you always feel like that (loneliness, etc) there's no getting away from that to me . when I read about loneliness, yes . loneliness has got to creep in again . . that's what I'm trying to point out, when you go to work the loneliness goes because you're being with people nearly half the day and then you come home and you do a bit of work here, and when I retire from there definitely I shall feel it because you've got no-one again, you're back to square one again, and this is the whole point . that's the whole point of going to work see, because . . you don't really want to go to work I think when you retire at the age of 65 . . meself, I think you should be able to get enough off the pension or social security to be able to live comfortably without having to go to work But as I say, I go to work because I want to meet people, that's all there is to it." (Mr Fowler)

Both Mr Fowler and Mr Haines were doing part-time work and one other person (Mr. Anderson) had seriously considered it. All three felt that returning to work was the best way of finding the companionship they felt they needed. Apart from the work option it was sons and daughters that provided the main focus of attention for 4 out of the 5 (one individual, Mr. Knox, had been childless)

Mr Thompson, who had married late, after moving to Birmingham at the end of the War, still had three children living at home, and he had taken over the responsibility of doing most of the housework (including cooking), Mr Busby had one son still living at home. With the other two Mr. Allen went to his daughter's every day for his main meal (his daughter also lived in Rubery), Mr Fowler's daughter came over for him every Tuesday evening and took him back to her house for a meal and an evening with his grandchildren. Mr Knox usually went over to see his sister most weeks and he - as with Mr. Thompson - was also in touch with an ex-work mate.

These relationships constituted for most of the five their main regular social contacts. Girl-friends might be found occasionally, men-friends perhaps as well, but they were limited in number and usually hard to find. The conditions encouraging and stimulating friendship were basically at a low ebb. not so much

the overt hostility encountered in Benwell, more a covert discouragement "That's a great friend you know", some would say, pointing towards the television. And so it was - it, at least, had the merit of being reliable and easy to get on with, no chance of rejection or disappointment there.

6.12 CONCLUDING COMMENT

The problems for retirees from Longbridge may be defined simply and precisely. First, they retired from a work relationship with little chance of seeing former work colleagues on any more than a chance or casual basis. Secondly, they faced a very large drop in income upon their retirement, a drop which drastically curtailed the sort of material and social life they had previously maintained. Thirdly, they retired into a community which had grown rapidly in the post-war period, a community, moreover, where their demographic and social position was weak. To say, as well as this, that there was a lack of community "spirit" or an absence of a firm identity to the area would, perhaps, be too vague and imprecise, rather, we can point to the gaps between the main components making up the community, i.e. the individual, the family and the work place, and the extent to which the retired person suffered precisely because of these gaps. Where indeed there were linkages in the form of pubs, clubs and so on, the elderly were usually excluded (or excluded themselves) by their inability to pay their way.

The point which suggests itself here is that both in communities in the throes of rapid decline (Benwell) and those in the process of rapid growth (Rubery and Rednal), the retired are perhaps the most affected by the structural change going on around them, and by the dislocation in social relationships which such change inevitably brings. The degree of dislocation which the elderly experience may be particularly acute where their number in the

community is small and where the needs of other age/social groups are dominant Under these conditions, the scope for the retired and elderly of developing their own life-styles, and developing at the same time, links and relationships with other age and social groups, is made particularly difficult The elderly under these circumstances do indeed appear different "You feel like that (i.e. different) people look on you as that", Mr McLean said, "People look on you as an 'old-age drop-out', " somebody else said In Benwell many were frightened at the hostility which is the ultimate consequence of these sort of feelings, of this sort of differentiation In Rubery and Rednal the elderly were more often just ignored, left alone with their sense (and others') of being separate and rather different

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Sunday Times, 13 December, 1955
- 2 Structure Plan for Birmingham, Written Statement, p 29, Birmingham City Council, 1973
- 3 Structure Plan for Birmingham, Report of Survey. Employment and Industry, p 51, Birmingham City Council, 1973
- 4 Goldthorpe, J H , et al, (1968, p 175
- 5 See Beynon, H , (1975), Turner, G , (1964)
- 6 See Goldthorpe, J H , et al, (1969)
- 7 Car production rose from 95,000 in 1923 to 500,000 in 1937,
Austins producing the first mass market car (the Austin 7) in 1921.
(Stevenson, J and Cook, C , 1978, pp 10-11)
- 8 Lambert, J E , and Wyatt, R J. , (1968), p 144.
9. Assa Briggs (1952) has described the early history of Longbridge
as follows.

In 1905 Herbert Austin had set up his own motor-car factory at Longbridge, with high hopes of 'motorising the masses' Longbridge was to become the model of a large-scale twentieth century production unit, employing new methods. The beginnings were modest. The original site covered 2¹/₂ acres, and Austin's capital consisted of £15,000. The first car was built there in 1906, and the first Austin 7 with a single cylinder engine appeared 4 years later. At that time the output of the Austin Works was 576 a year, and by 1914, when they employed 2,000 workers, annual production had increased to 1,500 (p. 45)

- 10 Ibid, p 284
- 11 See Turner, G (op cit), Beynon, H (op cit), Allen, (1972) for examples of this research
- 12 Beynon, H (op cit) comments in relation to a speed-up of the line at Fords

The speed-up had a particularly violent effect upon the older workers in the plant. At the best of times men in their fifties can't compete as equals on an assembly line with men half their age. Speed-up and the clamp-down on the organisation of work resulted in many of these men asking for their cards "

And in the context of the American Car Industry, one of Studs

Terkals' (1977) respondents (a spot welder) made the following comment

Auto workers are becoming increasingly young and increasingly black. Most of the older workers are a lot more - shall we say, conservative. Most of the older men have seniority, so they don't have to do the work I do. They put 'em on something easy. Old men can't do the work I do. They had one, about a year ago, and he had three heart attacks. And they finally gave him a broom. He was about forty, yeah, forty, that's an old man around here. (p 231)

- 13 B M C World (Longbridge Edition), No 14, October 1961, p. 11.
- 14 Ibid, No 44, April 1964, p 11
- 15 As a mass, in unison, numbers become strong, they add up. Through the mass the assembly line operator becomes a man and not a nonentity. It is through the mass, not through skill, that the assembly line operator obtains his freedom. However momentarily, the mass meeting created in these men some sense of being alive. (Beynon, H., op. cit. p 198)

CHAPTER 7

ARCHITECTS IN RETIREMENT

7 1 THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

The last group to be interviewed were the architects, and we stay once again in the Midlands, this time ranging over a large area of Birmingham and some of the surrounding counties to find the twenty-five individuals who talked about their retirement. Because of the size of the geographical area covered it is not possible to give the sort of description of individual localities that has been attempted previously. Instead, an outline will be sketched of the houses and localities visited - comparing these to the type of areas discussed previously.

In the preceding chapters the three areas covered have each represented different facets of working-class life under capitalism. Poverty and population decline in Benwell, occupational homogeneity and solidarity in Wheatley Hill, material progress and social privatisation in Rubery and Rednal. However, despite the different economic and social pressures affecting these communities, for the retired people in them the experience of living on a margin, of being without a financial surplus, was a common one (the miners were a partial exception to this tendency although their 'surplus' was achieved at some cost to their physical well-being). For the group to be discussed now these experiences were much less in evidence. Few had had to give up any major item of expenditure, and most had continued with many elements of the lives they had been leading prior to retirement. This was a group of people who had been able to put together an adequate surplus for retirement, and who still had the physical health to use and enjoy it. In sum, this was a group with a definite retirement life-style - a way of living and enjoying life without the discipline of full-time work and without the material austerity which afflicts those who are either wholly retired or those who cannot find work.

From the researcher's/interviewer's point of view the interviews in this section presented a very different personal experience from those conducted previously. Perhaps it had something to do with the often elegantly furnished rooms, the extensive and meticulously cared for gardens, the space and prosperity in homes and neighbourhoods. Perhaps as well it had something to do with the confidence and assertiveness of the respondents - their strong sense of 'self' easily transcending a by now rather battered tape recorder. They faced the interviewer as 'self-made men', with little to hide and plenty to reveal about themselves. Most in fact had had a good start to life and had taken care to exploit this advantage and build upon it where possible.¹ Most were 'successful' men by the criteria which society usually adopts and they were successful at least as much through hard work and shrewd judgement as an initial start in class and social background. As successful men they felt little to be afraid of - least of all in the interview situation, a situation of which they had long experience. If anything, the reverse was the case, the 'expert' (the interviewer) became the 'novice', and with most having used recording machines regularly even the tape-recorder became common-place. Still, there was occasional surprise at some questions and thoughtful and genial replies to most - the interviewer often leaving relaxed and at ease. And why not? He had been told (often) the story of a happy working life, and an equally happy retirement. He had been told this in environments free of the usual signs of austerity and thrift. At a personal level it was a relief in some ways: talking to individuals in Benwell, to the miners in Wheatley Hill, or to the car workers, these had often been painful and difficult experiences, people in miserable poverty, people with poor health, people coping without their wives - these were not easy things to talk about (and certainly not things you usually have a 2' - 3 hour conversation about). So it was

a relief in some ways to talk to the architects "I'm sorry, I'm not able to say that I'm miserable", said one, and indeed few were miserable. Certainly, there were none who were poor, none were forced to have their life styles determined by supplementary benefits, they may have chipped at some of the edges of their life-style, but the core or essence of it had been retained. This was a group of people at ease in their retirement, enjoying the release from what had often been burdensome responsibilities. In some respects the descriptions to be given below are descriptions of retirement as it could or should be - retirement as a period of choice and freedom to pursue personal interests - the freedom provided by supporting social, physical and material resources.

It is not entirely fortuitous that the architects should turn out in this way. In the choice of the final sample it was necessary to find a group who would maximise the sort of resources which were thought to be most useful in the retirement period. A number of possibilities were considered, but the architects were eventually selected as being the one most likely to show the outlines of an alternative retirement life-style - a life-style which would be less dominated by the sort of problems that have been documented so far. In particular, it was reasoned that the architects might be able to take into their retirement elements of their occupational lives (Salaman's, 1974, analysis of the architects' occupational community was influential here)², supporting these within a more flexible social and financial framework. On the latter, the Midlands was regarded as an appropriate area from which to select a group of architects - the post-war industrial boom and extensive housing developments in the fifties and early sixties providing a favourable environment for architectural practices. Finally, it was also thought that in the transfer from work to retirement a more gradual scaling down of activities might be possible (particularly for principals in private practices), and that this

might be an important factor in removing the 'anxieties' and 'tensions' often associated with retirement

On the other hand, there were also aspects of the architects' occupational experience which it was thought might have some negative consequences for retirement. In particular, there was the question of whether the reduction in responsibility in the later years would give rise to feelings of 'uselessness' or of rejection. There was also the question of whether - if there was a chance for a more flexible retirement - this might not itself give rise to anxieties and uncertainties as regards the decision for making the final break, i.e. how far a flexible retirement would itself be the source of conflict

7.2 OCCUPATIONAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUNDS

So far the discussion has been mainly about constraints in retirement and about people moving within a limited range of options. Sometimes a material surplus has been achieved but this has often been quickly exhausted - either by unemployment or perhaps by retirement itself. Notions of 'occupational choice' or 'retirement choice' have had limited utility. People have faced definite physical, social and material barriers, and it has been difficult to evade the sense in which these barriers have shaped and determined the pattern of individual lives. In focusing now on a group of architects we view the class and social structure from a very different vantage point, a middle-class one at base, one where the emphasis in occupational experiences had been less one of 'luck' or 'good' fortune (or conversely 'bad luck' and 'ill-fortune'), more one of achievement through hard work, good connections and sound judgement. In the group to be discussed here most looked back on their lives and recognised a pattern of upward progress and development. Occupational ceilings had been reached, talents and abilities had been stretched, most important of all, purpose and meaning had been achieved in working lives - with, alongside this

reasonable financial and social rewards. For this group, then, there had been some kind of 'pay-off', some sort of reward for diligence and professional competence (and juxtaposed with the rewards received by the previous groups the 'pay-off' has been a handsome one)

Of course, most of the architects had started from a higher vantage point to begin with. Just 3 out of the 25 come from working class backgrounds, most having been brought up in a home environment where a life in one of the professions was an accepted and 'natural' thing. Fathers had sometimes themselves been architects or builders (in seven cases), and amongst other occupations mentioned were engineer, factory manager, bank manager and local government official. In this milieu, sons would often feel as little choice in the likelihood of their going 'up' as the labourers in Benwell had of going 'down' (though in all other respects there were very big differences between the two groups indeed)

"I went in straight from school. I joined my father. I really didn't have a yen for it. I sort of automatically went in. It was understood I would go in." (Mr Clark)

"Well my father used to be an architect and I think he put me on to it as much as anything. It seemed the natural thing to do." (Mr Regan)

"Possibly to some extent I was pushed in. I was interested in drawing and so on. My father happened to be visiting Dunlops in connection with his work and he knew they had an architectural department there. He just organised that I could go there as a pupil in the first place." (Mr Mitchell)

There were in fact some common themes in the reasons individuals themselves gave for taking up architecture. 11 out of the 25 mentioned an early talent or interest in art or drawing which had led either themselves or others to suggest a career in architecture, others had had an interest in engineering and construction - an interest which had eventually brought them into the profession, for a minority (as illustrated by Mr Clark and Mr Regan

above) sons had followed fathers into practising architecture - for them "it seemed the natural thing to do " Notwithstanding these common themes, individual biographies indicate a variety of forces contributing to entry into architecture

"It sounds a ridiculous thing to say but when my parents were in Canada (father was Professor of Mathematics at a Canadian University) I was taught for a year by my Grandmother . and she said the way you draw geometrical figures you ought - perhaps - to think of architecture And that was the first time - this was when I was 11 - the first time I'd ever heard the word But from that time on I began to take an interest in the idea " (Mr Rathbone)

"My uncle was a Bank Manager so I was sent to the commercial school of the Regent Street Polytechnic I had about three months of commercial education and I thought that wasn't my future, although I was only about 15 at the time, and the people on the next floor up were drawing and I was always very interested in drawing this was called the technical college so I got moved up to the next floor This is during the First World War Then it struck me one day with all the damage that had been done there would be a lot of building to do after the war so I applied and went into architecture " (Mr Peach)

"There's a story told that when I was at school - I was at Rugby - I used to spend most of my time in the Drawing Room My father (an industrialist) used to say 'he's not good enough to be an artist, he'll never make a fortune, the best thing he can do is to go on a farm and at least have a nice out-door life ' Well it so happened I had an uncle who was quite a prominent architect in Birmingham . he took me under his wing and suggested I should go to Cambridge and it started off from there " (Mr Harding)

"The big thing that gave me the push I think was that my father was trained - he wasn't English - he was trained in an art school in Germany where he was given the old German heavy discipline with the old masters and Michaelangelo, and of course these people were architects as well as sculptors and so on And he had a very high view of architecture architecture meant for him, St Peter's, and so on - the big things a chance for creation This was partly bolstered by the fact that he himself was a failure because he had to leave Germany, there was a spate of anti-semitism and he couldn't survive there or Prussia He was advised to come to England and so he came and fitted in where he could nobody had a clue what you did with an artist so he had to switch to something so I think it was partly this background knowledge plus frustration he thought well, my son will have a chance, so he gave me a bit of a nudge in that direction and the school encouraged it and I found myself going into a school of architecture " (Mr Peters)

The group as a whole was split fairly evenly between those who had studied architecture full-time and those who had been articled to a private firm and who had studied either part-time or at night school for their qualifications (if done at the latter the process could take up to 10 years) As regards their eventual careers, 15 became partners either through forming a small practice of their own (usually with one or two others) or through entering an existing practice and being eventually promoted to a partnership - hereafter this group will be designated by the term 'Principals', 10 were to go either into local authority work (7), remain as salaried architects in private practice (2), or to join a commercial company as resident architect (1) - hereafter this group will be designated by the term "Non-Principals" ³ Salaman (op cit) in his application of the concept "occupational community" to architects, notes an important difference between Principals and Non-Principals as regards their attitude to their employment situation. Thus in the hypothetical situation of people obtaining so much money that work was no longer necessary, he found that

The vast proportion of principals would in this . situation remain in their present type of work Many of them said that under these conditions they would be able to enjoy their work all the more for they would be able to choose their work Most of those architects who were not principals would change their type of work under these hypothetical circumstances, and they all said that they would set up their own practices Many added that this was a real, personal ambition which they hoped to fulfil in the future (p 100)

In this study, some differences between Principals and Non-Principals were also noted regarding their attachment to the architectural community and, in particular, in the influence of that community on the non-work area of the architects' life More will be said of these differences later, for the moment, however, attention will be focused on feelings about the work itself (as opposed to the actual employment situation), and here there were no great differences between Principals and Non-Principals Of the things most liked nearly 60 per cent of the group mentioned the creative side of architecture and the accompanying

enthusiasm with which this aspect of work was discussed marked a radical departure from the feelings about work described in the previous interviews

"The great thing is when you're designing something. You live in another world for a bit. The client tells you this, that and the other, or, if it's a competition, you've got the conditions. . . you have to sort of imagine it; you try all the variables. . . you work out one answer. 'No that one won't do. . .'. Or you argue it out amongst yourselves. . . But in the process, no matter where you are - in a bus or on top of a train - you're living in a sort of fantasy world of that job at that time. That's the joy of architecture. . . this is what makes architects tick." (Mr Johnstone)

"It's not just architecture, it's a thing anybody with a creative mind will say. . . it's the sense of creating something out of nothing. You get the same with painting or sculpture where you are actually creating something, that's the essence of the thing and candidly architecture's a damn disease - my wife will tell you that." (Mr Hawkeswood)

"Oh, yes, what I enjoyed most was the creative thing. Looking back on one's experiences - I was saying this to somebody the other day - the jobs we enjoyed doing most were the jobs that brought the least return. . . financial return. And at the end of the day when somebody says that's very nice I like what you've done. . . that's worth all the tea in China." (Mr Edgington)

The drawbacks with architectural work and the things disliked were precisely those aspects which as one architect put it "blocked the creative side", chief amongst these being the uneven flow of work, the increase in building regulations and controls and councillors and committees (the latter being most often mentioned by those in local government). In essence, this was a group of people who expressed feeling and passion about the nature of their work - the extent of attachment often leading to disdain for any perceived excess of administrative controls.⁴

"The big bug-bear, I always found, was ignorant councillors." (Mr Oliver)

"Well, I was an individual, I was never very good at obeying rules and regulations that were just irritating." (Mr Edgington)

"Well, the greatest thing which all people in the sphere of architecture face is the frustrations you find. Nothing to do with money or anything like that. . . but you find all sorts of frustrations from what I would term 'little men' they may be blooming great large men. . . but they're little mentally!" (Mr. . . .)

Whilst attitudes towards work were relatively homogeneous, there were differences regarding the degree of attachment to architecture, and the impact of the latter in the 'non-work' area of life (a crucial point in respect of the 'occupational community' concept). There were differences, in particular, between Principals and Non-Principals on this point - the former tending to have more architectural or related interests outside of the usual working hours, to have more work colleagues who were also friends outside of the office, and to spend large amounts of over-time on on-going architectural projects.

Here are some comments, for example, from senior partners from five architectural practices

" If you're a partner in a practice, and we had at times upwards of 100 people, you've just got to shift around and get the work first of all, and then you've got to get it done - for amongst other things to provide the monthly salary bill. It becomes very commercial in that sense - there are a lot of people depending on you, so that you could never leave it at the office, you were always bringing things home. It was an 18 - 20 hours job - even if it was only public relations in the evening - various federations and what have you. You never quite lost it - .. you were always with the trade "

(Mr Holmes)

"I always reckoned you started work when you got out of bed and started shaving - thinking about it - and the last thing you thought of before you went to sleep was your job. Of course it goes in phases - but I used to tell people coming into the business they'd got to be prepared. Architecture was one crisis after another. There always seemed to be a crisis - if it wasn't one job it was another job. You're never free from stress and strain "

(Mr Clark)

"It's perpetual - it's ever with you - it means when you're going along, say you're driving a motor car, or in your bath, your problem is always there to be solved. That's the joy of it, that's one of the things an architect can be grateful for, it's ever with him. I imagine it's the same with many other professions. It's a professional thing isn't it?"

(Mr Harding)

"Yes - I'm afraid I always seemed to be working on it. I did a lot of work for charitable people like schools - Quaker schools, a lot of that I did in my spare-time. So that I was working in my spare-time in Architecture - so it did take up a great deal of time and I found it very difficult to get my mind off it. Then when I went on my holidays we went looking at buildings - part of the time "

(Mr Kendrick)

"You thought of very little else . . . Our spare time was taken up looking at what other people were doing . . . and sketching and taking a few photographs you know . . . going to something you'd seen reported in the papers and which you thought was interesting " (Mr Regan)

In these examples the connections between "work" and "life", and occupation and leisure, appear very close indeed ⁵ Of course, there is a cogent financial reason why this should be so (as the comment from Mr Holmes suggests) Quite apart from any idealistic commitment to the work itself, a partner in a private practice has to go "after work" in a way which is not encountered by architects in other areas He has to maintain contacts, attend trade and professional functions develop and attract new clients - all this on a scale rarely equalled by those architects working for local authorities In short, the Principal has to locate himself firmly within the occupational milieu and culture - an absolute necessity if he is to ensure the regular flow of work which can guarantee the practice's survival One consequence of this involvement is a sharpening in the professional ideology which accompanies architectural work (that ideology stressing the social importance of architecture, and the extent of its impact on individual and social behaviour⁶) Whilst such an ideology was shared in part by all who were interviewed, it was most clearly stated by those in private practice, i.e. in a context where the ideology developed from a strong material need

"Well one thing, it's a very imaginative job . . . the other thing is that you are dealing with people . . . it's not like abstract things . . . painting, sculpture and so on . . . You are dealing with man's needs and interpreting those needs so that the result shall be both practical and, one hopes, artistic . . . And that I think is the most rewarding side of architecture, it's the serving of man and his needs in an attractive manner " (Mr Peach)

"In a way the architect is a creature that's bred really . . . it influences the whole of one's outlook . . . It becomes a philosophy . . . I don't know whether this sounds rational to you . . . but you know, it's a way of life . . . wherever you go or whatever you do . . . as I said . . . if you'd only be interested superficially in architecture . . . There are two things

we more or less live with in the urban developments one's the people, the other's the buildings and all that go with them So you might as well get what you can out of it The environment next to the human is the biggest impact on anybody's life It really explains, in a way, how much I feel you know whatever I do wherever I go is a busman's holiday and I enjoy it nevertheless " (Mr Edgington)

Whilst, as suggested above, elements of this ideology could certainly be found amongst the Non-Principals, there was a tendency for it to be less all-embracing, less of a coherent world view arising out of a deep intellectual and material commitment Thus the Non-Principals were more likely to stress other non-architectural aspects to their lives, to suggest a degree of distancing from their occupational environment, and to insist on the importance of maintaining a sense of detachment

"I felt that one could get altogether too wrapped up in it if one let it invade home life too " (Mr Rathbone)

"In local government, and particularly in education work, the work goes through at a steady pace all the time and there's really no need or very rarely any need to spend a lot of time on over-time - bringing your work home anything like that I'd made up my mind I wouldn't attempt to do private work at home while I was working with the corporation I didn't think, for one thing, it was fair to the family - we have a son and daughter - and I used to like to spend the time with them So what I used to endeavour to do was to get home the same time every night and leave my work at the office " (Mr Oliver)

"If I got talking with an architect well I don't like too much shop talk and so outside the office I'd rather be with a new type of people purely social " (Mr Fairley)

"I didn't go to so many architectural meetings - there were quite a large number then I think had you got mixed up in that you could probably have spent your life you know all architecture seven days a week which nice though it is it's not quite what one wanted " (Mr Morrison)

The interesting question here is how far these differing levels of involvement will affect attitudes towards and experiences in retirement On the one hand, it might be argued that the deeper involvement of the Principals might create difficulties in adjusting to retirement and adjusting in particular

to the reduced scale of responsibilities which retirement brings. On the other hand, this group should be in a better position to control their entry into retirement - allowing a more flexible run-down in their responsibilities. This point would not be so applicable to the Non-Principals - a group much more likely to experience an immediate "cut-off" from work to retirement, one which may bring some difficulties - at least in the early stages of this period. Certainly, the latter were more likely to report problems in the run-up to retirement than the Principals (50 per cent as against 33.3 per cent), and these problems tended to be associated with changes in their employment situation. For example, the two salaried architects in private practice both reported a deterioration in the sort of work they were given in their last years at work - an experience which was often deeply resented.

" there was this problem - which I suppose happens everywhere - in that all the younger people think they know better and they've got their different ideas and so on, and as you get younger partners bosses so they do tend to put the older people to one side and think they're only useful for the hack work really. This was a problem. I suppose everybody suffers from the same really whereas from being used to running a job you find that you're relegated to certain parts and so on and of course, there obviously is the feeling that you new thought in design as you grow older you lose touch with them to some extent "

(Mr Mitchell)

"Now an Architect's project is not a 6 month job - it could be 4 - 5 years. So the thing is, as you come towards your retirement you start to get into a cul-de-sac a backwater. You're not getting the jobs that you have been used to, you're getting 'fill-ins' little jobs trivial jobs that you can knock off in a month or two, and it's very frustrating, you begin to feel you aren't wanted anymore you're just being tolerated it's a nasty feeling. Whereas a year ago perhaps you were sort of ploughing the furrow. Now you're sort of following the harrow. this is one of the bad. perhaps the bad part "

(Mr Tipton-Jones)

The Principals, on the other hand, had not had this problem since many of them had gone on to consultancies and had scaled down their work over a much longer time span. Their retirement patterns will be examined in more detail

below, but to set against the above problems, here is the experience of Mr Peach, who took a two year consultancy after reaching the age of 65.

"You had to compulsorily retire at 65, which was only fair, otherwise if you went on and on nobody further down the ladder would have a chance to come up. But when you got to the age of 65, there was no chopper because the projects which you already personally had in hand were not going to conveniently stop, and so we had an arrangement by which partners became consultants for two years which meant to say that it wasn't bang . you gradually retired spread over two years. Also for 12 months before I retired I was delegating work to people and then I could watch them taking it on while I was still there and it worked very well indeed."

But despite the potential problems for some in this group, few had had to bear the sort of 'costs' and 'burdens' characteristic of the groups and individuals interviewed so far. In this respect they were to enter retirement not simply better off financially, but with better physical and mental health, and with a circle of friends who would be lost only through the process of ageing - not through financial impoverishment or via the break-up of communities. Given this, how differently did they respond to retirement? What were they to make of it?

7.3 INTO RETIREMENT

The retirement pattern amongst groups with some control over their market situation is inevitably more complex than for those without such control, and amongst the architects this was particularly the case with the Principals. However, amongst all workers, the likelihood of working beyond 65 has been declining, and this is no less true of architects than it is of other groups. There are a number of factors at work here. First, over a third of architects in the U.K. are employed by local and central government agencies - most in this group will be compulsorily retired at the age of 65. Secondly, the trend towards larger architectural practices will inevitably bring rules and procedures for handling periods such as retirement - procedures which will be less dependent

on individual choice about when to finish work. Thirdly, the technological environment itself is less favourable for older architects, with metrification, decimalisation, and the general speed of innovation in new building materials, being the main sources of pressure. Finally, the market situation itself is now much less favourable for continuing architectural work into old age, and, in the situation of a decline in the demand for new buildings, a tendency to give way to younger architects may be particularly marked.

Of course, stories about architects dying on the drawing board may still have an element of truth. Yet they are increasingly less accurate as regards the profession as a whole. Architects, in fact, have had to accept the inevitability of retirement along with many other professional groups. Before looking at how a group of them responded to their retirement, some facts about them will first of all be summarised.

The distinction made earlier between Principals and Non-Principals is particularly relevant for the retirement period since most of the former had continued working beyond 65, whereas most of the latter had been compulsorily retired at this age. The average age of the 25 interviewed was 69.4 years, with the Principals being just over 2 years older than the Non-Principals (70.4 years as against 68.2 years). The average length of retirement was 3.8 years in the case of the Non-Principals and 4 years in the case of the Principals. This latter figure is taken from the end of the period of consultancy which many had taken after finishing at 65, thus, in a formal sense, retirement had been rather longer than the period of 4 years would suggest (however, I have used this figure to indicate the length of time which the Principals felt that they had themselves retired from Architecture).

Thus there is a group of 10 (the Non-Principals) who were virtually all

compulsorily retired at 65, and a group of 15 (the Principals) who had a much greater amount of individual choice about how and when they retired - many of them continuing to practice architecture into their late sixties, a group for whom retirement was part of a much more gradual divesting of responsibilities. Seven out of the 15 had gone on to consultancies (usually for periods of 2 - 3 years) for their old firms, and this had involved varying degrees of activity - the amount of work largely determined by the individual himself. In a number of cases there had been a winding down even before 65 (the age at which the consultancy was usually taken) - a point which has already been noted in the example of Mr Peach, who took a day off each week in the 12 months prior to formal retirement. Despite variations in the arrangements for the consultancy period, the comment by Mr Clark below will illustrate its basic outline.

"I became a consultant at 65 when I gave up the job of head of the firm and I took no percentage of profits. I took a fixed salary and I went into the office as and when it pleased me to. From then on I didn't actually take responsibility for any particular job. You see, in an architect's office, one of the partners has got to say this is my job and he's responsible. Well from then on I didn't take responsibility for any job although I was in on most of them and they used to discuss them with me and I used to be in the office most days. It was an easing off."

Some examples may be useful here to illustrate variations in this 'easing off' process. John Kendrick retired onto a consultancy at the age of 65 and for the first year of this continued to come into the office more or less every day. In the second year, he began to reduce his attendance, taking a seven week holiday and staying away from the office for one or two afternoons every week. He is now wholly retired. Mr Clark, who was quoted above, built into his partnership agreement an undertaking that he would retire at 65 and go onto a 5 year consultancy period, he finally retired at 69 when the partnership was reformed. Stephen Harding was a consultant for three years after reaching 65, gradually

reducing his responsibilities over this period, as with Mr Kendrick, he is now wholly retired. A slightly different retirement pattern is provided by Mr Johnstone who had combined a career in Architecture with that of town planning. He retired onto a number of consultancies at the age of 60, developing at the same time, his 'second career' as a planning consultant. He has continued with this into his late sixties and intends to combine consultancy work with semi-retirement well into his seventies.

All of the examples above are taken from individuals retiring from fairly large practices (some employing up to 100 people). These practices are much more likely to have a consultancy arrangement than a smaller firm where the opportunity will usually only be one of either part-time work (and hence responsibility for some jobs), or complete retirement. In two cases where the former had been tried it had been found rather unsatisfactory with the individual often carrying on as much work as he had done previously.

Given the possibility, however, of gradually easing off the amount of work they were doing, it is interesting that just one out of the 15 Principals reported difficulties in the transitional period from work to retirement - certainly there was no evidence to suggest that this retirement pattern was itself a cause of anxiety. In comparison 5 out of the 10 Non-Principals reported difficulties in the early stages of retirement (though ill-health and redundancy were complicating factors in two of these cases). Out of the small group of six (combining both groups) who reported difficulties, all reported settling into retirement after an average of 6 - 9 months.

Apart from having a generally easier run-up to retirement than those interviewed so far the architects were a group with a much higher level of social and group activities - these usually being explored with greater depth and intensity

in the retirement period (17 out of the 25 had 3 or more hobbies) In addition, many in the group were engaged in extensive voluntary activities within the community - hospital friends charitable housing associations, church work, etc - and these activities provided important elements of the retirement experience

One feature here was that these activities could be continued partly because of a much higher income level It is difficult to give precise figures because many of the Architects had investments and savings, as well as an occupational pension (in some cases) and of course the State pension Most, however, reported a figure of around £4,000 which they had to find to maintain the sort of standard of living they were used to, and very few reported that they were unable to find this amount Even this sum would still involve cutting down on activities and expenses - holidays abroad being the most frequently mentioned item in this context

In terms of family and communal relationships the architects' retirement seemed to have had little impact Almost all of the architects reported an unchanged family situation, with a strong tendency to have maintained the type of relationship built up over the years, rather than for a more intense exploration or, conversely, any deterioration in the relationship The underlying characteristic here was for both partners to have built up their own networks of activities and friends, with a tendency - in retirement - for the balance between joint and independent activities to be maintained As regards social relationships, therefore, retirement was not a disruptive event, the architects having friendships which were based more on a professional and social milieu than on specific work or community locations, relationships which usually continued into retirement, sometimes broadening out in their scope and content (Only 2 out of the 25 - it might be noted - reported problems in making or maintaining friends in retirement)

At a day to day level children were a relatively unimportant part of the architects' retirement. Family size was smallish (1.6 children) and nearly half of the total of 41 children had migrated to other regions in the country. Even here, however, distant homes provided a source for regular holidays - both for parents and children alike.

There were a number of forms of house moving in this group, with some short and medium distance migration. Regarding the former the main stimulus behind the move had been a wish to go from a larger to a smaller home for the retirement period (there were four examples of this), with the latter it was a desire to move to a smaller, rural community (there were two examples of this, both involving moves to villages within easy reach of Birmingham). There was also one architect who had bought a cottage on the Costa Del Sol, in which he and his wife planned to spend six months of the year, spending the rest of their time in their house in Birmingham. Six others had considered moving but decided against it, usually because they wished to remain within their existing circle of friends. It was not possible to interview any long-distance migrants (to the south-coast or south-west for example) but enquiries elicited very few examples of this type, and there seemed a clear preference for staying in the Midlands area. There are probably two principal reasons for this - apart from obvious ones such as disinclination to move away from friends. First there had been a tendency for people to settle in some of the more attractive parts of the Midlands - thus reducing the inclination to migrate. Secondly, where individuals (particularly the Principals) had maintained work commitments late into their sixties, a major move at such a late stage was not considered very feasible (a fact which would be reinforced by any desire to maintain those work commitments in some form).

Finally, it is salutary to note that 15 of the architects could think of no disadvantages at all to retirement, 17 reported freedom from responsibility and freedom to do things at one's own pace as the main advantages

Here, then, was a group with considerable social and financial resources, a group with few problems in relation to bad health, a group who had had a long and creative working life what was a group such as this to make of retirement? What were the benefits and drawbacks they encountered? What sort of life-style did they develop when the responsibilities of work were finally discarded?

7 4 EVERYDAY LIFE IN RETIREMENT

In retirement, the architects had two main advantages over the groups discussed so far. First, in terms of basic resources such as health, income, housing, and transport, they were rather more prosperous than the preceding groups. Secondly, as individuals, they had come into retirement in a much more satisfactory way, not only in respect of basic resources, but also in respect of the personal resources at their disposal resources which unlike that of the miners and car-workers had actually been added to and developed via their occupational experience (a situation which is rare for most workers who develop as individuals precisely to the extent that they can distance themselves from their work). The architects were not in the position of having to shed a restrictive work identity and then to assume one which was appropriate for retirement. On the contrary, they carried both a secure self-image, and a set of skills and resources which could be usefully exploited in the post-work period. Further, they saw (and felt) the advantages which retirement had for them in terms of enjoying these interests and resources within the context of a period free of work responsibilities. 'More freedom' was a phrase used by nearly half the architects to describe the way they felt about retirement: a freedom both from responsibilities and a freedom to do other things.

"I was very pleasantly surprised with retirement I think partly because I . . . because I was always a little bit slow and could never catch up and if that's your great anxiety - catching up - well . . . when you've no longer got to catch up it's something of a relief "

(Mr Harding)

"The first year seemed to me like an extended holiday I couldn't believe that I hadn't got to get into the rat-race and get into the office . . . that sort of thing This was the thing I enjoyed more than anything, the first 12 months as I say was like an extended holiday . . . I could hardly believe my luck "

(Mr Holmes)

"Well, for one thing we have been on some very interesting expeditions which is something . . . well I suppose one could have done it but you've got to be in the right frame of mind for it I always wanted to go to Greece . . . because obviously Greek architecture had a great interest for me . . . I've always been interested in Egyptian architecture . . . we went to see the Pyramids in Egypt . . . various other places Rome, Istanbul . . . also we have a great affection for Norway . . . we've three times been to Norway "

(Mr Peach)

This was a group of people who had stamped their presence onto retirement in much the same way they had done in respect of their occupational lives, and, just as with the latter they set projects for themselves, tasks and activities which would continue the intellectual and social engagement provided by their occupational careers To illustrate this point four people were doing research on their family history and two of these had already prepared substantial volumes from the material they had unearthed, one person - a former divisional commander in the Special Constabulary - was preparing a history of the Special Constabulary in the Midlands, working virtually full-time at this and retaining his secretary to type up the manuscript, there were four model engineering enthusiasts in the group and one of these had been collecting materials for some 10 years prior to his retirement in preparation for building a scale replica of one of his favourite steam engines (he has just completed the drawings for this), six had developed long-standing interests in painting and sketching - two of these attending evening classes in art, two people were involved with voluntary activities transporting elderly people to and from a day centre, and helping out

in the centre, one person was in the process of writing a guide book to his home town and had already completed a pamphlet on a local iron-works, finally, one person, whom we have already mentioned in the context of buying a cottage on the Costa Del Sol, was planning a book on the local flora, to be completed with his wife (a former biology teacher).

The above activities illustrate the convergence between work and non-work activities characteristic of occupational communities (Salaman, op.cit) Where these activities can be transferred to and developed in the retirement period the benefits of such a convergence are particularly noticeable, allowing an element of the occupational identity to be retained despite the ending of work⁸ The architects were also helped by having a wide range of activities and interests to carry into retirement, none reporting the problem of having to build up new hobbies and interests to fill in a retirement vacuum The following three comments illustrate the strength and depth of these interests

"I've got a lot of cine film I've made myself of the old steam days I put on one or two slide shows for old people I suppose probably you start to build up things from that I've now been asked if I'll take six courses for the local Boy Scouts' Association in photography so that they can get through their photography badges, Fircone have asked me to do a class in hobbies and perhaps even a bit of model engineering, then I've also been asked to go down to Tysley to the steam group down there and work with them two or three mornings a week to help re-build some of these steam locos down there for preservation then I also have a lot of my own modelling to do "

(Mr Oliver)

"The general thing is that I've got my early morning chores . I do that up to about 9 45 from then I work on my journal until 10 30 - then I go for my coffee I'm back home 11 45 - 12 . more journal until lunch-time After lunch a rest possibly half an hour and then I'm on to something else I jump about from one thing to another feeling that if you stay on one thing too long you will go stale so one day I will go to my English place names folio or surnames then I also have a broad interest in literature I'm always buying books "

(Mr Hawkeswood)

"I had an Aunt - a medieval historian - she died about 1968 she had all the family papers letters and diaries and things going right back to the beginning of the nineteenth century And I started - even before I was retired - reading through these, particularly those of my great grandfather And I thought well now this is a most fascinating picture of social history - which is something I knew absolutely nothing about And I edited the diaries of a particular relative and several hundred of his letters and got this written up into book form " (Mr Rathbone)

The importance of these projects lay in their capacity to give shape and meaning to the retirement period, thus helping to remove a source of anxiety and tension which can often surface in this period Anxiety about becoming useless, about having too much time on one's hands, anxiety about drifting, about mentally stagnating and decaying negative images such as these - whose force was often acknowledged by the architects - were thrust aside by the type of projects outlined above In this context the way in which people described their everyday lives in retirement was illustrative of the confidence and sense of purpose individuals had secured for themselves They were less anxious about 'time' and the problem of assisting its passing They could even enjoy the sense of having time on their hands - time to spare

"Well, of course, you potter about a lot you spend longer over things You've got time, for example, to go into town and spend half a day around the town calling at a shop here and a shop there, say once in two or three weeks I can occupy myself with half a day in the town Well then I've got three grandsons down in London well once or twice a year one at a time or two at a time they will come up for a week Well, I can devote myself to them for a week - I couldn't have done that when I was at work could I? Then I go about more with my wife get out and about you've got time for these things you see One of the Church Wardens came to me last week about writing up something for the Parish Magazine all those sort of things you know that beforehand in your business life you were too busy " (Mr Dowling)

"There is, I'm afraid, one confession we have to make, that is, I think we get up much later than we used to (laughs) that's one thing then, of course, there are household chores that have to be done where possible I help like washing-up, that sort of thing to make our leisure time more complete Then, of course, living in a little place like this, there are journeys to Solihull or shopping expeditions library oh, incidentally, I've read or have had more time for reading very much more than I used to "

(Mr. Brown)

"I've always belonged to the golf club which is immediately behind my house here er but had not played very much golf at all because I was too busy but after that to find I could go on a week-day if I wanted to when I wanted to and when it's so easy there's no rush no bustle this suited me down to the ground We've got a little club of all retired people formed a little club on their own within the club bank managers and all sorts of people lawyers and so on "

(Mr Holmes)

"I suppose to start off we don't get up as early as we should do a bit naughty but we generally come down open up the house put the plants back on the window sill . then we get our breakfast all prepared. We usually then take a cup of tea back to bed . have a breather for about 20 minutes Then I usually do some domestic work - we don't have any help - so I do that and my wife does the cooking .. and then there's bits of shopping and things like that and I suppose we tend to have a little 20 minutes after dinner . and possibly listen to the radio or read the paper we may go out for a walk or we may have some writing to do The evenings, of course, do tend to get taken up with various social activities "

(Mr Derrington)

There are some interesting phrases which occur in these extracts, phrases which perhaps give a clue to the feelings and attitudes behind the often substantial projects which people had set for themselves. People felt "a bit naughty" about getting up later or spoke of it in the form of a "confession", and these comments (alongside more serious ones) indicated the importance of activities and projects in alleviating the anxieties about retirement referred to earlier. In most cases this was done with ease and confidence (assisted in many cases by the "winding down" which many had had the benefit of), in other cases there would be a longer process of struggle, for some, occasional periods of doubt and unease. Mr Kendrick, for example, who was senior partner in a large architectural practice, comments

"I think this is what has been, until recently, was a sort of worry that I was becoming useless. But now I think I've got meself all weighed up and I've got something which - I mean - photographing a lot of flowers and cataloguing them may not be very much, but there's something to show for it when you've finished .. which I think is why I've taken that sort of line that if I was playing golf or something I wouldn't be likely to win any championships or anything There would be nothing to show for it . if one just went

on playing We've made a number of friends in the botanical line and this research we may do in this area - which has not been very well covered in a botanical way - could be a contribution Whether it is or not, the thought that it might be makes it very acceptable "

And from two other architects - one in industry, the other in private practice - there are two rather similar comments

"I do occasionally get the feeling I'm still a useful sort of person, I shouldn't be drifting doing nothing but I'm not doing nothing I'm writing a guide book to Leamington which is a positive contribution "

(Mr Peters)

"Yes it satisfies me very nicely thank you because it gives me a side interest (doing some architectural work occasionally) and it is a sop I suppose to this effect that er I'm not entirely useless I know that and I can convince myself I'm not you know but this is a positive seal to that situation "

(Mr Edgington)

Another way of illustrating this feeling came from those who, whilst satisfied with retirement overall, still missed the challenge and stimulation they had once had from work They missed the 'excitement' and 'tension' experienced in handling a contract and in preparing a new design, and they recognised a sense in which this could never really be compensated for - the arrival was inevitably slightly less exciting than the journey itself

"I do sometimes feel well I don't know lie in bed every morning half an hour before I've got to get up well there isn't the same objectives today there was when I was 50 I've got things to do but it isn't absolutely essential that they should be done I can do it if I want to I needn't if I don't You haven't got the same objective I often remind myself of the saying 'To journey hopefully is better than to arrive ' And it can be Our daughter-in-law said to us when we were seeing them as we were going she said 'I wish I was like you I can't wait enough for retirement ' I often think yes, but you wait until it comes you see another side to it you haven't got quite the same objective and purpose no you've got to adjust yourself to it "

(Mr Dowling)

"Well, it's a bit difficult to get used to not having a job the anxiety in a way because if you're running your own practice it's an anxious sort of job you know in a way You're responsible for making things go and making sure there's going to be some money left when all the bills are paid It's quite a worry and yet it's a challenge at the same time and you do miss that "

(Mr Regan)

Given the level of work commitments of this group - and particularly that of the principals - statements such as these are perhaps unsurprising. How much the more gradual easing off enjoyed by many of the Principals contributed to the relative rarity of such statements is a question we can only speculate on - certainly it was a critical factor in reducing worry and anxiety for a group whose occupational involvement had been intense. Indeed, rather than overwhelming anxiety, it was usually a sense of release and freedom which Principals and Non-Principals alike projected

"I suppose the main thing is, you're not running a shuttle service between you and the office every day, you're to some extent free to come and go as you like - not entirely - because as you loosen connections at work so you tighten the family ones - but it's an enjoyable tightening up - just as the loosening is. Oh no, a very pleasant transition. No - if you want my opinion on retirement, so long as you look at it early enough, I recommend it."

(Mr Emmerson)

"Oh - quite definitely in my mind is the lack of responsibility. - er - that's what I feel mostly. I don't know whether I had any more responsibility than others - I always had my full share - and it's lovely to get rid of that. I liked responsibility when I was younger and building up a practice ... thrived on it - but I think at the end I was very happy to pass that on to somebody else - I think that's the greatest thing. And the other thing, of course, is that the older you get the less energy you have and it's rather nice not to feel that it matters if you haven't got the energy."

(Mr Harding)

7 5 DOMESTIC AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

There was an important difference between the architects and the groups discussed previously in that the former were much more likely to report both an unchanged domestic situation (76 per cent) and the maintenance of the social networks which each couple had built up. There were a number of influences at work here. First, many people still employed domestic help in the home. This reduced the pressure to change domestic habits and the household routine. Secondly, the large size of many of the houses visited was itself an influential

factor in allowing an existing pattern of domestic relations to be maintained - as well as helping to reduce the tensions usually attributed to such relations in the retirement period. Thirdly, the smallness of family size combined with the tendency of children to move away, made a "turn towards the family" less feasible for the architects than for some of the groups we have discussed so far. Finally, all of the above features were under-pinned by the architects' control over a wide range of resources, making them much less vulnerable to the experience of retirement as one of reduced contact with friends and reduced participation in social activities, a tendency reinforced by the often extensive social and voluntary activities which the architects' wives were involved with.

Notwithstanding these influences, the unchanged nature of domestic relationships remains a striking feature of the architects' retirement. For most, the pre-retirement balance of joint and independent activities had usually been maintained, and few reported any tension in the marital relationship arriving with the onset of retirement.

"I think we've got just about enough space to avoid that being a trouble. My wife has a fairly active life too - she does voluntary work and this sometimes takes her to London for a day. So I think we are not on top of each other all the time." (Mr. Rathbone)

"... it's understood between us that I go somewhere I want to go - that's alright - she does the same - she has her own little clubs and things and she goes to them... I go to mine... we meet quite happily for a meal in the evening." (Mr. Holmes)

"I had thought we might get out a bit more but it was always difficult - she had some meeting on - or the hairdressers - or a neighbour next door would come around wanting to take her out - so on the whole very little changed except that I was more available here. We've lived our own lives and enjoyed them together when it was convenient." (Mr. Emmerson)

"My missus and I get on very well but we'd drive each other up the wall if I never went out. This is something that is often terrible in retirement, if the two people that have lived very happily together with the husband going off daily - and coming back in the evening and suddenly he's stuck at home. Well I've never done that - a couple of days a week I go to my club in town for lunch - in Birmingham and I go to my golf club another couple of days a week - so that I'm

But the combination of both external activities and internal space was an important one. Most of the houses where the interviews were conducted were large enough to have particular rooms to cater for individual interests and activities. Thus many of the men had their own study or work-room where they often spent a large part of the day either writing, painting, doing model engineering or just reading. The area was their own space and their own territory, more formally it might be viewed as a place for identity work, less formally it was simply an area for passing time in - an area, however, which the individual could control and manipulate for himself, retaining in the process an important degree of personal autonomy. Mr. Oliver reported having a "hobbies room" where he could go and "make as much mess as he liked", Mr. Peach showed me two such rooms in his house, one for his wife who was a potter, and whose room contained a kiln and other accessories, the other for himself and his tracks of railway line - for which he built his own rolling stock and engines. Here, then, were areas where ideas and fantasies could be sketched out and sometimes put into a material form, more prosaically, here also were areas where people could be alone - be perhaps their "old" or "true" selves.

"This little house is designed for four bedrooms. Well there are only two of us. We have one bedroom and one guestroom. One of the bedrooms is my wife's pottery. The other is my own study. And we're as happy as sand-boys each in our territory. We can be as untidy as we like. . . with no complaints."

(Mr. Peach)

"We've got a nice working arrangement. I come and do what little bit of business that I've got. I do my own income tax things. . . and investments. I come in here after breakfast and do them on my own. Left alone. . . and madam gets on with her work. . . goes off shopping. . . then I go into town and she has her bridge. It works very well. Very satisfactory. . . that side of it has worked quite well. . . I think cash is a terribly important thing in retirement for those things people can afford to carry on their individual pursuits."

(Mr. Clark)

"My wife has said she was in the habit of feeling that the middle part of the day was exclusively hers, and the idea of cooking a meal in the middle of the day and indeed having one on the premises, was something to adjust to. But I've got my own. I've got a small study where I work and I'm out quite a bit. That part worked fairly well."

(Mr. Rathbone)

Often, of course, the house had been designed by the architect himself (sometimes with retirement in mind), so there was a direct way here in which individuals could secure the space they felt they needed (as opposed to other groups who have more public and bureaucratic definitions of space imposed upon them). Those who did not design their own houses at least had the resources to control and select the type of house they lived in.

"I drew up a specification of what I wanted before we bought it. and we spent a lot of time finding the one we wanted and this was it. I said you've got to have a double garage, a golf course at the back - which it has - a room for me, which I hadn't managed to get before, this is exclusively mine. oh various things like that."

(Mr. Holmes)

So, here were environments designed and selected with the individuals' own personality and interests in mind - environments, that is, for living, flexible enough to accommodate the individual both in work and retirement environments where individual identities could be maintained and could, indeed, flourish.

7.6 PRINCIPALS AND NON-PRINCIPALS IN RETIREMENT

So far, little has been said of the relevance of the distinction made earlier between Principals and Non-Principals. In fact, as far as adjustment to retirement is concerned there were no great differences between the groups. There were, however, some general features which are worth commenting on. First, in the area of social relationships there were discernible differences between the two groups. Thus, the Principals were far more likely than the Non-Principals to have kept in regular contact with former architectural colleagues (9 (60 per cent)

of the former as against 1 (10 per cent) of the latter), and amongst the Principals the distinction between "friend" and "colleague" was likely to be much more blurred. This feature is related both to the more extensive occupational involvement of the Principals and to their more gradual entry into retirement - aspects which tended to increase the likelihood of their keeping up social ties with former colleagues

With the Non-Principals there was a much clearer distinction made between "friend" and "colleague", and they tended to lose contact much more quickly with the latter - this being reinforced by their more abrupt departure from architectural work. There was in fact a tendency both amongst the Non-Principals and those Principals who did not go on to a consultancy, for friendships in retirement to move to a broader social sphere - either within the community itself, or amongst more broadly based professional and social groups. Mr Holmes, for example, who earlier mentioned the retired persons' group in his Gold Club, comments on his friendships

"No, I would say it's gone into a different sphere. Whereas all my friends during my career were all very largely concerned with the trade with the profession suppliers sub-contractors ... and so on who you get to meet at various functions Now the emphasis has gone over .. my friends are numbered now - apart from the few I still retain - amongst these retired chaps (at the Golf Club) ... that are still of my generation "

Mr Tipton-Jones, on the other hand, who was formerly a salaried architect in private practice, had found most of his new friends within the community itself.

" .. by having had friends in the profession we really haven't made friends with these folks here (neighbours) ... we know more .. we are much more friendly and intimately related with the people round here now than we were when we were working. There's a young couple next door we occasionally go baby-sitting for or talk to them .. whereas before it was .. well .. we casually happened to notice each other."

Yet it would be true to say that amongst Principals and Non-Principals alike there was an often zealous involvement in social and community life - an involvement which retirement often gave full rein to. An extreme example here is that of Mr Derrington, a local authority architect who had moved on his retirement from Birmingham to the Gloucestershire village of Chipping Camden - a community with a large percentage of retired professional people. After just four years in the village, Mr. Derrington's level of organisational involvement is hardly less than impressive: Camera Club (member); Music Society (member); Camden Arts Society (treasurer), Choral Society (member), Civic Society (member), Historical Society (member), Debating Society (member). Mr. Derrington is also involved with organising a day centre for elderly people in the village, he is also a steward of the shows put on by the Camden Art Gallery.⁹ To some extent, Mr. Derrington is an extreme example in respect of the range and variety of his activities, but the tendency towards a high level of participation in social and cultural activities was characteristic of virtually all the architects.

A second difference between the Principals and the Non-Principals can be seen in the early stages of retirement - with the latter reporting greater tension and stress in this period. It is naturally tempting to put this down simply to compulsory retirement, but the numbers involved are very small, and there are complicating factors in a number of the cases. Hence such a direct conclusion would be inadmissible. The essential details are that half of the Non-Principals had experienced some initial problems in retirement. Yet there were complicating features in three out of the six cases here, making it impossible to give an unequivocal statement on these findings. The individual cases do indicate some important problems, however.

Mr Comerford, the one Principal to have experienced difficulties in

retirement, had had to retire early after suffering a stroke, some two years after this he lost his wife. In the meantime, however, he had moved out of Birmingham to Lichfield, and a continuing problem for him has been one of breaking into a new circle of friends. The stroke (from which he made virtually a complete recovery) left him with a slight speech impediment and this has tended to exacerbate his isolation. He comments that "You feel that the door is closed as far as friendships are concerned." He recalls inviting his art teacher (he attends evening classes) to his house on one occasion. "He looked very surprised and demurred . . . silly to ask really. I don't know what it is . . . certainly making friends isn't easy."

Amongst the Non-Principals, three of the five recovered very quickly from their initial problems in adjusting to retirement, and they have since gone on to lead very active lives. The remaining two had more difficult times - one because of an early retirement through redundancy, combined as well with widowhood, the other through an early retirement because of ill-health.

Richard Peters, at the age of 64, was given three weeks' notice by the industrial corporation he had been with for nearly 20 years. He had been expecting to finish at 65 but this abrupt termination of his contract came as a deep shock - an unexpected product of a programme of rationalisation which the company had been carrying through. According to Mr. Peters the explanation given to him for the speed of his redundancy was that with a lot of people going

"They felt that the . . . the general feeling is it caused a lot of unrest and that it was best that if you were going you should have a chopper to make it a clean out . . . so you didn't have a lot of people moping around . . . spreading despondent feeling around the place. I said 'Yes, but surely somebody who has been here twenty years . . . you know me well enough to know I want to finish the job off . . . another two months you could give me the sack, I will have finished it.' Well he said: 'We've been told to do this by the personnel department in London . . . and we're not differentiating the people we know from the people we don't know.' . . . Well I don't know whether I agree with that."

What was healthy for the Corporation, however, was much less so for the individual at the receiving end of its policy. Mr. Peters describes his feelings with clarity and simplicity

"You can't gradually shed the load because you're not paid to do that ... so what happens is when you retire you get to a stage even though you might have a month or two of winding down - which really means throwing papers away - finishing up one or two things .. you find you've moved from a position where you've got a great burden ... and this isn't an easy adjustment to make. And also there's a second thing which is a bit of a mental shock that you think doesn't matter, but it's not easy to accept, and that is at one moment you're important in some, whatever that measure of importance is .. you're a person and people need you, . . consult you . . and you're carrying their cares, and then a day comes and they make the speeches and shake your hands .. and you just don't matter . I should imagine within a couple of months they've forgotten your name. But suddenly you're of no further importance. They might remember you pleasantly .. chap we used to have but they're all getting on with their job . you just walk out of the stage and you don't exist anymore. And it's not easy to make a mental adjustment Before you were somebody who people rang up and people listened to you . and now you're just looking around saying 'What do you want to do with yourself?' Well, I think it takes a bit of intellectual effort You know the situation .. you can't sit down and moan about it you shake yourself into a new situation - but it doesn't happen overnight "

One year after this experience Mr Peters' wife died, so - ultimately - there was more than an intellectual effort to be made. For him it was a lost year - a terrible year - an experience which would mean two more years passing before a satisfactory adjustment had been made.

Mr Fairley, a local authority architect, was forced to retire at 60 because of high blood pressure - this caused "purely and simply" because of over-work. He had been in Local Government for 37 years, eventually reaching the position of Assistant County Architect It had been a long haul, and it was difficult at first to accept that it was all over

" we spent several weeks in Cornwall It was the longest holiday I've ever been allowed But the time came we had to come back and it was only then that the change hit me When I say it hit me, I mean others going to work yourself left behind My wife and I completely having to re-adjust our lives and this hit me hard too as the months went by, gradually losing touch with that old life and old connections and pride-wise eventually becoming a nobody after being

Mr Fairley went on:

"John Masters, the County Surveyor, he lives across the way there ... I used to get up especially in the morning to see him going into the office .. talk about nostalgic .. eating my heart out to see him going off and I .. not wanted .. on the shelf

Despite this difficult beginning to his retirement, Mr. Fairley quickly realised the ultimate benefits and compensations, and his comments on the value of retirement are illustrative of the therapeutic outcomes which are possible even after a period of psychological shock

"I think one of the greatest (advantages) is that after 40 years .. being at the beck and call of everybody, .. attending committees ... going to the office from 9 - 5 .. not only 9 - 5 but bringing tapes home, dictating, etc .. suddenly you get your complete independence. Now this means something - it did to me, anyhow This is the finest time in my life in other words my own master .. and the time to do all the things I'd never had time for before. We love travelling ... we have many friends in various parts of the country .. we go for long spells to stay with them And last but not least I'm a very keen golfer .. and a very understanding wife .. and a very dear daughter .. which helped me over a rather trying period of breaking into retirement. But finally .. but by no means least, because I had to voluntarily retire before my time .. I now feel a damn sight better than I've ever felt even though I'm four years older .. and that in itself makes retirement worthwhile "

7.7 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

" .. I think the shedding of responsibility and the freedom of choice .. of time .. and everything else .. that is entirely in your hands, these are the greatest things .. these were the things that I felt so glad ... so relieved about." (Mr Edgington)

"... one of the greatest reliefs I find is the reduction of responsibility and knowing that ... er .. God willing .. er .. unless there's a major war .. a major catastrophe ... we shall be alright in our years of retirement ... and that we don't have to do anything .. we're not obliged to do anything. That is I think the greatest impact .. the net result is that we do everything with much more zest." (Mr. Holmes)

"It's the sort of freedom from responsibility .. the feeling that .. when you wake up in the morning that .. only occasionally do you have to jump to it .. get up .. and rush off somewhere ... I think it's just that .. being fairly active .. I think it's the freedom to do what I want .. and not to have a programme set for me ..." (Mr Kendrick)

A retirement free of constraints is the goal that we have in some senses been searching for, and it is amongst these architects that we begin to see what such a retirement could be like. In essence it is a life where people relax into a rich vein of interests and activities. A life where people have the resources to move around in varied environments - environments which they themselves can help shape and determine.

That the architects had managed to build such an environment is not meant to suggest that they in themselves were "better" or "more superior" than the other groups who were interviewed. It is rather more a case of the range and level of resources they had been able to retain in the transition from work to retirement: resources of good health, good housing and sufficient income, being among the most important. None of the previous groups had all of these things combined - some were deficient in all of them: not surprisingly their image of retirement was likely to be rather different compared with that of the architects.

Of course, whether the above four elements are both necessary and sufficient conditions for a satisfactory retirement can only be answered by the individual. Nonetheless, the experience of the architects does indicate that retirement - given such conditions - is a period in the life cycle to be feared no more or less than other periods: that it should be seen as a time for special "fear" and special "anxiety" is only because it often does mean a crippling reduction in key resources - remedying this is, of course, as much a social and economic problem as it is an individual and psychological one.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Data from a survey of architects carried out by Mark Abrams for "The Observer" suggests that over 70 per cent of architects may come from middle class backgrounds, or come into contact with middle class styles of life at schools (quoted in A Lipman, 1969, p 203)
- 2 The study by Salaman, G (1974), and the earlier work by Barrington Kaye (1960) and Lipman, A (Ibid), represent the main sociological studies - in this country - of the architectural profession.
3. This distinction has been made by Salaman, G (Ibid.)
4. See Salaman, G. for a further discussion on this point.
5. This finding is replicated and discussed in more detail by Salaman, G.
6. See Lipman, A. (op cit.) for a discussion on this point
7. Ibid, p.199
- 8 This argument is developed further in the section on work in Chapter 10.
9. This does not complete the list of activities since Mr Derrington is also a member of societies and organisations in other villages in the area

SECTION 3

THE PROCESS OF RETIREMENT

SECTION 3

THE PROCESS OF RETIREMENT

INTRODUCTION

It is now time to draw together and summarise some of the main themes that have been under discussion. This will be done at three principal levels. First, in Chapter 8, an account will be presented of retirement at the level of the economy and society as a whole. This account will form a background to the succeeding chapters, and will attempt to show how the experience of retirement, as well as being an event shaped by personal life histories, is also one influenced by the location of those histories within given class and social structures; structures which will set boundaries and constraints upon the retirement experience, influencing - at the most intimate level - predispositions to withdrawal or activity.

In Chapter 9, using material from the above interviews, a description of retirement will be presented at the level of the individual and his immediate environment with an attempt to show the changes and re-alignments occurring in some of his most important social relationships.

In Chapter 10, again using the interview material as a base, an attempt is made to present the main components of a retirement social policy, this latter being discussed in relation to the work, family and community dimensions which have influenced the presentation of the interviews. Three propositions are developed in this chapter to illustrate what should be the main tenets of any future policy framework.

In the final, concluding chapter, a re-definition of retirement is sketched, and a summary made of the present trend of discussions on pensions and retirement - both at a governmental level and amongst pensioners themselves.

Uniting the three main levels of analysis and, in particular, the macro- and micro-sociological levels, is a concern to establish the processual nature of retirement and the variety of life-styles encountered within this period. In this context the concern is with 'de-mystifying' the retirement experience, indicating its roots within individual biographies and the economic and social structures from which such biographies draw their resources. This concern with 'de-mystifying' retirement evolves from a view that the study of retirement and old age has been retarded by misleading generalisations and metaphors regarding the characteristics of ageing. Thus, for example, both the idea of the elderly being pushed from the centre of social relations (because of industrialisation) and the assumption that retirement must inevitably lead to some form of crisis, are views which under-pin many discussions on the social policy of old age. Yet, neither of these views have shown much acknowledgement either of the variety of social relations existing amongst the elderly (both in pre-industrial and industrial societies), or the variety of meanings that individuals attach to retirement. This focus on the 'crisis' and 'anxiety' of retirement and ageing has diverted attention away from the normal ageing process. As a result, we have little knowledge about the feelings of those who do not experience retirement as a personal crisis. And we have even less idea about the type of social policies most appropriate for such a group.

In what follows, therefore, an attempt is made to provide - from a sociological perspective - a map of the retirement process which is relevant to the experiences of the majority of older people. In this respect, I have attempted to cover both the crises and the triumphs in retirement, indicating, as well, the main features of what is now a major stage in the life-cycle.

CHAPTER 8

THE ELDERLY IN CLASS AND PRODUCTION RELATIONS

8 1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous four chapters I have been concerned with outlining what may be termed 'the internal structure of retirement', i.e. retirement as seen through individual lives, occupations and communities. I have also attempted to describe the 'everyday' experiences of the retired, relating these to the most immediate structures in which they are involved. As a consequence, the terminology used has had an interactionist character. The emphasis has been on the 'meaning of retirement', 'becoming retired', and the 'negotiation of retirement' terms which suggest a notion of individuals acting on their own - or with a limited group of others - to determine the quality of the environment they inhabit. This type of approach (and it will be developed further below) is useful for giving us a grounding in the basic realities of retirement i.e. retirement at the level of individual experience. But it understates or leaves unclear the role of the broader structures and relationships influencing the retirement experience. Thus, no individual pensioner determines the level of pensions, although it will be crucial in determining the scope of daily life in retirement, no individual pensioner determines the level of employment, but the latter may determine whether he gets a job or whether he loses one, and also the age at which he retires in the first place, finally, no individual determines the character of urban planning, but it may determine not only the type of house he lives in, the quality of communal facilities, and so on, but also how near he lives to relatives and friends. In short, there are many components of the individual's environment which cannot easily be negotiated, components which, nonetheless, are highly significant in their impact on the individual's daily life.

The most important of these 'components' - for most approaches in gerontology - has been conceptualised in relation to a model of industrialisation and modernisation, one which has suggested a deterioration in the position of the elderly as compared with the historical past¹. In the light of this, before proceeding to an exposition of the determining influences on the elderly and retired, the adequacies of this particular model will be examined

8 2 OLD AGE IN SOCIAL THEORY

The way we view retirement (and the retired) and the way the retired view themselves, is filtered through numerous structures and images. Some of these have been discussed in the form of individual life histories and occupational environments, elements which are usually the main building blocks which people find available for constructing views about retirement. However, these elements are themselves tied into broader concepts, e.g. into notions of dependency, into social images of old age, into particular conceptions of social change concepts which have their own influence in structuring the range of images associated with retirement and old age.

Now a dominant image and concept within Social Gerontology has been a stress on the elderly as 'victims' in the process of modernisation. Here, the elderly are seen as having 'lost' a secure and caring environment as industrialisation has unfolded. Geographical and social mobility, the turning away from the larger family unit, the speed of change in knowledge formation - all these aspects are seen as undermining the position of the elderly. It would appear that in the twentieth century the elderly can no longer feel 'at home' (both literally and metaphorically). They have become - it is argued - 'outsiders', non-participants in a largely uncaring and unfeeling society. According to Burgess (1960):

The country had been a favourable environment for the older person and for the extended family which he headed. The city, with its smaller house accommodations, its residential and social mobility, its rapid

tempo, its impersonality, and its individualism, provided the objective conditions for the independence of the nuclear from the extended family (p 271)

Burgess concluded

Family and kinship ties still persist but they are no longer central and vital. The result is that the older person feels de-throned and devalued where he once reigned supreme. He can no longer count on the role of the patriarch in ordering the destiny of his children and grand-children. He cannot even be sure of being venerated and respected. In short, he has lost his old role of dominance and has not yet found a new one (p 273)

This weakened position in the area of family relationships is seen as reinforced by the spread of mandatory retirement. Thus, given the apparent strength of the work ethic in modernised societies (Cowgill, 1974), and the importance of work in allocating material and non-material resources, retirement is seen as entailing an inevitable reduction in social rewards - including 'monetary income and psychologically satisfying status.'² Cowgill (op. cit.), for example, summarises the consequences of retirement in the following way

in the long run the introduction of modern health technology contributes to the ageing of the population and its work-force. This in turn creates pressures toward retirement, forces people out of the most valued and highly rewarded roles, deprives them of utility, curtails their income and lowers their status in the society (p. 13)

Now it has already been argued (see Chapter 3) that much of the research on the elderly in the late fifties and sixties overturned many of the above assertions. Historical evidence suggests that the elderly were not so well treated, as Burgess and others suggest, either within the 'extended family' or in the 'countryside',³ adherence to the work ethic has never been a simple and unequivocal feature of modern societies, even in that most work conscious of societies - America (see Gutman, 1976), and leisure is not necessarily a secondary and undervalued part of people's lives. On the contrary, it may well be, in advanced capitalist societies, an area where the most important identities

are nurtured and developed - an area where the individual finds a central source of refuge from the alienation and de-humanisation encountered in work (McAnnell, 1976, Rapoport and Rapoport, 1975)

Yet, even allowing for the above considerations, tensions in the social position of the elderly (both within the family and in the community) still remain - tensions which have held back the full development of the retirement period. The argument to be put forward here is that in attempting to understand these 'tensions' we need to go beyond a simple comparison between the elderly today, and those of a 'pre-modern' era. Instead, we must explore how the process of becoming retired develops from varied locations in class and production relations. These relations influencing views both about the social role of the elderly and retired, and the type of resources and facilities to which they are entitled.

8.3 THE ELDERLY IN CLASS AND PRODUCTION RELATIONS

Simply presenting 'the elderly' as a group disenfranchised within the modern world led to a number of difficult questions - was this true of all elderly people? Were there no differences and variations in the extent to which people faced poverty and loss of social status? Were there no variations in the degree of commitment people had to their work and, by extension, the degree of commitment they had towards leisure? In addition, the idea of 'modernisation' or 'industrialisation' pushing the elderly to the periphery of social life carried with it the suggestion that, given that the elderly had 'lost' certain roles, new ones could easily replace these (Blau, 1973). Given their creation, the central issue then became the individual's ability to change and adapt to the new set of roles created.

However, the capacity of existing institutions to create such roles, and their ability to respond to the needs of the retired, was rarely given critical consideration

Even when the problem was posed at a societal level, it was usually couched in terms of raising the retirement age - a policy issue which evaded broader questions connected with the emergence of retirement

In changing the emphasis back towards class and production relations it will be argued here that the central question becomes not that the elderly have 'lost' certain functions, or that they have become marginal to developed, industrial societies. Instead, the key question concerns the contradiction which has developed between the labour-process as a whole (and in particular the wage-labour relationship), and the emergence of the retirement period. Thus, to the extent that we are moving more towards a leisure and retirement based culture, with the 'non-work' period making up an increasing proportion of the total life-span, it is the ability of wage-labour - and the factory environment itself - to provide the necessary supports for retirement that should become our main concern.

What are the central elements of the wage-labour relationship that concern us here? The outline of this relationship has already been sketched (see Chapter 5). It will be recalled that for Marx⁴

The free labourer sells himself and, indeed, sells himself piecemeal - the worker belongs neither to an owner nor to the land, but 8, 10, 12, 15 hours of his daily life belong to him who buys them. The worker leaves the capitalist to whom he hires himself whenever he likes and the capitalist discharges him whenever he things fit, as soon as he no longer gets any profit out of him, or not the anticipated profit. But the worker, whose sole source of livelihood is the sale of his labour power, cannot leave the whole class of purchasers, that is the capitalist class, without renouncing his existence.

The outcome of this is that the livelihood of non-owners is set exclusively by the terms on which they can sell their labour in the market. Beyond this, they are reliant on state support, support which, given that it is usually set at monetary levels well below labour market earnings, means near or total pauperisation for unemployed and retired wage-earner alike (Westergaard and Resler, 1975, Field, 1977A)

In addition, the performance of wage-labour is embedded within a wider division of labour - one which sub-divides humans into exclusive areas of work, production itself being split into numerous operations performed by different types of workers. Braverman (1974) has described the consequences of this in the following terms

Every step in the labour process is divorced, so far as possible from special knowledge and training and reduced to simple labour. Meanwhile, the relatively few persons for whom special knowledge and training are reserved are freed so far as possible from the obligations of simple labour. In this way, a structure is given to all labour processes that at its extremes polarizes those whose time is infinitely valuable and those whose time is worth almost nothing. This might even be called the general law of the capitalist division of labour. It is not the sole force acting upon the organisation of work, but it is certainly the most powerful and general. It shapes not only work, but populations as well, because over the long-run it creates that mass of simple labour which is the primary feature of populations in advanced capitalist countries." (pp 82-3)

With the above approach, the conditions attached to wage-labour are seen as leading to basic insecurities both in economic life (with the ever present threat of pauperisation), and in the experience of work itself (with, for example, the threat of de-skilling). In terms of the political economy of retirement, the result of these insecurities would appear to be not only a retirement of poverty and material hardship, but also one where a division of labour set limits to the individual's full participation in social and cultural life (Gorz, 1974)

An important theoretical debate to emerge in the fifties concerned whether or not this type of approach was still salient to the capitalism of the post-war period. Here, advocates of the embourgeoisment thesis argued that in the context of post-war affluence, old class divisions were breaking down, and that inequalities of wealth, power and opportunity were being progressively eroded at the same time.⁵ On the basis of welfare reforms, a commitment to full-employment, and permanent economic growth, a convergence of life-styles was now seen as possible, a convergence under-pinned by the increased

importance of leisure in people's lives, and the development of new industries which would reduce the alienation traditionally experienced by blue-collar workers (Blauner, 1964)

According to this type of argument, then, retirement could be seen as being both stimulated and developed by reforms within capitalist society and in specific features of work organisation. Thus, not only would future retirees be more financially secure, but the extension of leisure time in society would mean - ultimately - an easier transition to retirement.

Arguably, the position of the elderly provides us with an important test as to the adequacy of arguments about the strength of post-war reforms. On the one hand, it might be argued that the number of people attending pre-retirement courses, buying handbooks on retirement, or retiring to the seaside, was indicative of a transformation in traditional images of retirement. On the other hand, it might also be argued that such activities remained overwhelmingly restricted to the middle class, and that retirement for most wage earners still entails a period of considerable hardship and poverty.

Alternatively, it might be suggested that the poverty of today's generation of pensioners reflects still the poverty and unemployment they may have encountered in the early part of their lives, and that the greater prosperity of younger generations of workers augurs well for future groups of retirees. To set against this, the belief in there being great equality and prosperity in the country has - since the halcyon days of the fifties and sixties - undergone substantial revision. Researchers such as Blackburn (1967), Atkinson (1964), and Westergaard and Resler (1975), to name just a few, have indicated the substantial inequalities of income and wealth still existing in Britain. Urry and Wakeford (1973) and Stanworth and Giddens (1974) have documented the characteristics

of a powerful elite in the British social structure - one which has continued to set the terms on which political and economic issues are debated. On the inequalities arising from work itself, Goldthorpe et al (1969) - in an examination of the embourgeoisment thesis - concluded that trends of change were not all in the direction of reducing class differences and divisions, and Nichols and Beynon's (1977) work has shown how even in the supposedly more 'progressive' chemical industry, conditions of labour remained - for many workers - analagous to those in traditional assembly line work.

Evidence on inequality has also been extended to include a variety of other groups - women, immigrants, etc, whose marginality has been firmly related to the existence of a class society (for women see Wilson, 1977, for immigrants see Castles and Kosack, 1973). The relationship of the elderly to the class structure has remained, however, virtually unexplored (except for passing references to the material deprivation experienced by pensioners). Even though both Simone de Beauvoir (1972) and Elder (1977) locate poverty in old age as an integral part of the insecurities of working-class life, nowhere has this been systematically examined. Indeed, a converse tendency has been to regard age stratification as a variable of equal weighting with class and social factors (Foner, 1974), and to see inequality as a reflection of disparities between age-groups as opposed to social classes or socio-economic groupings.

This tendency was in part created and reinforced by the profusion of myths in relation to retirement and the elderly. Ironically, here, in the very period that feminists and black liberationists were de-mystifying their respective social and political identities, the elderly were being wreathed in ever more complex and varied explanations for their oppressed status. The break up of the extended family, the centrality of work for the male, the alienation induced by

city and urban life, the resistance to any planning for retirement - these and other explanations became popular amongst both the left and the right. Indeed, the degree of ideological agreement as to what was wrong with the elderly seemed to place them outside the realm of critical analysis, people instinctively knew what was the matter with the elderly (or so it seemed), and there appeared little demand for the rigorous debate which other groups were subjected to.

This failure of analysis had three principal consequences. First, it gave credence to views about a 'dissolving class structure', and the emergence of a society where inequalities were the province of marginal or residual groups only, e.g. the elderly, (poverty becoming a condition of age rather than one of class location). Secondly, it limited discussion on the political impact of retirement and, in particular, the respective rights of older and younger workers. So, for example, we find that it has now become generally accepted that older workers have somehow less of a right than younger workers (especially those with dependents) to work in times of high unemployment, (the acceptance of this principle by both groups limiting the potential of campaigns over unemployment and redundancies). Thirdly, it has restricted our understanding of the benefits of retirement. By focusing on the alienation of old age as a necessary consequence of urbanisation, and the break-up of the extended family, the advantages of retirement have been largely ignored in the literature. The failure to discuss such issues ultimately has its own part in reinforcing the social marginality of the retirement period - with, in particular, little attention being given to the resources required by active, healthy retirees.

The argument to be pursued here is that we now need not only a more critical analysis of retirement and old age, but also one which maps out new policies for the retirement period - policies which take as their starting point

the idea of retirement as a potentially liberating period in the life cycle, one where freedom from work and family responsibilities can mean welcome time for personal development - given adequate social resources and facilities. In addition, there must be recognition of the need to under-pin such policies with new political and social rights for the retirement period - rights which will be guaranteed independently of fluctuations in economic and social conditions.⁶

Acknowledgement of these issues has become of increased importance with the ending of the post-war boom, the consolidation of trends towards a larger retired population, and the advent of high levels of unemployment. These developments raise challenging questions about the political role of the elderly and the priority of their needs and aspirations vis-à-vis other age groups. The most serious issue which has to be faced is that despite the dramatic changes in the number of the elderly and their position in the labour market, none of the post-war social reforms have tackled the question of social and political rights in retirement. Interpretations as to the value and role of retirement are still being judged almost solely in relation to broader economic conditions and objectives. This feature has been magnified in importance with the ending of the economic boom, and the subsequent spiral of unemployment and inflation. That the elderly have suffered worst of all' as a result of the latter is now a standard political cliché - one which is used to justify both cuts in the standard of living and in the social wage. But it is partly the function of such clichés to slide over reality, or at least to interpret that reality in a way which does least damage to existing centres of power. That the elderly have indeed suffered as a result of the crisis can hardly be denied. But the extent to which their difficulties have been added to by the character of national economic policies (particularly in connection with the re-structuring of the labour force) needs to be spelt out more clearly - if the need to establish rights in retirement is to be responded to. Thus, before

examining the retirement experience, and policies for retirement in more detail, the present economic and political background will first be described

8 4 AFTER THE BOOM OLDER WORKERS AND THE ECONOMIC RECESSION

In Chapter 2 we described the emphasis on the employment of the elderly in the post-war period - this in the context of acute labour shortages and fears about the burden of an ageing population. This concern with the employment of the elderly (and the therapeutic advantages to work) was most apparent in the early part of the 50's. However, even beyond this period we still find a reservoir of concern surfacing at Labour Conferences and discussions. At the T U C Conference in 1963, one delegate, speaking for a motion in favour of the relaxation of the retirement earnings rule, asserted:

Can we, as a nation, insist that every woman of 60 and every man of 65 must retire and contribute no more than a limited amount to the nation from their skills and experience acquired over the last 45 to 50 years of life? How often do we hear of the death very quickly after retirement of our former colleagues? Yet had they had something to live for, who knows, they might have gone on living for many more years, feeling that they were useful and wanted and that it was worth their while financially to do so.

The need for older workers to relieve labour shortages was discussed at a meeting of the Ministry of Labour's National Joint Advisory Council, in 1966. The meeting concluded that⁸

Full use of the older worker can go a long way to ease the general labour shortage, thus reducing inflationary pressures on the economy and on the individual firm. Older workers can be expected to respond favourably to any attempts by an employer to make special arrangements for their continued employment.

Amongst the proposals agreed upon at the meeting were: first, special arrangements to be made for employing and training older workers, secondly, a new initiative by offices of the Ministry of Labour in placing older workers - this, 'by intensified activity and a more sophisticated approach'.

What this 'more sophisticated approach' would entail was left unspecified and, regardless of any initiatives that were undertaken (there appears no record of any), the appeal to employ more older workers was to meet a negative response, a rather unsurprising fact given the urgent concern with overmanning in British industry which subsequently broke to the surface¹⁰ This concern with reducing manning levels and, in addition, rationalising inefficient, unprofitable sectors of industry, has to be traced back to the difficulties faced by the national economy from the late fifties onwards The winter of 1956-7 brought the first serious recession, and with it a sharp rise in unemployment According to Widgey (1976)

This faltering in the British economy's growth was in some ways inevitable Although, by previous British standards, the level of capital investment was high, it was clearly inadequate to face the 'economic miracles' of Germany and later Japan Britain, which had been at first artificially shielded from the sharpening competition from its European competitors, whose factories were physically devastated, now was exposed to head-on competition America was less and less willing to support Britain as a junior economic partner And British manufacturers themselves were increasingly exporting their cash, finding their capital forced abroad by the strength of the British working class (p 163)

The interaction between strong international competition and low rates of investment and productivity at home (combined with the pressure from rising wages) was eventually to lead to a major crisis of profitability (Glynn and Sutcliffe, 1972) The impact of international competition is reflected in the fact that Britain's share of industrial production in the Western world was cut by half (from 10 per cent to 5 per cent) between 1953 and 1970 In addition, whilst British production rose 36 per cent between 1965 and 1973, West Germany's rose 42 per cent, France's 53 per cent, and Japan's 130 2 per cent The onset of a world economic crisis, combined with this deterioration in Britain's own economic position, was eventually to lead to the now familiar upsurge of redundancies and

unemployment Since 1968 unemployment has - on average - been much higher than the low levels common in the early post-war period, rising to over 1 million in 1972, and to 1¹/₂ million from 1976 onwards ¹¹

As well as the specific weaknesses of the British economy, long run changes in technology have also contributed to higher levels of unemployment As a number of writers have recently argued (in particular, Mandel, 1975, Walton and Gamble, 1976), an important trend in the 50's and 60's in most capitalist countries, has been the increased pace of technological innovation and the adoption of advanced labour saving techniques Walton and Gamble (op cit) suggest that this process has intensified in the seventies with a new wave of labour-saving innovation, based on computers and electronics These writers argue that

Increasingly large numbers of workers are (being) displaced from the productive process and have to find jobs in the burgeoning service sector As Marx foresaw in 'Grundrisse', the historical tendency of capitalist accumulation is to reduce necessary labour to the minimum so as to increase surplus labour to the maximum The rate of exploitation is raised by employing ever fewer workers, ever more machines, and thus increasing exploitation to its furthest extent (p 161)

This economic and technological environment was to shift once more the position of the elderly in the labour market, and to change, as well, ideologies concerning retirement The crude celebration of the work ethic, evident in much government propaganda in the early fifties, was substantially altered ¹² People had now to accept the need for redundancies, for 'shake-outs', and early retirement Britain's economic position (and the condition of her industry) demanded a smaller and more efficient work-force Given also that the post-war baby boom was now turning into a boom of young workers, it was the replacement of the old with the young which was to become a strong theme in Government policy (e g the job release scheme)

The increased insecurity this environment brought for older workers was reinforced by the operation of the 1965 Redundancy Payments Act. This Act reflected the widespread view that mal-utilisation of manpower was a substantial barrier to economic expansion - hence the need for legislation which would secure greater acceptance of the need for technological change, and which would mitigate some of the economic and social consequences for those workers directly involved (Parker, et al 1971)

The consequences of this policy have been borne particularly heavily by older workers. Whilst male workers aged 50 - 64 represent 32 per cent of the total male labour force aged 20+, they accounted for 43 per cent of 'paid' redundancies in 1971, 45 per cent in 1972, and 44 per cent in 1974¹³. In addition age, as well as increasing the likelihood of redundancy, will be a critical factor in the length of time people stay unemployed. In the official survey of redundancy by Parker et al (op cit), about one quarter of their paid redundant sample regarded age as a serious handicap in finding another job, 97 per cent of those aged under 40 at the time of the paid redundancy succeeded in finding another job, but only 47 per cent of those aged 60 - 64 (25 per cent of those in this age group remaining continuously unemployed) did so.

The above findings are confirmed in the high level of unemployment affecting older workers. As was noted in Chapter 2, in a recession unemployment hits the young and old hardest of all. Thus, in 1976, the under-20s and over-50s made up 36 per cent of the labour force but 42 per cent of the unemployed. However, as in the thirties, older workers are unemployed for a much longer period than their younger counterparts. More than a third of unemployed men

over 55 have been without a job for at least a year, in the 18 - 24 age group, the proportion is just over 10 per cent. With male unemployment for those 60 - 65 now running at nearly 10 per cent (January 1977 figures), and with the possibility of a long period of unemployment prior to retirement for many in this group, the ability to maintain a reasonable standard of living without dipping into savings will be crucial - if additional poverty in retirement is to be avoided.¹⁴ Yet, on the evidence of work carried out by Wedderburn (1972) and Marsden and Duff (1975) illustrating the extent of hardship and poverty amongst the unemployed and the use of any redundancy payments to boost every-day living expenses, this seems unlikely. Given also that the majority of the unemployed are manual workers (80 per cent), with limited savings apart from those invested in a privately owned house, the likely result of the recession will be an increase in the number of workers entering retirement with virtually no resources beyond the state pension and any occupational pension.

With forecasts that Britain will enter the 1980's with probably over one million unemployed ('Economist', October 1st, 1977), the chances of pensioners supplementing their incomes with paid work will become increasingly slim. Thus, the tendency for economic activity rates to fall when unemployment rises is particularly marked in the case of males over pensionable age - the latter tending to retire when the demand for labour falls, and when they are no longer encouraged by their employers to stay on at work. The male economic activity rate for those aged 65 - 69 dropped from 40 per cent in 1961 to 31 per cent in 1971, for males over 70 - in the same period - it dropped from 15.2 per cent to 10.9 per cent, for males 65+ it dropped 2.3 per cent between 1966 and 1968 alone - a fall equivalent to 69,000 men.

8 5 AFTER THE BOOM PERMANENT RETIREMENT
AND THE UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH

The above evidence suggests that the older worker was especially affected by the upsurge in redundancies arising from the ending of the boom and the subsequent restructuring of industry. There is little evidence, however, that the then Labour Government was particularly appreciative of the social questions arising out of these changes. In March 1968, the Minister for Social Security was asked by one M P ¹⁵

Does he not appreciate that the Government's policies have caused high unemployment? Would not a reduction in the insurance (i.e. retirement, C P) age be the most humane way of overcoming the high unemployment?

Not only did this meet with a negative response, but in the following year it was still being claimed by the Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity, that ¹⁶

Employers are urged by the Department's local offices . . . to remove unnecessary restrictions on the engagement of older work people and to make the test of suitability for employment, capacity not age

But, as the official survey of the working of the Redundancy Payments Act was subsequently to show, it was precisely in this period that age was increasingly adopted as a criterion for determining those who should be made redundant, regardless of any commitment by Government to secure the employment of older workers, in practice legislation stemming from the 'need for technological progress' simply helped to facilitate their dismissal (Martin and Fryer, 1973)

Such a refusal to recognise that labour policies were, in effect, stimulating a move towards permanent retirement and retirement, in many instances, at an earlier age, did little to help the security of potential retirees. It must have been strange indeed to hear on the one hand Government announcements about the importance of re-training elderly workers and, on the other hand, to be on the

receiving end of a labour 'shake-out' primarily on the basis of one's age. Worse still, the consequences arising from the failure openly to admit that older workers would be harmed most by industrial changes, were heightened by the resulting financial insecurities. Not only were redundancy payments wholly inadequate for those so affected (Martin and Fryer, *op cit*) but the general move towards permanent retirement came in the absence of any real changes in the existing inequalities of wealth and income. As the evidence from Atkinson, Westergaard and Resler and others suggests, the material position of most workers has hardly improved so dramatically as to guarantee financial security in retirement. Even by 1971 few manual workers (who represent 55 - 60 per cent of all workers) earned as much as £40 per week, and of those who did (around 11 per cent) over half had to work more than 50 hours a week to achieve such a figure.¹⁷

Under-pinning this has been the maintenance of life-cycle inequalities in earnings. The main characteristic of these is that the earnings of manual workers fall in later life as the ability to work overtime is lessened. As a result, many fall into the 'low-paid' category, after short periods of prosperity both before children are born and just before they leave home, when they are beginning to bring in money from work. In fact, if we exclude male workers under the age of 21, the majority of the low paid are either unskilled or over the age of 50 (Bosanquet and Stephens, 1972).

The significance of this is that if we assume that it is only after middle age that people can begin to put aside significant sums for their old age, then for manual workers this coincides with a period when their incomes are rapidly falling (comparing manual workers on the basis of age we find nearly two-thirds of those 60 - 64 earning below the average weekly earnings for manual workers), and, furthermore, even if savings are made these may well be depleted

by the bouts of unemployment and redundancy to which older workers are increasingly prone

To summarise so far whilst the ending of the economic boom, and the lack of competitiveness in British industry, created the climate for high levels of unemployment (especially amongst older and younger workers), and earlier retirement, changes in the pattern of income and wealth distribution were not so significant as to prevent new forms of financial hardship and dependency from emerging. Thus, whilst affluence and the ending of inequality were being hailed as part of fundamental changes in the social structure, new structures of inequality were developing - these to be reflected in an upsurge of concern, in the sixties and seventies, with the poverty and alienation encountered in old age. It is to this latter that we must now turn.

8 6 THE EXPERIENCE OF RETIREMENT SETTING THE MATERIAL BOUNDARIES

In 'Working class community', Brian Jackson (1968) talks about the 'deep and terrible rhythm' which, he suggests, 'is the very ground of working class life'.¹⁹ Essentially, this rhythm is the poverty which the working-class family experiences in the early stages of the family cycle, the prosperity in the middle when children are working but still at home, and, finally, the poverty towards the end of the cycle, with the onset of retirement and old age.

The history of pension reform in the present century has, in essence, been one of a failure to tackle the root causes of this 'deep and terrible rhythm'. This failure has stemmed partly from the assumption that a satisfactory pension system could be superimposed upon a highly unsatisfactory and inequalitarian wage system and, partly also from ambiguities in the meaning and priority which society accords to retirement. Despite the first point, and partly because of the second point, early pension legislation not only presupposed the existence of

substantial savings, but also made an assumption that most individuals would want to continue working for as long as possible (as assumption which blithely ignored the arduous nature of many working class occupations) In later legislation, particularly that following on from the Beveridge report, it was still assumed that the individual would wish to delay retirement for as long as possible, and this was encouraged by the provision of an increased pension for those working beyond 65

Both these assumptions have tended to reinforce the marginality of retirement in people's lives (particularly in the case of manual workers) Men and women in social classes IV and V still have a lower life expectancy than those in classes I and II - they are also more likely to enter retirement in a poor state of health - and this, combined with the poverty they may encounter, leaves retirement a period likely to be approached with caution and unease ²⁰

Much, it is true, has changed People are entering retirement at younger ages (10 per cent of employees in the private sector now retire before the state pension age), and this retirement usually means - for the majority - a complete withdrawal from work activity This latter reflecting the institutionalisation of retirement within the economic system

But if the extent of employment in retirement has undergone dramatic change, the level of financial provision for pensioners has not responded at quite the same rate Supplementary pensioners still make up the largest group of claimants receiving benefit at any one time ²¹ This, notwithstanding the introduction of a new pensions scheme, is unlikely to change in the near future As the Supplementary Benefits Commission (1976) itself points out (in its latest annual report

The full effect of this scheme will not . be felt until well into the 21st century and although newly retired pensioners will begin to receive increased benefits from April 1979, those who are already retired will not . The dependence of the pensioner population on supplementary benefits will therefore not be significantly reduced as a result of this new scheme for at least 20 years (p 25)

The financial position of pensioners does reflect an important change in the distribution of poverty over the life cycle . Whilst poverty has - to some extent - been alleviated in its consequences at earlier stages of the life cycle (though the 'dark and terrible rhythm' still remains), a much larger number of working class people than in the past (when most would die before reaching retirement) can now expect a period of poverty in the final stage of their lives - particularly women, of whom two thirds are dependent on supplementary pensions . The association of this poverty with wage-earning has been commented on by Westergaard and Resler (op cit)

Occupational downgrading near retirement and poverty after retirement, are not common conditions of old age in general . They are risks - of high probability so far as the latter is concerned - attached to wage-earning . Managerial and professional position in working life confers relative immunity from them, property ownership of more than small dimensions, total immunity (p 353)

Elsewhere, Westergaard and Resler argue

Subsistence poverty is indeed common among old people, the sick, the handicapped, and so on, but only because the majority of the old, sick, and handicapped have previously been dependent on jobs that provided them with few or no other resources to fall back on than their meagre benefits from public funds (p 125)

The extent of poverty amongst the elderly was discussed in a number of studies in the fifties and early sixties - see, in particular, the Phillips Committee, 1954, Townsend, 1957, Cole and Utting, 1962, Ministry of Pensions, 1966 . These studies, together with those including the working population - see, for example, Abel-Smith and Townsend, 1965 - suggested that despite the reforms of the post-war period, substantial poverty remained a signal feature of the lives

of many millions of people. Although it was the elderly who were seen to make up a large proportion of those millions, the implications of this were usually ignored. Indeed, whilst it had been the discovery of enormous poverty amongst elderly people which had sparked off debates about the character of post-war reforms, it was a concern with the consequences of poverty in relation to families which tended - subsequently - to hold the limelight. True, those findings did eventually lead to the adoption of a more aggressive stance by charities concerned with the elderly (the rise of Age Concern is of particular note here). They also stimulated discussions leading to a reform of the Pensions system (see, here, the present Labour Government's White Paper, 'Better Pensions'). But most of the discussions and particularly the subsequent reforms, continued to separate poverty in old age from income inequalities at earlier points in the life cycle. Indeed, insofar as benefits from the reform of pensions will have a relatively large earnings related component, such inequalities have now been incorporated into the pensions system. As Anne Jeffreys (1976) has argued²²

It is bad enough to live in a society where people can command higher salaries than their fellow citizens because of the marketability of their particular skill, and because of advantages in their sex, race, and background. It will be pernicious to live in a society where the Government, as well as private pension schemes, will allow people increased money in retirement because of these factors.

What the above argument confirms is the continuing failure to connect poverty in old age with the wider inequalities surrounding the performance of wage labour, and the inability of most working people to build up an adequate financial surplus for their old age. This is especially true of the low paid - a group which will benefit least from the new earnings related scheme, despite the mitigating effect of the 20 best years rule (Lister, 1975).

The implications of these points should have been given much greater prominence than has been the case so far. If we are moving into an increasingly

'ageing world' then we should be concerned not simply with providing sufficient resources for people after they retire, but also providing these when people are working. Poverty in old age must be seen, in part, as the reverse side of the continuing inequalities in income and property distribution in the pre-retirement period, inequalities which have been exacerbated in the past two decades by a worsening in the position of the low paid worker, and the continued growth of unemployment (Kincaid, 1973, Trinder, 1975)

Certainly, as regards the material context of old age, the short and medium-term outlook must be considered serious - particularly given the extent of the public expenditure cuts (with the removal of food subsidies, the reduced capital programme for the personal social services, the cuts in the hospital building programme) and the impact of inflation on overall living standards

The result of these trends, combined with the maintenance of wealth inequalities, and the inadequacy of the basic pension, can only mean a further retardation in the development of the retirement period. Earlier retirement will merely come to mean - for many people - an extended period of subsistence level living. There may well be - in the first 4 - 5 years of the individual's retirement - a relatively secure period (as some of the interviews indicate), with savings and/or part-time earnings providing additional financial resources. After this, however, and particularly in the period beyond 75, individuals will become increasingly reliant on the state pension, plus any occupational pension; a reliance which may well trigger hardship and poverty for many ²³

As to the effect of the new pensions scheme, the likelihood is an increase rather than a decrease in the inequalities and divisions existing amongst pensioners. Nicholas Bosanquet (1978) has declared that

There will be a growing division in income and in living standards between the 'old' and the 'new' pensioners - those who are and those who are not eligible for the new pension. This will accentuate

the differences between the younger retired and the very elderly which have already been increasing. There is nothing in present national insurance arrangements which provides a relative increase in the standard of living of the poorest pensioners. The most hopeful developments have been in the changes in the supplementary benefit system which, however, suffers from the disadvantage that the take-up is still inadequate. The 'solution' of the problem of poverty in old age has been pushed very far into the future, almost into the next century (p 90)

To conclude we have had an important demographic change (an increase in the number of the elderly), a change in the character of employment (a large reduction in the number of pensioners working) - without sufficient changes in the proportion of resources going to the retired population. In the E E C countries only Italy provides a lower basic pension than the U K, and the U.K. is behind at least three other countries (Italy, Holland, West Germany) as regards the proportion of G N P. which is spent on pensions²⁴. Many people, as we have noted, are still dependent on the supplementary pension, and 600,000 pensioners could claim supplementary benefit but are failing to do so (a figure which has remained virtually unchanged throughout the whole of the post-war period). Despite reforms, the low paid will benefit to only a marginal degree insofar as their retirement is concerned, and anyone over 43 today will still get less than full benefit.

But if the argument so far has been that political and economic policies have held back the development of retirement, it should not be concluded that individuals still perceive it simply as a time of decline and senescence. The complexity and variety of responses to retirement must still be regarded as central to our thesis (and central to the conclusions which can be drawn from the interviews described). What has been sketched above is the essential background or canvas on which the retirement experience is built. Individual actors will - despite the universality of many of the constraints - interpret the resources and environments given them in different ways. It is to an analysis of these interpretations that we must now turn.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Burgess, E.W (1960) and Blau, Z. (1973) for examples of this thesis.
- 2 Cowgill, D (1974), p.12
- 3 See Thomas, K (1976) and Laslett, P. (1977) for recent studies of the elderly in pre-industrial England Peter Laslett, in his work, makes the point that

if it is unjustifiable to think of the aged as always being neglected and condemned in our world, it is equally unjustifiable to assume that they were always cherished by their families and by their kin folk in the pre-industrial era It is true that the fragmentary though suggestive evidence which we shall cite indicates that the aged in pre-industrial England were more frequently to be found surrounded by their immediate family than is the case in England today It is possible that they were given access to the families of their married offspring more readily than is now the case. This may be thought surprising in view of the infrequent occurrence of multi-generational and of complicated households of all kinds, which we have several times remarked upon as characteristic of an earlier England But we shall find that these circumstances can be persuasively accounted for without having to suppose that in the traditional era of our country deliberate provision was made for the physical, emotional or economic needs of aged persons, aged relations or aged parents in a way which was in any sense superior to the provisions now being made by the children, the relatives and the friends of aged persons in our own day, not to speak of the elaborate machinery of the welfare state. (pp 176-177)

- 4 Quoted in Blackburn, R (1976), p 17
- 5 For a recent discussion on the Embourgeoisement Thesis and the various criticisms made of it, see Roberts, K (1977), pp. 37-65
- 6 This point is developed further in Chapter 10
- 7 T U C Congress (1963), pp 334 - 335
- 8 Ministry of Labour Gazette (1966), May p 222
- 9 Ibid
- 10 For a discussion on the economic background to this development, see Glynn, A and Sutcliffe, B (1972).

- 11 See Gamble, A and Walton, P (1976), pp 1-33, for a review of Britain's deteriorating economic position in the post-war period
- 12 For a good example of this propaganda see "Age and Employment", a pamphlet published by the Ministry of Labour in 1953.
- 13 Quoted in Parker, S. (1975), p 90
- 14 These data on unemployment amongst the elderly are drawn from "Unemployment rates by age", Department of Employment Gazette, July, 1977; "Anatomy of the Unemployed", Economist, October 1st, 1977
- 15 Hansard (1968), Vol 760, Col 2.
16. Hansard (1969), Vol 777, Col 179
- 17 Westergaard, J and Resler, H (1975), p 85
- 18 New Earnings Survey (1976)
- 19 Jackson, B. (1968), p 156
- 20 Fox, J (1977), p 9
- 21 Of the 8 4 million people in Britain over retirement age, nearly two thirds - 5 57 million - live in households which are below, at or close to (up to 140 per cent) supplementary benefit level. (Quoted in New Society, January 26, 1978)
22. New Society, August 28, 1975
- 23 In 1972, nearly one-third of occupational pensioners received less than £2 a week (quoted in 'Better Pensions', H. M S O , 1964).
- 24 P. Hewitt (1974), pp.13-16 In a more recent article Roger Beattie (1978), comparing Britain's new pension scheme with that of pension schemes in other Western European countries, concludes

it is clear that Britain is responding to an aspiration shared by workers in most countries. namely, that living standards in old age should somehow approximate those attained during working life. But the target for income replacement, as measured for the worker on average earnings, appears to be lower than in various countries of Western Europe (p. 313)

CHAPTER 9

THE RETIREMENT PASSAGE

9 1 INTRODUCTION

From an examination of the political economy of retirement we must now return to the individuals' own experience of this period. As implied above, it would be unwise to expect an exact correspondence between the two levels - experience and perceptions of retirement being affected by the varied social and occupational backgrounds under-pinning the individual's retirement. These latter, combined with the person's own feelings and desires, will go some way in structuring the range of images connected with retirement. However, the scope and form of these images will be heavily influenced by the type of constraints sketched above. Those without a material surplus spoke of existential problems - problems connected with 'passing' or 'killing' time. They spoke - as well - about the need to stop dreaming about those things that were impossible to achieve or to realise. True, many also celebrated the freedom felt in having lives no longer structured by the demands and responsibilities of work and labour, they also celebrated the extra time they now had to explore relationships and activities that were important to them. But despite the good things, the lack of a surplus would set permanent limitations upon the retirement experience. People had 'worries' constantly at the back or the front of their minds, and the more numerous the worries the more tense and anxious about retirement they would become.

On the other hand, those with an adequate material surplus stretched out and expanded their lives in numerous directions. Age was not a barrier to such 'self-development'. On the contrary, when accompanied by a loosening of social constraints and normative controls, age and experience combined to produce increased depth and meaning to life. Combined as well with a rich and secure life history,

retirement could become a welcome part of the individual's life-cycle.

However, the existence or otherwise of a material surplus still only gives us the barest outline to the retirement experience. People - as noted above - come into retirement from varied social and occupational backgrounds, in addition, they may have been unemployed, or had bouts of ill health in the years leading up to retirement. These, with other factors, produce variations in the type of responses which are made. Clearly, there is no one retirement experience, no one crisis or triumph. Below, an attempt is made to indicate - from the available material on retirement, and from the interviews themselves - the main variations that may be encountered.

9 2 THE PRE-RETIREMENT PERIOD

The run-up to formal retirement may be marked by a number of changes. For many people important alterations occur in perceptions about work and work-based relationships. The interviews discussed above illustrate a variety of such alterations. Thus, we find some people undergoing a subjective distancing from the world of work - sampling interests and activities which might be taken up in greater depth in the retirement period. For others, we find objective changes, such as redundancy and poor health, precipitating a concern about the future. Conversely, we find many people hardly thinking at all about retirement - delaying any decisions until the day actually comes around.

A number of more general factors will also be influencing feelings and perceptions in this period. For example, along with the individual's ageing, the community in which he lives may be ageing as well (demographically, that is), within the family, sons and daughters will by now have grown up and may have moved away. Both of these aspects will stimulate awareness of the ageing process, of

changes in the life-cycle, and the possibility of a future period of transition

An important question here concerns the quantity and quality of resources people are able to hold on to in this period. Amongst early retirees, for example, Wedderburn (1975) has distinguished between: first, those who have lost their jobs a few years before the age of 65 (if they are men), who have in addition poor financial resources, and possibly a disability as well - such men enter retirement with the minimum of resources, and may find it a bitter and isolating experience (particularly if they are single), secondly, there are those who have chosen to retire because retirement is something to look forward to both in a positive sense (to do other things), and in a negative one (to escape from work), and who have an adequate income to support themselves in retirement. Such differences are often sharpened rather than diminished as the retirement period progresses

Amongst those interviewed for this study the main variations in the movement from work to retirement may be summarised as follows

1 Stable Withdrawal

This involves a definite acknowledgement of either the need for, or the likelihood of, a changed relationship to work, with a readiness to face up to the changes in life-style and behaviour this may bring about. With both the miners and architects we find a definite tendency towards such an acknowledgement, one which was often accompanied by a feeling that the individual could no longer compete so effectively at work, and that his major 'accomplishments' or duties had been achieved or fulfilled (both these aspects tended to assist positive feelings about retirement) In addition, we might suggest that with miners in general, the high number of people reporting too sick to work in the final years up to retirement may reflect not only an objective state of health but also a subjective feeling on the

individual's part that he has worked long enough - a feeling which was also common amongst the assembly-line workers in the car plant - and that retirement was now a welcome alternative.¹

2. Unstable Withdrawal

This involves a situation where objective pressures such as redundancy (perhaps combined with ill-health) force the individual to accept a changed relationship to work. Where - as in the case of some individuals in Benwell - this was accompanied by a diminution in material resources, the withdrawal or expulsion from work may set up a social vacuum. In some instances, unemployment and retirement may merge together as part of an extended period of declining resources.² The negative associations arising from this may be accompanied by a feeling that the individual has been discarded and rejected by society. The phrase 'too old to work, too young to die' may be particularly appropriate for people in this group.³

3. Abrupt Withdrawal

Whilst younger people in particular may have positive feelings about retirement the evidence from some research (Crook and Heinstejn, 1958, Lehr and Dreher, 1969) suggests that the closer retirement gets, the less favourably disposed towards it people become. In such instances, people will do very little planning or thinking about retirement. Amongst those interviewed, this was especially true of the car-workers (particularly the non-assembly line workers) who faced a rapid decline in income and social contacts immediately after retirement. Given these circumstances the tendency was to delay thinking about retirement until the last possible moment.

9 3 THE RETIREMENT PASSAGE

The withdrawal from work may assume a number of forms, but the retirement passage usually starts off from the point where the individual recognises important changes occurring in relation to work activities, changes which set in motion alterations in the individual's economic and social status. The term 'passage' is used here in preference to the word 'crisis', for the reasons put forward by Sheehy (1977)

Use of the word crisis to describe the strategic interplay of stable periods and critical turning points has caused some confusion. What about me? I didn't have a crisis.' People will often say rather defensively. Our culture's interpretation of the Greek word crisis is pejorative, implying personal failure, weakness, an inability to bear up against stressful outside events. I've replaced that confusing label with a less loaded word for the critical transitions between stages, and called them passages (p. 23)

By the term retirement passage I shall be referring mainly to the period in which the individual is divesting himself of the worker status, and is beginning to sample the feelings, sentiments and activities associated with being retired. Of course, the retirement period goes beyond this, and has various other markers and turning-points. Ultimately, we find it merging into old age itself. As a general rule, the longer the individual has been in the retirement passage, the more aware he becomes of the ageing process. At the beginning, however, his consciousness of ageing may be quite low, though this may partly reflect both a resistance to certain connotations attached to retirement, and the effect of cultural stereotypes of old age. Statements such as "I don't really feel my age, of course" "I'm not an old person yet." or even "I don't really consider myself retired" all suggest the extent to which becoming retired is tied in with often unfavourable perceptions about the ageing process. Despite this,

the early period of the retirement passage can be differentiated fairly easily from old age, and it is with the former that we are mainly concerned here - a period where, ironically, a resistance to stereotypes of old age may itself consolidate a need for activity and engagement

Prior to Sheehy's adoption of the term 'passage', the concept of 'status-passage' had been introduced by Strauss (1969), in his work "Mirrors and Masks".

According to Strauss:

Membership in any enduring group or social structure inevitably involves passage from status to status. In order that a group persist and flourish, each status must be filled, jobs must be done. The incumbents of positions die, retire, leave, fail, and sometimes betray the organisation. New kinds of goals develop and so new positions are created. Other positions get sloughed off, and persons who previously filled them must shift or be shifted elsewhere. Lengthy retention of a given status may hide a genuine shift of social position, as old duties and prerogatives are dropped and new ones accrue. Unless a group were to be wholly undifferentiated, its members necessarily have to move up, down and sideways. (pp 100-101)

For both Sheehy and Strauss movement from a stage or a status is an inevitable feature of social life, reflecting both the needs of the social structure and an impulse for change felt by individuals themselves. However, it is clearly the case that individuals are often resistant to movement from, say, a particular status, and that one status is often more unpopular than another.

Retirement is still one of these. It is a period in the life-cycle which society has surrounded with ambiguous definitions - images of retirement responding closely to changes in economic conditions. It is a period which, whilst having all the formal characteristics of a major stage in the life-cycle (under-pinned by improvements in mortality, declining economic activity rates and increased unemployment), has yet to receive the attention accorded to other such periods (except in respect of pensions and their imputed 'cost' to society).

In an important sense, then, both society and individuals themselves are still negotiating the meaning of retirement, and this fact alone gives the retirement passage considerable sociological interest. Retirement has, of course, been studied in a number of ways. Crawford (1973), for example, has examined the various rituals associated with leaving work, e.g. wearing "decent" clothes in the last week at work, having a retirement ceremony, rituals which, she suggests, may be important in helping the individual to adjust to his new status. However, whilst rituals such as these may have an immediate, short-term relevance, beyond this they are likely to be less important than a number of other factors (such as financial security and social relationships) in influencing adjustment to retirement. Retirement has also been considered in relation to the ageing process itself, with attempts to understand the main physiological and psychological changes affecting the individual (Williams, 1963, Palmore, 1970). The problem here is that changes of this order are likely to have greater long-term implications (in particular for those beyond 75). As regards the early and middle stages of retirement it is the social and economic changes which are likely to exert the greatest influence.

Support for this view can be drawn from some of the conclusions made in the theoretical debate considered in Chapter 3 (particularly in relation to the critique of disengagement theory). Thus, researchers were unequivocal in arguing that in the short and medium-term period of retirement relationships and activities important to the individual prior to retirement remained so after it. In addition, later work proposed the view that it was the ability to maintain continuity in some form - from work to retirement - that was a crucial variable in easing those anxieties often associated with this period. There was also, emerging

out of this work, a conception of retirement not as a "once and for all event", but as a process unfolding through time - one which involved both immediate and more gradual re-alignments in the retiree's relationship to those around him.

Following on from this debate, and to illustrate some of the processes involved in more detail, I have attempted below to provide a sense of the individual moving through a variety of structures and relationships indicating, as well, the most important changes and re-alignments which the retiree finds taking place.

9.4 THE PROCESS OF RETIREMENT VARIATIONS IN THE RETIREMENT PASSAGE

In a work cited earlier, Strauss makes the observation that

In speaking of children's development, a directional terminology of advancement or improvement is almost always used, although it need not be. Leaving aside questions of direction, it is perfectly clear that conceptual change - hence transformation - no less marks the course of adult careers. Utilizing the dual meaning of the word 'terms' I am suggesting that in coming to new terms a person becomes something other than he was. Terminological shifts necessitate, but also signalise, new evaluations of self and others, of events, acts, and objects, and the transformation of perception is irreversible, once having changed, there is no going back. One can look back, but he can evaluate only from his new status. (p 92)

Strauss goes on to note 'critical incidents' or 'turning-points' which force a person to recognise that "I'm not the same as I was as I used to be"⁴

Shock, anxiety and tension may often follow, as also does the "need to try out the new self, to explore and validate the new and often exciting or fearful conceptions"⁵ Retirement is clearly a turning-point along these lines

People recall discomfort in the early period of retirement (or sometimes later)

Individuals sometimes felt "puzzled" as to how they were to fill their time in,

or they felt "strange" for a period before it finally hit them that they had

finished work. Either way there was a sense of life being somehow "different"

to what it had been before. A change - an irrevocable one - had taken place, and

time was usually needed to shape up to its full implications

This "strangeness" reflected the re-alignment of some relationships and the absence of others - aspects which were particularly noticeable at the start of the retirement passage. As a result, people often expressed a need to replace those activities and relationships which had been lost or altered to a significant degree. There was a desire for structures and resources which would support and integrate the self in the way which previously had been realised by work or by particular work/leisure relationships. Further, people felt the "strangeness" and "anxiety" of retirement - the more difficult this integration appeared or became. Certainly, the desire for integration was a strong one.

"That's the right way to attack retirement - try to keep interested, try to do bits of jobs, I think it's important that you shouldn't allow yourself to get to the state where you don't particularly want to do anything - to go anywhere." (Mr Richards, miner)

"The first six months is hell - the first six months you're quarrelling with yourself - you're quarrelling with everybody else - you've lost your rudder - it's as simple as that. Well then you've got to start regimenting yourself - organising yourself." (Mr Hawkeswood, architect)

"Well, I think it is - I think it is important that you shouldn't allow yourself to get to the state where you don't particularly want to do anything - go anywhere - you can get to that state you know a lot of people do, and the older you get the worse it gets." (Mr Aston, car worker)

But there were important differences between the groups interviewed - both in respect of the impact of retirement, and in the resources which people had to overcome the "losses" and re-alignments which retirement brought about. Let us look, first of all, at those where the losses in retirement had been minimised.

1 Continuities in Life-experiences

From the interviews described above, two variations in the retirement passage are clearly apparent first, that of a continuous retirement passage, secondly, that of a discontinuous retirement passage. In this section we are concerned with the former, a passage where, despite alterations in the balance of resources and relationships which the individual has, a large number are still retained in the process of becoming retired. Arising out of this, there is a less fundamental shift in the individual's sense of identity - both in his awareness of himself and where he stands in relation to others. He still feels himself to be a certain type of worker and/or a certain type of individual and, where this gives him a feeling of self-esteem, this acts as a crucial support in the passage through to retirement.

This feeling may or may not be reflected at an everyday level in the individual's encounters with others. With the miners, this was often the case. As suggested earlier, the occupational relationships and identity bound up with being a miner spilled over into retirement, and few felt a weakening in their position in the world simply because of the loss of the work routine. Relationships were still available to provide a sense of the "old" way of life, the "old" way of doing things. People were certainly changed to some degree by retirement, but not to the extent that they turned around and said "I'm not the person I used to be. I'm somehow different." Much, in fact, had stayed the same.

For the architects occupational relationships were less important than the occupational identity and sense of esteem which people drew from this. This identity was usually carried over into retirement, allowing a central component in the individual's conception of himself to be maintained. In moving from being a practicing to being a retired architect the individual (particularly those in

private practice) was also helped by having a transitional period during which he could gradually reduce his responsibilities⁶ In such instances, the passage of retirement and the pace at which it was taken, could be negotiated at a pace convenient for the individual and for his firm, the consultancy period allowing younger architects the chance to be promoted, and older ones a feeling that they were still involved - without, however, the day to day responsibilities

How much difference did the miners' and architects' continuous retirement passage affect their reported adjustment to retirement? Tables 1 - 4 set out comparisons between the groups interviewed on a number of important items Table 1 indicates that approximately three-quarters of both miners and architects reported few problems in adjusting to retirement They were much less likely to report feelings of "strangeness" and "disorientation" in the early retirement period The extent to which the miners' social world had remained largely intact is reflected in Tables 2 - 4, where we find over three-quarters reporting the same or increased social activity, and high levels of contact with former workmates and children This was less true of the architects, though this was compensated for by a higher and more extensive level of social activity - supported of course by greater financial resources

A continuous retirement passage was also found amongst individuals in the other groups interviewed - though it was less common overall In particular, we noted five in the inner-city group who reported a relatively easy adjustment to retirement and they - unlike others in that group - had been able to maintain key relationships and activities They also shared - with the miners and architects - a stable work history, one where a sense of having achieved certain things, and of having worked long enough, was usually quite strong This latter was also

TABLE 9 1
REPORTED ADJUSTMENT TO RETIREMENT

	Problems in the early or later stages		No reported problems		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Inner-city	16	76	5	24	21	100
Miners	8	32	17	68	25	100
Car workers	12	48	13	52	25	100
Architects	6	24	19	76	25	100

TABLE 9 2
REPORTED CHANGE IN SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Decline		Same/Increase		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Inner-city	12	57	9	43	21	100
Miners	6	24	19	76	25	100
Car workers	16	64	9	36	25	100
Architects	3	12	22	88	25	100

TABLE 9 3

CONTACT WITH FORMER WORK MATES

	Never seen		Occasionally seen		Regularly seen		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Inner-city	11	52	7	33	3	14	21	100
Miners	1	4	11	44	13	52	25	100
Car workers	10	40	8	32	7	28	25	100
Architects	9	36	10	40	6	24	25	100

TABLE 9 4

CONTACT WITH AT LEAST ONE CHILD(SON/DAUGHTER; NIECE/NEPHEW)

	Weekly or more		Fortnightly		Monthly or less		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Inner-city	11	52	2	10	8	38	21	100
Miners	16	64	8	32	1	4	25	100
Car workers	18	72	2	8	5	20	25	100
Architects	8	32	6	24	11	44	25	100

found amongst some of the car workers (particularly the assembly-line workers), and this was an important factor assisting their retirement. In addition, those amongst the car workers reporting a favourable adjustment to retirement were more likely to have experienced a greater level of continuity of relationships by virtue of the lower level of activity they had had prior to retirement.

2 Discontinuities in Life Experiences

With the discontinuous retirement passage there is either a significant break from a hitherto stable pattern of activities and relationships or, alternatively, a "broadening-out" of instabilities inherent in a particular life-style (as with some of those interviewed in Benwell). In both instances retirement appears to symbolise a deterioration in the quality and quantity of social contacts - a situation which may provoke a real crisis for the individual as the control over the environment is steadily undermined. With the ending of work activity a social vacuum may be entered, a vacuum in part created by limited social contacts, few material resources and low self-esteem (the latter sometimes arising out of an unstable work history, or one which has failed to provide any sense of achievement).

In these instances, the retirement passage may be marked by strong feelings of disorientation, with social relationships in particular undergoing drastic re-alignment.

"It seemed as though you were suddenly cut off from life going out of everything you've done. I was 14 when I started work and I finished when I was 65. That's 51 years of working life . . . you've done 51 years of working life and you're suddenly cut off from it . . . it does have an effect on you." (Mr McLean, car worker)

"Oh' I felt terrible yes I felt lost absolutely lost . . . didn't know what to do with meself I was getting up at the usual time . . . I was really sometimes a bit depressed." (Mr Jennings, Benwell)

For some, such feelings may initially be overcome by the experience of retirement as an extended holiday, however, with insufficient material resources such an experience would quickly evaporate

"We used to enjoy ourselves We thought it was great at the beginning. We went down the town, had a little drink .. had a bottle of Guinness . . . go in and have a meal .. which was cheap then about two years ago. We knew a place where we could get a nice little meal ... just 15s. for two of us . . . of course I had the money to spend ... but as time went on it just dwindled away. After a few months it began to get me down not having the money But at first I thought it was great. "

(Mr. Hanner, Benwell)

The characteristic experience for many of the car workers, and for those in the inner-city, was a retirement passage where a decline in the quantity and quality of social contacts inter-acted with a steep decline in income This aspect is reflected in the decline in social activity which many reported (64 per cent of car workers and 57 per cent of the inner-city residents - see Table 2) Given, as well, the limited contact with former work mates (see Table 3) by members of both groups, emphasis had now to be placed mainly on personal friends, on children, and on the domestic sphere Yet, even in these contexts, formidable problems had still to be confronted - these stemming partly from the nature of the communities in which people were residing

The inner-city group retired to a community which had lost much of its population to areas with better housing and facilities - leaving mainly the poor to stay behind The car-workers, on the other hand, retired to a community still in the throes of rapid expansion, an expansion which tipped the demographic balance towards the young, and those with families Both areas had, then, undergone rapid changes - with the social structure of each changing accordingly In Benwell, bad housing, the effects of slum clearance, and the shortage of communal facilities, had all taken their toll on the quality of social relationships

which people could enjoy. Those with sufficient financial resources could, of course, go out of the community and experience environments more suited to their needs. The poor, and the elderly poor in particular were, however, locked in that environment. The decline in the community hit them in a more concentrated fashion. For the newly retired this served only to sharpen feelings that becoming old was a signal for being cast off and rejected by society.

The experience of retirement in Rubery and Rednal had similar consequences. For many of the car workers retirement had been a dislocating event. Individual financial resources were pared to the minimum and communal facilities had hardly kept pace with the rise in population. Demographically, the elderly were in a weak position compared with younger age groups. All these features served to undermine the social position of the retired and elderly, making it as difficult to be old and poor in an expanding community as it was to be in a declining one.

The alternatives were limited for both groups. Children were important for many (though 38 per cent of those in the inner city saw just one child monthly or less), and the marital relationship was a crucial support for some. But where these relationships took place within the context of an overall impoverishment in social relations it was difficult for them to escape some sort of deterioration as well. And, where all the above factors were combined with being single or being widowed, their effects were concentrated even more.

9 5 COMPONENTS OF A RETIREMENT LIFE-STYLE

In a passage quoted earlier, Strauss suggests that after a turning-point in the individual's life there is, as he puts it, "a need to try out the new self, to explore and validate the new and often exciting or fearful conceptions."⁷ Applying this observation to the retirement passages described above, it might

be suggested that an essential difference between the two lies in the adequacy of the environment provided for the "new self", and the saliency of the "old self" for the changed set of conditions which retirement brings, variations within these areas producing differing conceptions about what it means to be retired. On the one hand, there is a conception of retirement as a period where the self is "embattled" - constantly fighting against poverty, against deteriorating social ties, against the distress of too much surplus time. On the other hand, there is a conception of retirement as involving the deeper exploration of both "new" and "old" selves, i. e. retirement as a period of discovery, a period for re-structuring and re-organising a particular life-pattern

Given the possibility of such differing conceptions, combined with the increased importance of retirement in people's lives, it seems important to ask what are the necessary components for a secure retirement life-style? How can the "embattled self" be replaced by a self which can mould and fashion retirement to a secure and flexible image? To answer these questions we must first of all go back to the theoretical arguments discussed in Chapter 3.

One of the problems with some of the theoretical approaches discussed earlier is that most assumed a rather limited set of responses to retirement. In the case of role theory the response is located almost exclusively in a presumed need to maintain certain roles, and an assumption that "new roles" - such as those associated with leisure activities - are difficult to learn. In a variant of the theory - activity theory - emphasis is placed on social activity per se, with little attempt to specify the type of activity which might be most salient to the individual, i. e. activity related to his own hierarchy of values and skills. With disengagement it is the quality of withdrawal - a natural concomitant (it is argued) of the ageing process which appears to be the central focus of the retirement experience.

The difficulty with the above approaches is that the response to retirement is put either in terms of a general model of the ageing process or it is judged in relation to criteria considered appropriate for a satisfactory retirement (even though we have no clear idea as to what such criteria might be). In both cases, therefore, the response to retirement is divorced from an appraisal of the resources which the individual has at his disposal, from aspects of his own biography, and from the social environment in which he lives.

As sociological models of adjustment, therefore, these approaches must be regarded as inadequate (a) because they remove the response to retirement away from those aspects of the individual's life which may be crucial in determining his adjustment, (b) because they leave us with no clear picture as to what policies are necessary for people who do have difficulty in adjusting to retirement. In the latter respect, neither role theory nor disengagement theory have really gone beyond a very high level of generalisation insofar as policy questions are concerned. In Blau's (1973) work, for example, we find a call for the revision of existing concepts relating to the obligations of citizenship, and she suggests the need for old people to have "productive roles" (as have a number of commentators). But neither of these recommendations are followed up in any depth, and in no instances are they related to the needs of specified populations of elderly people.

One solution to the problems raised here has been put forward by Rosow (see Chapter Three) who uses the individual as the source for norms, and relates "good adjustment" to the continuity of life patterns from middle to old age. This is qualified by the subjective impact of the change (or lack of it) occurring in retirement. Changes which eliminate previously negative aspects of life or add new positive features are regarded as contributing to good adjustment. Conversely, stable patterns which intensify persistent frustrations or introduce new dissatisfactions are seen contributing to "poor" adjustment.

With this approach, then, adjustment to retirement is related to the perceptions and the life history of the individual - rather than on pre-determined categories of need or on a given model of the ageing process. Now we might note an interesting correspondence here between Rosow's analysis and that of Johnson (1976), who adopts a biographical approach to understanding the elderly, suggesting that we should "Listen to reconstructed biographies in order to identify (the individual's) life history and the way it has sculpted present problems and concerns."⁸ Johnson goes on:

In this way the individual's own priorities for the latter end of his life will emerge - his own losses and triumphs and fears and satisfactions and unfulfilled aspirations (p 159)

This approach had been echoed earlier by Maddox (1966) in a critique of disengagement theory, where he notes the latter's "tendency to treat as relatively insignificant those variations in the constraints of social environment and in the cumulative patterns of experience which constitute the biographies of individuals "⁹ Maddox suggests that:

The possibility has not been adequately explored that an individual life-style - reflecting, for example, an orderly career and its correlates - developed during his mature years might be an important variable intervening between his response to retirement and the hypothesised intra-psychic process of withdrawal " (p. 131)

These various arguments do suggest an alternative approach in the light of the problems and limitations attached to both role theory and disengagement theory. This alternative model would be one which combined a study of the individual's biography with an examination of the constraints operating in the social environment. The type of adjustment made to retirement would depend on the sort of resources which each of these elements provided - and the way both sides interacted with each other. Thus, rather than limit responses to retirement either in terms of

the absence or presence of a given role, or in terms of characteristics intrinsic to the process of ageing, we should simply see retirement as an arena which tests the compatibility and flexibility of given life-styles on the one hand, and the compatibility and flexibility of different social environments on the other. The response to retirement would depend on the type of resources provided by the main participants within this arena - with the social environment (community, family, etc), the life histories of individuals and cultural images of ageing and retirement being the key components.

Utilising this type of model would have important implications for understanding the elements necessary for building a secure and meaningful retirement. The first would be that rather than introduce from the "outside" a new set of roles and relationships for securing the welfare of the elderly, we must derive policies and resources from the different meanings individuals themselves attach to retirement and the varied life-styles and life histories they bring into it. According to this line of argument, therefore, one component for a secure and flexible retirement life-style would be an environment which encouraged individuals to mould and develop their own views about retirement - views which would be derived less from a prevailing orthodoxy about "the needs of the elderly" and more from the individual's own review of his past and an awareness of his future status as a retiree.¹⁰

There is, however, a second, contrasting implication arising out of the above model of adjustment. Because of the importance of this interplay between biography and social constraints, we must recognise the interaction between instabilities in personal life styles and the broader, social ambivalence towards retirement. The extent to which most individuals have been actively conditioned not to expect too much out of retirement, and the extent to which their lives have been

formed around skills and values inappropriate to the retirement period, indicate the need for a socially derived component for a secure retirement - one which seeks to mobilise undeveloped or latent attitudes and which encourages a new political and social awareness amongst the elderly. This additional component would initiate policies and programmes for combatting the "pacification" of the elderly, i.e. their stereotyping as helpless and dependent individuals - individuals who are the objects rather than the initiators of policies and activities. Such stereotypes exert a profound influence, structuring, as they do, priorities and images for and about retirement. As a result, retirement is often viewed as a period for simply making the best of scarce and limited resources, a period for "digging in" and securing a particular anchorage. Rarely is retirement viewed as a time for self-discovery and self-development. On the contrary, the centre-piece of retirement is an often weary struggle to maintain a given identity - this, in the face of threats to self-esteem by feelings of social rejection or material hardship.

The effects of cultural stereotypes on perceptions about retirement may be intensified by aspects of the individual's own life pattern - features which may leave the individual more vulnerable to feelings of alienation in old age. Amongst some of those interviewed in Benwell, for example, we found individuals whose social marginality had been made apparent prior to retirement - with periods of unemployment and redundancy. Often, these were individuals whose position in the division of labour itself created barriers for actively responding to retirement, their lives as labouring men having done little to prepare them either with skills and interests useful in retirement or with a positive image of themselves which might assist in developing and exploring such interests. In addition, their domestic and social lives were often marked by instabilities in terms of marital breakdown and the absence of close friends, instabilities which came to have increased importance

with the onset of retirement and residence in an area undergoing economic and social decline

In contrast to this, the architects had enjoyed an occupational career providing both financial security in old age, and a variety of skills appropriate to the retirement period, as well as this, they were supported by numerous social relationships - these being expanded in new directions in the retirement period.

In terms of our model of adjustment these two groups would represent polarities as regards "good" and "poor" adjustment the limited resources of the inner-city residents mirroring the type of resources available in their social environment, the resources of the architects, on the other hand, interacted with an environment stimulating and enriching the retirement experience.

The point might also be made that the inner city context had done little to encourage the "stable and intimate relationships", which researchers such as Lowenthal and Haven (1968) and Lemon et al (1972) suggest are crucial to maintaining morale in old age. The scarcity of such relationships, combined with an unstable work history or one where the person's location in the division of labour had limited the development of skills and interests, did much to undermine attempts at building a network of activities and friends

Conditions such as the above represent a formidable challenge insofar as a retirement social policy is concerned. Merely securing the conditions for ensuring that individuals can continue with important pre-retirement activities, and that policies for retirement reflect subjective needs and aspirations, is challenge enough. But securing the second component suggested above, i.e. combatting instabilities in personal life styles and social environments, is a challenge of even greater magnitude,

suggesting as it does a need for intervention hitherto without precedent in the area of retirement. Yet, the necessity for such intervention seems inescapable once the implications of demographic and social trends are recognised. These indicate that a lengthy period of retirement - for increasing numbers of people - is here to stay, and that the question of access to a wide range of resources and facilities must be regarded as an issue of major concern. Indeed, the question of a social policy for retirement, to under-pin and stimulate new life styles and activities, should now be at the top of any agenda of priorities for social action. It is to an examination of the character of such policies that we must now turn

FOOTNOTES

1 This finding is supported by the large rise - reported in many countries -
in the number of invalidity pensions being awarded to older workers

In this connection, Roger Beattie (1978) has commented:

Is this a disguised form of early retirement? The answer is not clear, but as a recent O. E. C. D. study points out, the rising number of invalidity pensions may mean that 65 is too high a retirement age (p 313)

2 In a study of the long-term unemployed, A. Sinfield (1968) notes that:

Workers approaching retirement age experience the highest long-term unemployment. Generally, both the rate of long-term unemployment and the proportion of unemployed who are long out of work rises with increasing age. (p 30)

3 The phrase "Too Old to Work, Too Young to Die", forms the title of an article by Marina Surkin, Social Policy, November/December, 1975.

4 Strauss, A (1969), p 93

5 Ibid

6 A. Strauss's description of "transition periods" is of particular relevance to the architects' consultancy period

In status-passage, transition periods are a necessity, for people often invest heavily of themselves in a position, come to possess it as it possesses them, and it is no easy matter for them to sever themselves from it. If the full ritual of leave-taking is not allowed, a person may be for some time only partially in his new status. On the other hand the institution stands ready with devices to make him forget, to plunge him into the new office, to point out and allow him to experience the gratifications accruing to it, as well as to force him to abandon the old (pp 103-4)

7 Strauss, A op cit p 93.

8 Johnson, M (1976), p 159

9. Maddox, G (1966), p 130.

10. In this context, Johnson, M op. cit has made the point that:

We do social welfare to old people and not with them. It is assumed that the professionals, both in medicine and in the social services, know what their needs are and how they can be resolved or ameliorated. But the present approach will die a natural death when policy makers realise that the older section of the population can consume infinite resources on this principle and still not be in a satisfactory state

(p 159)

CHAPTER 10

ELEMENTS OF A RETIREMENT SOCIAL POLICY

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Despite the emergence of retirement, and the increased number of elderly people, we so far have no recognisable social policy for the retirement period. We do, it is true, have a social policy for meeting specific needs of the very elderly - though even this has evolved in a remarkably ad hoc way, with no specific framework or philosophy guiding the sort of interventions which are made. But as regards the retirement period as a whole, we have no policy in any form - disregarding, that is, those discussions coming under the general heading of pensions. Instead, the typical procedure has been to shelter behind a range of assumptions which undervalue and delimit the scope of retirement - by suggesting, for example, that it is "second-best" to the role of worker, or implying that individuals can expect very little beyond a gradual disengagement - this, to be punctuated by subsidised rail trips, bingo and cups of tea at the local day-centre, and visits by community volunteers.

In short, society has thought very little about the meaning and value to be accorded to retirement, and the activities and facilities which have been provided have been of little use for ensuring the secure and flexible life-style which people have a right to expect. That they do have this right would appear to be a most important point to stress. Thus, we need to state very clearly - first, that people have a right to retirement, secondly, that they have a right to the most equitable and beneficial range of life-styles (some of which may include an element of the worker role) that can be devised, thirdly, that the right to retirement is one which should be held constant, notwithstanding economic and

political changes. The failure to spell out such rights has meant not only a material allowance which falls far short of providing the basis for such life-styles, but also that the very right to retirement may be called into question - this on the pretext of economic need and individual dislike of retirement. The argument of this study, however, is that wide publicity about the latter may be regarded as a convenient piece of moralising to serve particular economic interests. In this sense the so-called "crisis" and "anxiety" of retirement is more a crisis period for those concerned with providing proper social and welfare facilities for those outside of full-time work - provision which may well entail fundamental questioning about economic and social priorities.

Thus a corollary to acknowledging rights to retirement would be recognition of the structural changes which must occur to under-pin this new stage in the life-cycle. So far, we have had the emergence of retirement come rather easily - too easily. It has simply been assumed that an expansion in the number of retired people would either have no implications for other groups and institutions, or that the implications would be restricted to peripheral areas. This assumption has been facilitated by the type of analysis - and the type of language - used when discussing the retired and elderly. Typically, they appear as a group set apart from the major concerns or institutional areas in society: retirement and work, retirement and leisure, retirement and community structure, these areas appear more as antinomies, rather than intimately related concerns. In this respect, the impact on society - resulting from the emergence of retirement - has been a negligible one. A profoundly important change has occurred in the distribution and status of different sections of the population without, however, corresponding changes in the economic and social institutions which attempt to meet the needs of this population. It has been assumed that work and familial and communal structures can remain largely intact, notwithstanding important demographic and social changes. Alternatively, it has been assumed that

if such structures do change, a relatively minor variable influencing the desirability and direction of change would be the emerging needs of the retired population

The argument taken here is that this position must be rejected and replaced by a new focus on the social implications of retirement, supported by a social policy for the retirement period - one which recognises the inequalities between individuals and the environments they occupy, and which takes account of these inequalities when building policies for securing the rights to retirement set out above. Accompanying this development must be a more age- and retirement-conscious society, one which plans and develops its institutions not only on the basis of the pre-work and working population, but also on the needs of the retired population. Working from some of the experiences discussed in the interviews, there are three principal areas which must be covered by a retirement social policy - work, family and community. These will be discussed in that order below.

10.2 THE ORGANISATION OF WORK

Accepting the rights to retirement outlined above has major implications for the organisation of work. There is a need, first of all, to examine the adequacy of different work environments for preparing people for retirement. We need to look, in particular, at those environments which restrict the development of all-round skills, i.e. skills which could benefit the individual in the period beyond work. There is also the task of examining those environments which are known to exert undue physical and mental strain on the individual - strain which might limit the number of years spent in retirement. Arising from this might be a suggestion that individuals should only work a restricted number of years in such occupations, or that a flexible retirement might be

necessary to allow those who worked in particularly stressful occupations to retire earlier, and those who worked in less stressful occupations to go on working later. Before taking this argument further, the necessity for such a policy can be illustrated by examples from the interview material.

1 Work and Retirement

In looking at the interconnections between these two areas, from the interviews discussed above, two extremes are immediately apparent, i.e. the work of the miners and labourers in the North East, and the work of the architects. With the former we find manual labour setting definite boundaries to the retirement experience, miners and labourers being poorer, less fit, certainly likely to die earlier than the architects who were interviewed. But it was not simply that the architects were likely to live longer - an inequality which must presumably rank as the most important, it was also a question of their capacity to shape and control their lives in the retirement period. The miners and labourers had a common perception and experience of retirement as containing a series of boundaries beyond which they could not go. Their hope was only that an existing life-style could at least be maintained (though it would almost certainly deteriorate because of poor health and/or low income), there was rarely any hope that a particular life-style could be improved upon or diversified. In the main, and where feasible, people "dug in" to their old or existing way of life and hoped that it would change as little as possible - this, on the assumption that when it did change, it would usually be for the worse.

For the workers in the North East, then, both the character and conditions attached to their labour led to limitations being placed upon the retirement experience. What, however, of the car workers? Do similar conclusions apply

to them as well? One of the reasons for selecting a group of car workers - especially one from the Midlands - was that given certain arguments about the improved economic and social position of this type of group, the question of whether a similar "improvement" had taken place in their experience of retirement seemed important to ask. The evidence from this study provided little to suggest that such an improvement had occurred. On the contrary, many of the car workers had had to face up to numerous material and social "losses" in retirement - losses which had often undermined the economic and social anchorage built up over the years.

These losses apart, we must also note that the car workers' experience of work itself created tensions. For them, the "barriers" between "work and life" made it more likely that retirement would appear as a "break" and a "rupture" from past experiences and relationships. In effect, discontinuity was built into the work context. Thus, work experiences had done little to develop skills and resources with relevance beyond the factory, and work relationships were usually terminated at the factory gate. If work did have an influence on the "non-work" areas of life it was usually on the negative side. People working different shifts from week to week would find it difficult to participate actively within the community, people doing assembly work might often be too tired to go out.

Given conditions such as these one should not be surprised that people would often ask "What is my life now that work is no longer present?" "What is there left for me?" By this, some meant not that work was important to them, but that once the obligation to work had been removed there was little else of importance left for them.

The experience of the architects was fundamentally different in this respect. Their occupational environment had allowed the development of - and may

itself have stimulated - a variety of skills (engineering, painting, carpentry, modelling and writing), skills which could be transferred and developed further in the retirement period. In some respects, they straddled both sides of the mental and manual division of labour, and the more rounded development of skills and abilities to which this led undoubtedly made retirement both easier to adjust to, and ultimately more fulfilling for the individuals concerned. In this context, it may be worth re-stating the relevance of an argument put forward by role theorists in the early fifties. In 1954, for example, Havighurst was putting forward the need for role flexibility in the middle years to help individuals adjust to retirement¹. However, it might well be argued that the subsequent spread of assembly-line production and associated work methods has seen the reverse of this advice. Work roles have in fact become more and more "inflexible", and the labour process as a whole has tended more and more to reduce work to its "simplest level" (Braverman, 1974). Few workers are prepared for retirement by being involved in work which develops their own resources and abilities. On the contrary, the meaning usually placed upon work is that it is a barrier to the development of such abilities, and that it is only outside of the work situation that the individual can really develop.

However, the extent to which this is possible may still be diminished by enduring features of the work situation - particularly where long hours of over-time are worked, and/or where the individual is physically and psychologically exhausted at the end of the working day.

Arguably the impact of such characteristics may only be fully appreciated within the period of retirement. In the context of home and family building the restrictive effects of work, and the wider division of labour, may have less

immediate impact on the individual - indeed, tolerance of such restrictions may well be consistent with current trends towards "home-centredness"² But in retirement, attenuated social relationships (because of shift and overtime working), and the possession of skills and abilities with little relevance beyond specific work processes, may well undermine attempts to build a life-style appropriate for this period - a failure which may have a devastating impact on the individuals so affected

2 Work Resources and a Social Policy for Retirement

A number of both general and more specific policy issues arise from the above. On the former, the emergence of retirement raises a number of questions about the division of labour characteristic of the capitalist mode of production. Both Braverman (op cit) and Nichols and Beynon (1977) see this division of labour as one which subdivides individuals into exclusive areas of work - areas which are organised around principles which ignore human needs and capabilities. This division sets additional limits on the extent to which workers can alter the type of jobs they do, and also the influence they have on decisions which are made concerning aspects of their work. The outcome of this is a reduction in the social resources provided by work - both as regards the formation of specific skills, and in respect of the individual's confidence and ability to control and shape his environment.

Such features become more rather than less important, given an expansion of the time spent outside the work situation. A restrictive division of labour distigures not only the experience of work but the experience of retirement also. This argument leads us to the first main element of a retirement social policy.

PROPOSITION NO. 1 With the emergence of retirement the disjunction between a restrictive division of labour, and the expansion - both in duration and social importance - of non-work areas, has become more acute. Given acceptance of the right to retirement the implication of this should be explored in relation to work and occupational structures. These latter should be examined as to their capacity to generate skills and resources which are transferable in some form to the retirement period. Those which fail to do this must be organised so that they are not the exclusive responsibility of particular individuals. Accepting the right to retirement must mean that all individuals can expect the right to work which will facilitate their entry into the retirement period.

Arising from this proposition are two specific policy issues. First, we might suggest the possibility of occupations being ranked and categorised according to their effect on the individual's physical and psychological health, and on the type of skills and resources they develop. In the period between a more long-term restructuring of the division of labour, retirement ages could be related to the type of ranking an occupation received, in this way the age of retirement would reflect in part the impact of the individual's occupational environment, thus recognising the unequal nature of different environments in respect of health and mental welfare. In administrative and financial terms a policy of flexible retirement according to occupation would be easier and more practical than a flexible retirement policy based on individual choice alone, the latter having the disadvantage of creating considerable uncertainty both for employee and employer - particularly those of the former who are genuinely uncertain whether or not to retire. Flexible retirement according to occupation, on the other hand, would combine both an element of security - people would still know exactly when they had to retire, with a greater recognition of the wide differences amongst older people,

and, to repeat, it would be somewhat easier to organise than flexible retirement according to individual choice alone

Secondly, with the expanding number of years now spent in retirement (and with healthier retirees), a re-organisation of the work career itself might be considered. Instead of the present demarcations between entry into, and exit from the labour force, a situation might be envisaged where workers entered and re-entered the labour force at a number of points in their work careers. This might develop from a policy of giving work and education complementary functions throughout the life span with, for example, sabbatical periods (hitherto reserved for only a minority of employees) available to all workers, allowing the individual to develop ideas and interests independent of work interests, or to explore an aspect of the latter in greater depth. Such a flexible structuring of the work career would itself greatly facilitate entry into retirement, the latter becoming a more permanent version - for some - of a sabbatical period³

The need for a new approach to the organisation of the work career is now particularly pressing given the failure of some economies to guarantee life-time employment (Economist, October 1st, 1977), the breaking of the commitment to full employment (Townsend, 1977), and the unstable employment experience of older unskilled and semi-skilled workers. These factors, combined with the emergence of the retirement period, point to the need for a restructuring of the work career along the lines suggested above. This would provide a means for attacking both the problem of unemployment and the problem of easing the transition to retirement

10 3 THE FAMILY

The variety of relationships uncovered by the interviews confirms the correctness of the point that there is a "vast variety of human groups encompassed by the term family"⁴ Given such variety we should not be surprised that the view that retirement necessarily leads to tension and disagreement between husband and wife, is a rather misleading one. Once again, there are pervasive myths to be attacked here - the "husband under the feet" syndrome being one of the most prominent. Certainly, if there were something approaching a uniform tendency amongst the groups interviewed for this study, it would be that only a minority could be considered representative of such a syndrome. A rather larger number of couples was much more keen on expressing delight and satisfaction at being able to spend more time with each other, and developing a relationship which had often been sacrificed for the sake of work and wider family commitments.

But there were important variations in the way such feelings were expressed, in the nature of conjugal roles, and the relationship of these to the wider social environment - these variations having an important impact on the retirement experience. Once again, before drawing out some of the policy implications a review of the interview material will be considered.

1. Family Life and the Experience of Retirement

Two of the groups interviewed - the miners and architects - had fairly uniform (albeit differing) family structures, and their experience will be discussed first of all. These were also groups of people for whom the experience of retirement had been somewhat easier - particularly in the early stages - and there are some important links to be drawn out in this respect. Of course, it will not be possible to trace specific causal connections, but it should be possible to indicate that certain types of family structure may be more appropriate for the retirement period than other types.

Both the miners and architects provided us with examples of stability and continuity in respect of the conjugal relationship and the social network to which the relationship was connected. Taking the marital relationship first of all, in neither of the two groups did we find any expressions of a feeling that the relationship had deteriorated. On the contrary, in a number of cases, there were joyful descriptions of greater harmonisation in the home - particularly in the case of the miners, where the nature and organisation of their work had clearly had a great (and often deleterious) impact on the domestic unit.

For both groups, as well, the conjugal relationship had been incorporated into a wide range of social relationships, and most of these were continued with after retirement. In the case of the architects we noted an underlying characteristic for both partners to have built up their own network of friends and activities, and there was a tendency for the balance between joint and independent activities to be maintained in the retirement period. With the miners there had been a more segregated conjugal relationship - one which was embedded in a close-knit network of friends, relatives and neighbours. However, the extent of segregation had been modified in retirement, with a greater sharing of domestic tasks and activities beyond the home.

Thus, although very different in the nature of resources they had, and in the type of activities they engaged in, there were interesting similarities between the miners and architects in respect of a certain balance between joint and independent activities. Such a balance was also encountered amongst the group of five in Benwell (the inner-city area) who had had a relatively easy and successful entry into retirement. Four of the five had family structures with an intermediate degree of conjugal role segregation. In Bott's (1957) definition this involved a situation where in external relationships husband and wife had some joint

relationships and some segregated ones. The division of labour within the household was more flexible than in the case of extreme conjugal segregation, with an increased emphasis on joint organisation and at least some shared interests.

This description is also applicable to the miners and architects, indicating the type of relationship which people had either started from, or moved towards, in the retirement period. We might argue here that such a balance of relationships had some advantages in retirement. Given a combination of both internal and external relationships there was rarely the painful (and in some cases humiliating - see Townsend, 1957) return to the home, and the anxious, faltering steps towards securing a new status and role. In the above instances, with the balance of activities either being carried through into retirement or arising out of a "softening" and modification of initially more segregated roles and activities, relationships were more cohesive and varied than was the case with other groups.

In short, unlike others who were interviewed, the individuals above did not retire to a domestic unit with only tenuous links to the surrounding environment. Neither did they retire into a situation where the marital relationship was alone in providing emotional support. There were, in fact, numerous children, friends and relatives for developing contacts with, and with whom the meaning and value of retirement could be explored and discussed.

In contrast to this we can now turn to the car workers and to the other inner-city residents who were interviewed. Amongst the former we distinguished between a group with relatively few retirement problems, and those with a range of difficulties. We noted that the group without retirement problems were more likely to have a joint conjugal role relationship, and to report either an unchanged domestic situation or - in a minority of cases - a greater degree of closeness. Those with retirement problems on the other hand, tended to have more segregated

conjugal role relationships, and often reported some domestic conflict - particularly in the early stages of retirement. Loose-knit networks were characteristic of both groups, with evidence to suggest that these networks had attenuated somewhat after retirement. This had had a differential impact on the two groups. The group without retirement problems tended to have been "home-centred" - a characteristic which may well have been influenced by the fact that over 60 per cent were migrants. (Willmot and Young (1960) found that a greater sharing of household tasks and home activities is characteristic of migrant couples). Amongst those with retirement problems, on the other hand (a mainly non-migrant group), we find a much stronger social and leisure orientation. However, financial difficulties and the dissolution of social networks often forced the individual into a re-orientation towards the home - a movement which was often to cause tension and anxiety, at least in the early stages.

In short, both groups came to focus on immediate family relationships in retirement (extensive contacts with children being maintained). But whilst this was merely a confirmation of an existing practice for one group, it represented a significant re-alignment for the other group - one which was often viewed with considerable hostility. However, the loose-knit networks common to both groups meant that in most cases the marital relationship was of overriding importance both in providing emotional support, and as regards exploring the meaning of retirement. This could be of considerable strength, as some couples rediscovered warmth and intimacy towards each other. But it was also a source of weakness, since "failure" to recover such intimacy took place in the absence of alternative relationships. In these instances, for the retired male, the anxiety of retirement could be precisely the anxiety of moving into a world with a limited number of close and supportive relationships, the impact of an event such as widowhood bringing this into particularly sharp relief.

With the inner-city group loose-knit networks (with joint conjugal role

relationships) were again prominent, with the disruption of social networks (in the context of massive population decline) being particularly marked. In a group of five who were undergoing a rather debilitating experience in retirement, it is noticeable that two were single men with highly unstable social networks, we also find another individual whose close-knit network had disintegrated due to a combination of retirement and poor health, finally, we find two men whose loose-knit networks had contracted since retirement (financial reasons being prominent in one instance), and for whom a "turning-in" towards the family had not had sufficient compensation as set against the relationships which had been lost.

In the case of a group of eleven who had all experienced initial problems in adjusting to retirement, we noted a strong tendency for a "re-orientation" towards the family as part of a "strategy of resistance" for overcoming problems in retirement - again within the context of a social network and social environment which offered little in the way of alternatives. For this group the retirement experience came to be built almost exclusively around the home, and the endless round of activities associated with the maintenance of the domestic unit, social relationships becoming increasingly limited as the retirement period progressed.

What are the implications to be drawn from these variations in family structure and family relationships?

2 Family, Social Network and Social Policies for Retirement

At one level, the long-term changes in family structure have favourable implications for relationships within retirement. Willmott and Young (1973), for example, have charted the rise of what they term "The Symmetrical Family", a family where there is greater sharing of tasks, activities and friends, and where there is a marked "home orientation" amongst both women and men. They use the

term "symmetrical" to suggest not equality but something closer to it than was normal in the past, along with a greater degree of role sharing within the home. The rise of this family type suggests that domestic relations in retirement should increasingly become a natural extension of past domestic practice. One positive side to this is a decrease in anxiety for the retired male as he enters a domestic arena where he has always played an important role: the sharing of activities in retirement becomes a natural extension of those activities shared before retirement.

Of course it may well be true that amongst older people a high degree of role segregation is still common, and this may remain the case for some time to come (Willmott and Young, *op cit*). Even so, as some of the evidence from this study would indicate, we do find some retired couples modifying conjugal roles, this often being part of a conscious strategy for organising and coping with daily life in retirement.

Overall, if Willmott and Young are correct in their analysis of future family patterns, it could well be argued that although in the sphere of work relations a divergence between work and retirement is still apparent, in the sphere of family relations a certain convergence is now taking place, with the greater time individuals spend in retirement consonant with a broader trend towards involvement in home-based activities.

But there is another side to this emergent family type - a side which has less favourable implications for retirement. On the one hand, the importance of relatives in the family's social network may diminish - particularly with migration to new housing estates sited away from the individual's family of origin. On the other hand, the role of friends and neighbours in the individual's social network may be limited by conditions of work (e.g. shift systems), features, which as

Noble (1970) has pointed out, have their own effect on residential patterns, limiting the quantity and quality of social contacts in the individual's environment. Given a continuation of trends encouraging urban dispersal, and the widespread adoption of the "continental" shift system, the likelihood of individuals entering retirement with a rather limited range of relationships outside the home is increased

The car workers who were interviewed give us a good illustration of the above point. Those who had migrated from other parts of the country were, perhaps examples of Willmott and Young's new family type, with the accent on home building and a sharing of activities both inside and beyond the home. This group had fitted in well with retirement, as might be hypothesised. But it is also worth noting that relationships in retirement were built on a very limited terrain, with the immediate family being the exclusive focus. Where children had remained close at hand (as many had done), and where the marital relationship was secure and intimate, the narrowness of this terrain was no great handicap. But it was vulnerable. The death of a wife, the migration of a favourite son or daughter, could be (and usually were) isolating events. The narrowness of the terrain on which relationships were built meant that the loss of one significant relationship was more distressing and isolating than for other groups - because of the difficulties involved in finding alternative supportive relationships. In a very real sense, people in these environments were more vulnerable to the crises and changes punctuating the retirement passage - an adjustment to retirement built on a close marital bond being quickly undermined with the loss of the partner. In these situations, people would start to speak of loneliness, of their lack of social contacts, and of their sense of isolation in relation to the surrounding environment. It is at this point - given the absence of alternatives for the individual - that major policy issues start to be posed

PROPOSITION NO. 2 Whilst the emergence of the symmetrical family and the emergence of retirement, can both be said to signify converging elements in a trend towards home-centredness, the removal of this family type from extensive kinship and friendship ties may lead to a vulnerability for the retiree in the early and later stages of retirement. The implications for the latter are well known, with the reduced availability of children and close relatives to look after aged and infirm kin, being one of the most important (Rosser and Harris, 1968, Wilmott, 1976). But the absence of support may also be important in the early stages of retirement, where renewed stress is laid on domestic and community based relationships. With the combination of a reduced number of social contacts both within the family and within the community, the transition to retirement may well be a difficult one.

From a policy perspective, the instabilities in current family and residential patterns, need to be accounted for in a pension which allows

- (a) the incorporation of pre-retirement activities into the retirement period,
- (b) increased financial support for those who, for example, have been recently widowed or for those who live in areas affected by high rates of population change.

At present these are often the groups who are the poorest and least able to circumvent constraints within the environment, with membership of loose-knit networks and financial impoverishment setting up their own dialectic of withdrawal and reduced social activity.

Secondly, in the absence of a situation where retired and elderly people have a variety of resources to draw upon, an emphasis on "inner-resources" and flexibility of life-styles, will become increasingly important. Here, the role of education will become central, not only in providing new skills and interests to be explored in the retirement period but, in addition, "skills for survival",⁵ i.e. skills for coping with major life-cycle changes and changes in the individual's

immediate environment. Here, rather than constantly invoking the existence of a past environment providing warmth and security for its elderly members, we should set out the skills and resources which individuals must develop for themselves if they are to respond effectively to the retirement experience. We must recognise that the retirement period - containing as it does so many potential areas of both crisis and achievement - may require a new range of social and intellectual skills, skills which may be of particular importance where the individual has only a limited circle of contacts to debate and discuss the various changes affecting him.

Thirdly, if the argument above is that work and familial relationships are causing a split away from complex ties within the community, the question of combatting age discrimination as it is applied to the elderly will become of increasing importance. The isolation of the elderly either within the community, or in age-specific institutions, makes them highly vulnerable to the social practices arising from such discrimination. The need here is to start re-defining concepts such as "ageing" and "retirement" in a way which allows for the expression of an individuality based on life-long experience, and which recognises the continued desire for participation in a variety of social relationships. In this respect the nomenclature of an ageing society must be transformed from its existing emphasis on the constraints and barriers coterminous with the ageing process towards an awareness that it is mainly social and cultural barriers which limit the scope and content of life in the sixties and seventies and beyond. Long-term changes in life-expectancy and retirement patterns thus demand a new public and private language to reflect the changed status and expectations of the aged. In particular, this language must reflect a shift towards greater autonomy on the part of the aged, with their independence from work and family structures being the foundation for a new identity and social status.

10 4 COMMUNITY

Placing the interviews in different social and geographical contexts gave some illustration of the variety of social relationships in which retired men may be found. That this should be surprising again signifies another facet of the myths surrounding retirement - those, in particular, stressing the loneliness and isolation of the retired male when set apart from his work environment. The dominant picture here has been one suggesting that the male's attachment to his work creates difficulties for him in retirement - friendships and activities paling by comparison with the relationships and tasks bound up with work. Once again, such a myth is convenient for projecting instabilities within the environment onto instabilities within the individual himself - transforming the former into a magnification of the latter (rather than vice versa). But instabilities in the social environment cannot be brushed aside so easily. They provide a constant background to daily life in retirement, and, because of this, their influence on perceptions and images of retirement will be crucial.

That individuals can and do experience loneliness and isolation in retirement can hardly be denied. And, just as clearly, it would be wrong to attribute all of this to constraints within the social environment. Regardless of the latter, exploring relationships in retirement - particularly new ones - is often a difficult and painful process, a process where people may feel they are putting themselves in vulnerable, emotionally-charged situations - often, here, for the first time for many years. In these situations (particularly acute where retirement and widowhood are combined) the individual may have to re-learn the skills attached to creating and sustaining friendships, re-learn the problems involved with acceptance and rejection, liking and disliking. But we must temper features intrinsic to retirement, with environmental factors. Certainly, retirement

is often a "difficult" and "anxious" period - at least in the early stages. But the key difficulties may often lie outside the individual's control, problems with making and sustaining relationships being compounded by upheavals in the individual's immediate environment. For illustration of this point we must once again return to the interviews.

1 Community and Retirement

For both the inner-city group and the car workers, forming relationships in retirement was made difficult in a context of rapid population decline in one instance, and rapid population increase in another. Elderly people in the inner-city spoke of the problems of "passing time" or "killing time". They spoke, too, of the hostility they encountered on the street and in bars, and they spoke of the problems involved in finding people of their own type or kind, people who would be interested in talking with them - without insulting them, or hitting them, or thinking that they were mad. Retirement had, it is true, helped to diminish the number and quality of social contacts for many who were interviewed. But these contacts had often been fragile and tenuous anyhow, and the event of retirement was often of much less importance than the restrictions imposed by the pension and the decline in the surrounding community. It was the chemistry of the latter - combined with retirement - which was to expose individuals to painful and debilitating changes in their social world.

The car workers interviewed had suffered analogous changes. At first sight the community context appears to be a more favourable one. Housing conditions were far better than those in Benwell, environmentally, too, this was a suburb on the edge of the countryside - as opposed to being a decaying central area left behind in the process of growth. Indeed, instead of decay, the emphasis in Rubery and Rednal was on population expansion, this latter coming with the building of new housing estates to accommodate the growth of the Midlands in the post-war period.

But this very expansion contains elements of instability for groups such as the retired. Being retired in a high wage, family orientated suburb, one which continues to expand with the building of large new estates, may accentuate feelings of marginalisation in old age. There would be feelings of economic marginalisation because the prices in the shops will reflect the relative prosperity of the wage earner, and because the cash nexus will strictly control entry to pubs, clubs and cinemas, and of social marginalisation. (a) because the aged are a demographic minority compared to those with families - the dominance of the latter influencing the type of facilities constructed, (b) because the increase in population will, initially at least, cause a gap between needs and facilities - a gap which will be felt more acutely by poorer members of the community.

The position of the miners and architects provided a welcome contrast to the fragile social ties encountered above. Environmental changes had been of undoubted importance to the miners - with population decline and a change in the status and role of the mining community being amongst the most important. But the impact of these changes had been softened both by the more favourable financial position of the miners and the presence of an active and supportive circle of friends and relations. Retirement, in fact, was part of a collective experience (with the closing down of the mine), one which was followed through with numerous other relationships (and retirements). Given these conditions, the meaning of retirement could be explored on a much wider and extensive basis than for the retired car worker or the individual in the inner-city.

Access to a wide range of relationships was also available to the architects - though the nature of these was very different from the miners. For the architects, it was the variety of environments which they enjoyed in retirement which was the

most interesting feature. These environments functioned at two principal levels (neither of which were specific to certain localities). At one level there was the range of organisations attendant upon being a member of the professional middle-class (and having the income the latter is usually associated with) - Golf Club, drinking/social club, rotary organisation, voluntary services, political/church organisations - and so on. These varied concerns provided a range of interests and activities which could be maintained in the retirement period. At another level there was an environment built around family and friends - an environment which was both more extensive than for the inner-city resident or car worker - and one which was not specific to a particular locality as was the case with the mine worker. This feature was a major source of stability underpinning the architects' retirement. With the other groups interviewed, limited resources made all three vulnerable to changes in their immediate environment - and to the break-up of social networks with, for example, the moving away or the death of close friends - or their own poor health. The depth and breadth of the architects' social world made them less vulnerable on each of these counts - their friends were much less likely to die (just as they were less likely to suffer poor health) - and even if friends did move away, resources were available which allowed them to be replaced and/or regularly visited. Here, then, the meaning of retirement could be discovered within rich and varied environments - these suffering least of all (compared with the other groups interviewed) from either age-related changes - or changes associated with the broader social environment.

2 Community, Social Relationships and a Retirement Social Policy

If the right to retirement carries with it a right to a range of resources and relationships - then securing this right may often be made difficult by constraints within the individual's social environment. The elderly are particularly vulnerable in this respect - often living in areas with the least resources to

respond effectively to their needs. Thus, elderly people are often over-represented in the declining parts of cities, or those areas scheduled for urban renewal conversely they are often under-represented in new growth areas or areas where resources and facilities are being concentrated.⁶ Given their social location, therefore, a deterioration in the individual's own resources may itself interact with a deterioration in resources at an environmental and community level.⁷

Even without such deterioration specific features of capitalist urbanisation may have harmful consequences for the elderly - the location of resources in new growth areas or the concentration of certain facilities (shopping, entertainment etc.) in existing city centres, being chief amongst these. First, the location of resources in new growth areas may mean problems of access for those living in more isolated areas - particularly for those on low incomes and dependent on public transport. Secondly, where a concentration of resources is associated with over-congestion - the sheer density and level of concentration may make the facilities in such areas socially unattractive (and unmanageable) to groups such as the elderly - especially for those who are disabled in any way. Thus, for example, the trend towards centralised shopping areas (e.g. Birmingham's Bull Ring, Newcastle's Eldon Square) with minimal attention to the needs of the physically disabled (apart from the provision of special toilets) actually precludes large sections of the population who for varying reasons cannot cope with the ensuing congestion (most new buildings fulfil legislative requirements as regards help in facilitating access but in terms of the internal arrangements ignore entirely the special needs of the retired and elderly).⁸ Thirdly, the concentration of resources in centres with new and expensive buildings - erected on highly priced land - coupled with the

pricing policies of the monopolies who dominate the central areas, leads on the one hand to the increased cost of facilities such as entertainment - the admission cost to cinemas and theatres in central areas being beyond the reach of those dependent on the state retirement pension - and, on the other hand, to the deterioration of facilities outside the central area. The latter may result in the closure of small trading establishments - establishments which may have been of some importance to the elderly having both a social function and the advantage of physical proximity.⁹ Finally, as the interviews above would suggest, the social trends accompanying both growth and decline in particular areas may accentuate the marginalisation of the elderly, the main planning focus being on housing and facilities for families and children - facilities for the elderly often coming only as an "after-thought" or as part of some charitable endeavour.

This summary of some of the processes affecting the elderly leads us on to the following proposition

PROPOSITION No 3 Accepting the right to a range of resources and facilities in retirement requires an upgrading in the priority according to the elderly within the urban environment

The important role which retirement now plays in people's lives needs recognition in the planning and organisation of facilities within city areas, with the encouragement of a much broader range of activities than has hitherto been allowed for. Rather than retirement being a period for the individual to move from the centre to the periphery of social life (a move reinforced by the numerous myths surrounding the ageing process), the converse should be the case, with the development of a more libertarian life-style as work and familial responsibilities fade away. The foundation of such a life-style will involve bringing the elderly

into the varied environments provided by city life. In this context, rather than the latter being a harmful or negative force in relation to the elderly (as it is usually depicted), it could be a highly positive one- providing precisely the range of resources necessary for developing the retirement period.

As well as harnessing the positive features to city life, however, we must also recognise the negative aspects, and develop the necessary policy measures. The most important element here is the extent to which urban growth disadvantages those left behind in the older areas, and also those living in areas subjected to population expansion. As has been argued, the elderly are often the most vulnerable to the pressures and changes which such growth brings about. This is less a result of age per se, than a consequence of the diminished financial resources accompanying retirement. In areas where social and communal networks are breaking up and/or re-grouping as a result of economic changes, those with limited incomes may face formidable barriers to re-constructing their own social networks. This is accentuated by widowhood, poor health or the death of close friends.

As well as the necessity for additional financial help for individuals and communities facing these kinds of stresses, a retirement policy must also be developed to reduce the impact which such changes help bring about. In the absence of any policies we find that it is the elderly who are often the last to be moved out of areas undergoing slum clearance, and in those areas where population is expanding, the elderly may suffer worst of all from the social dislocation arising from an expanding community with few additional facilities. The rights of the elderly and retired in these situations need to be established more firmly and coherently than at present. Often, the mis-treatment of the elderly stems from their categorisation as "non-productive" members of society, members who, it

would appear, disqualify themselves from participation in social life by the fact that they are no longer economically useful. Many forms of abuse follow from this, not least of which is an abuse of the sort of environments which people have a right to demand and expect. Thus, the spacious lay-outs in New Towns or new suburbs of industrial cities are often feted for the advantages accruing to family life and the needs of young children. This is all to the good, but rarely does there appear much consideration for the plight of elderly people caught up in the inevitable costs of such growth and development. Once again, fantasies about a rural idyll are less than helpful. We need constructive policies to identify both the place of the retired in new residential areas and the needs of those in older areas. Without such policies the retirement experience for many will become one where disruptions and dislocations within the individual's neighbourhood set in process a steady withdrawal and isolation from community life itself.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Havighurst, R J (1954), pp 309-311
- 2 See Young, M and Willmott P (1973) for a review of these trends
- 3 For a recent discussion on the value of sabbaticals see Goyder, C (1978), Sabbaticals for All, N C L C Publishing Society Ltd
- 4 Johnson M Relations and Relationships p 24 in Ageing in Society Open University (forthcoming)
- 5 This term is used by Alex Comfort (1977)
- 6 For a discussion of these processes see the Inter-project report of the Community Development Project (1974)
- 7 In the C D P areas, 6 of the 12 whilst having a proportion of the population aged over 65 no greater than that nationally, reported a higher than average proportion of households containing an elderly person living alone i.e. the persons most at risk are often to be found in areas with the least resources available to respond to their needs in an effective manner (Ibid p 11)
- 8 For a further illustration of this point see the article on facilities for the disabled in the new National Theatre, in the Sunday Times, 28th March 1976
- 9 Consider for example, the decline of the corner chemist's shop - over 300 close each year in England and Wales. These shops often provide a valuable resource for medical and related advice for groups such as the elderly

CHAPTER 11

RE-DEFINING RETIREMENT IN SEARCH OF AN IDEOLOGY

The development of an effective retirement social policy can hardly arise without major changes in the way retirement is defined and conceptualised at public and governmental levels. The outline of such a definition has been suggested in a number of arguments advanced in this thesis. These have suggested a view of retirement as a potentially liberating period in the individual's life - a period where social and leisure relations can be enjoyed without the burdens often associated with full-time work and family responsibilities. Given this perspective retirement can now be viewed as a major stage in the life-cycle, a stage where the question of the individual's ability to choose and shape an appropriate life-style becomes a vitally important policy issue.

This broader and more radical view of retirement has yet to be reflected in governmental thinking. In "Better Pensions" (H M S O, 1974), for example, one searches in vain for a consideration of questions such as: what sort of life-styles should people expect in retirement? What degree of choice should be allowed in the determination of such life styles? What sort of resources (and on what scale) are necessary for ensuring security in retirement? Rather than confronting these issues we find that legislation has simply turned the financial provision for retirement into an adjunct of existing inequalities in income and property distribution - thus ensuring that a large number of people (Age Concern has put the figure at around one million) will still have insufficient income for the meeting of basic needs (without recourse to Supplementary Benefits). In addition, because of inequalities within the occupational pension system many more will be below the level of income

for complete material security in retirement - security, that is, to direct and organise life according to individual tastes and preferences

There has also been a failure on the part of Governments to recognise that it is partly through their own economic policies that retirement has come to assume so much importance. In the 30's, and more recently in the 60's and 70's, we find an expansion in the number of wholly retired people, as the combination of an economic recession and rapid technological change produced pressures to change the composition and distribution of the labour force. Yet we find that no Government has been prepared openly to admit that either by virtue of a particular economic policy the security of older workers would be threatened, or that by pursuing such a policy an expansion in the number of retired people would become inevitable. Indeed, real Governmental intent has been camouflaged by incantations about the right to work and the centrality of work in our society - even though both of these aspects are becoming of much less relevance to large sections of the population. As a consequence, retirement has remained - for policy makers at least - a marginal period both for the individual and for society, with only limited attempts to build the necessary super-structure to accommodate the changes in population and employment. Without such large scale intervention myths about retirement have inevitably flourished - their power and popularity coming to exercise an autonomous role in forestalling the development of the retirement period.

Already, it is true, we are seeing the start of an organised movement by groups of pensioners against the deprivations and inequalities they experience. This is taking place on a very broad front. Thus we find pensioners organising a sit-in to get access to a rest centre¹ campaigns over the dangers arising from badly paved streets² campaigns by individual pensioners to improve the pensions

paid out by company pension funds³, and, inevitably, demonstrations around the issue of the basic pension itself

When Barbara Castle spoke at a meeting of the Wandsworth Poverty Action Group she was interrupted by a clutch of elderly, becardiganed ladies sitting near the front who heckled tenaciously with loud cries of "shame!" and "what about the pensioners!"⁴

After a hard winter of high fuel bills and the risk of hypothermia, nearly 3,000 pensioners travelled to London yesterday to vent their spleen on the politicians. At the rally their immediate target was Mr. Michael Meacher, Under Secretary of State at the D. H. S. S. and a well known champion of pensioners. Mr Meacher's gallant attempts to explain the Government's economic dilemmas cut no ice among those who had been on the road since 5.30 that morning. His speech was drowned in abuse, catcalls and hand-clapping from an audience who, in any other political context, would have been branded as itinerant rowdies.⁵

In spite of driving rain about 20 pensioners began a silent vigil outside Mr Ennals's (Secretary of State for Social Services, C. P.) home yesterday. They were relieved every two hours by other pensioners and students supporting the protest...⁶

They want a pension related to average earnings and rising prices, a special payment to help all pensioners with their winter fuel bills and a guarantee that their fuel supplies would not be cut off. They were not impressed by the Minister. 'He seems a sort of plastic calculator' said one... 'He tries to tell us that pensioners are better off now. But we're about 60 per cent worse off.'⁷

These campaigns will undoubtedly continue to grow both in number and in variety. To what extent they will develop into a unified struggle, however, remains uncertain. The extent to which pensioners are themselves affected by class differences within their ranks is a factor which will break down a unified campaign based on the commonality of age and retirement alone. a factor strengthened by the very different experiences of early retirees as compared, say, with the very elderly. The likelihood is that we shall see an increasing number of campaigns carried out by elderly people living in certain deprived localities (e.g. inner-city areas), where the poverty encountered in old age interacts with a decline in resources at a community level. We are also likely to see feminist politics linking up with the

politics of old age, since it is women who form the majority of pensioners, and who are most likely to experience the problems of living alone and living at subsistence level. Beyond this, the extent to which the material base to retirement will continue - for the foreseeable future - to reflect wider economic and social inequalities, makes a large scale movement of pensioners rather less likely.

The maintenance of these inequalities will inevitably place limits upon the development of the retirement period itself. This situation will be reinforced if (a) interpretations concerning the value of retirement continue to be tied to the vagaries of the economy, or (b) if the meaning and priority accorded to retirement remains subordinate to the supposed centrality of work. In this context, it might be argued that the work ethic needs to be replaced by an ideology, and a social movement, which unites both work and retirement - an ideology which, with the active participation of pensioners themselves, helps to set in motion the necessary institutional changes for the development of the retirement period.

At the present, in the absence of any such changes, we are seeing an alarming gap opening up between the long term changes in employment and population and corresponding changes in the distribution of economic and social resources. The view that such a disjunction can be resolved by simply raising the retirement age or expanding the number of jobs for the elderly is a dangerous fallacy. The implications arising from the emergence of retirement are far more formidable than either of these standard "solutions" would suggest. Thus, if we are to accept everyone's right to a given period of retirement, can we also accept the massive inequalities in work experiences which leave people manifestly unequal at the start of their retirement? If we are to accept the idea of retirement as a positive addition to leisure and cultural relations, can we also accept the way in which the organisation of work is pushing people away from

involvement in such relations? - leaving culture, "as a private luxury, and the negation of the real, social individual." ⁸ If we are to accept retirement as a period when the individual can direct his abilities to the full, a period where he can explore "new freedoms", can we also accept the continuing inequalities in access to resources which exists in all areas of life?

Clearly, we might not wish to accept any of these things. But this still begs some important questions. What, then, is retirement for? What sort of lives do we want people to lead in their retirement? These are questions which at least deserve an answer.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Observer, September 11, 1977
- 2 Guardian, November 17, 1977
- 3 Ibid
- 4 Guardian, June 16, 1977
- 5 Guardian, March 11, 1976
- 6 Times, October 22, 1976
- 7 Guardian, October 22, 1976
- 8 Gorz, A (1974), p 202

APPENDIX 1. SAMPLING METHODS

APPENDIX 2 THE INTERVIEW SITUATION

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX 1 SAMPLING

Before describing the sampling methods used in this study, a brief description will be made of the reasoning behind the choice of groups to be interviewed. The over-riding criterion was to find a combination of groups with different types of resources - social, financial and environmental resources being the most important. It was decided early on to provide a regional comparison as a background to the study, with the North-East and the Midlands being the favoured areas. Within these areas, two occupational groups - miners and car workers - stood out as worthy of study. First, because of their differing experiences in the post-war period (particularly in respect of the economic fortunes of their respective industries), secondly, because of the differing resources and relationships each was likely to bring into retirement. On the latter I was interested in the implication of the "old" and "new" working class debate for a period such as retirement; reasoning that if arguments about a more prosperous and leisure-orientated working class were correct, some benefits and advantages might well be passed on to retirement.

The selection of the other two groups was designed to examine the experience of retirement at different ends of the class structure. By picking a group in an inner-city area I thought it likely that a large number of individuals would come from unskilled or semi-skilled backgrounds, with the experience of periods of unemployment prior to retirement being a strong possibility. My concern here was to look at how occupational and social instabilities interacted within a deteriorating environment. Here the focus of the retirement experience would probably be one of "survival" and "resistance" in the face of a largely hostile social world. By contrast, the architects seemed likely to be a group experiencing

far more stability in their entry into retirement, experiencing, as well, far more choice in how they structured and organised their life in the period after work.

Having decided on the choice of groups, however, there were some difficult questions in respect of sampling which had to be resolved. Whilst there are no great problems connected with sampling all people over pensionable age, there are significantly more problems when sampling particular groups and individuals within the pensionable population. In this study I was interested in a particular age category (65 - 74), in particular occupations, and in particular communities. These interests demanded the adoption of a variety of sampling procedures.

With two of the groups - the miners and car workers - constructing an adequate sampling frame turned out to be relatively straightforward, and I shall discuss the sampling procedures for these groups first of all. In the case of the miners, records were available showing the ages and addresses of all of those who had been employed at Wheatley Hill Colliery at the time of its closure. From this list a total of 86 names were drawn, this representing all of those miners both resident in Wheatley Hill, and aged 55 - 64 at the time the pit closed. Given that eight years had elapsed since pit closure, this meant an age range of between 63 - 72 at the time sampling was carried out. Although this would give a rather younger group than originally intended, there were, it was felt, some advantages to this. First, poor health and advanced disability would probably begin to affect miners rather earlier than other groups, and since the emphasis of the study was on retirement interests and activities, a group of miners predominantly in their sixties seemed more satisfactory as regards meeting this emphasis. Secondly,

given that discussions on early retirement for miners had begun to take place around the time sampling was carried out, it was of some benefit that the final sample contained a number of people who fitted into the "early retirement" category

The alternative to the above would have been to construct a list of miners aged between 58 - 64 when the pit closed, adding to this a list of miners who had retired before the closure. However, I rejected this on the basis that there were some advantages to keeping the sample as homogeneous as possible, particularly given the relatively small number who would eventually be interviewed. Given also that pit closure had been such a dominant theme in County Durham (as well as in other mining areas), examining the impact of closure on a group of older men seemed a valuable subsidiary aim of the study. To this end all those retiring prior to the closure of the colliery were excluded.

Using the electoral register and records from Wheatley Hill lodge it was possible to determine most of those who had died or moved away in the intervening seven year period. There were also a small number - known to the Lodge Secretary - who were not yet 65 and who were still working. Excluding these groups cut the original sample by over half - to 42 men. Out of this group 40 were contacted (in random order). Of these

3 had died

6 refused

2 failed to be contacted after 3 calls

2 had yet to retire (both having yet to reach 65)

2 were ill

25 were interviewed

—

40

—

This left just two people from the final list who were not contacted. Out of the six refusals there were two men who had recently lost their wives and who felt unable to undergo a lengthy interview.

The Car Workers

In the case of the car workers, British Leyland were kind enough to give me access to their records of former employees. These covered all of those who had worked at the company for longer than seven years and who had retired at or around 65 years of age. (There were separate records for blue and white collar workers, and only the former were used for this study). The records were organised around the year of the persons retirement, so by taking the years 1969 - 1973, a retirement period of 3 - 7 years was allowed for. Study of the records showed 106 persons retiring in this period who were also resident at Rubery and Rednal. This list was subsequently checked against the electoral register, and some 27 names failed to appear on it. However, the register did show a person (usually female) of the same name living at many of the addresses, so it could be inferred in these cases that the person had probably died.

The main worry here was that since a new electoral register was in preparation there were likely to be a number of people who had died since the compilation of the old one. The problem here was as much a social/personal one as methodological since it was felt that the letter which was sent out to people asking them to be interviewed might cause a recently bereaved person some upset. For reasons which will be made clear below all of the architects and most of the inner-city residents were known to be alive prior to any contact, and in the case of the miners, information provided by the electoral register and lodge records, combined with informal contacts, gave information on most of those who had died.

Further research (including an interview with the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages in Birmingham) suggested that short of scouring local newspapers there was no easy way around the problem and I decided to go ahead and sample from the original 106 - excluding the 27 who did not appear on the electoral register. Using random number tables a total of 46 people were contacted. Of these

6 had died
 1 had moved
 3 were too ill to be interviewed
 4 failed to be contacted after 3 calls
 7 refused
 25 were interviewed
 —
 46
 —

As indicated above there were six people who had in fact died. In one instance only, however, was the bereavement a very recent one. Five out of the six widows were seen in person, and most, after I had explained the purpose of the study, accepted apologies for any upset caused by my enquiry.

As will be noted above there were a rather larger number of straight refusals than in the case of the miners. Of these the majority felt or stated that they really did not have enough to talk about insofar as retirement was concerned. "You make the best of it on the money you have", was the feeling which most of the seven put across. There were two exceptions to this feeling. Bill Medwin had worked at Longbridge for 42 years and had had a difficult period in the years leading up to retirement, having been moved (at the age of 60) from his job as a storeman to working on the assembly line, and working nights for the first time in his life. Not surprisingly he found this a very difficult transition to take, and he still felt very bitter about his last years at work. Retirement, on the other hand, he

described as "the best period of his life", and he reported no problems in adjusting to it. In contrast to this, Mr. Ellis (a toolmaker) reported that after 3 years of retirement he still found it a difficult and unhappy period in his life.

Some days you just mooch and sit around. I stop up until 12.00 or more most nights, not being tired. Some nights I'd like to get up but then in the winter months that's costing electricity and so on.

Financial problems and missing the companionship of former workmates were the main difficulties Mr. Ellis had found - the financial problems in retirement being mentioned with particular emphasis.

We have a car but we can rarely afford to use it, probably not more than once a week. I just can't afford it. My wife and I like to go out for a meal occasionally but that's becoming impossible. We like to go out, I think you should go out, but soon we shall just have to stop in.

In conclusion, the problems of getting representative samples of retired miners and car workers were largely overcome. With the architects and inner-city residents, however, there were more formidable problems.

The Architects

Taking the architects first of all the group interviewed was split between seven local authority architects, one architect working for a large industrial corporation and 17 architects in private practice. Finding the local authority architects proved relatively straightforward. Three local authorities in the Midlands were contacted and asked if they could provide names and addresses of architects who had retired between 3 - 7 years from their departments. Birmingham provided a list of six architects, all of whom were interviewed, apart from one who had moved away and whose address could not be traced. Staffordshire County Council, after being contacted, wrote to three of their former employees to see if they would be willing to take part in the study, only one of these agreed and he was subsequently interviewed. Finally, Warwickshire County Council had just

one recent retiree, and he agreed to be interviewed

The architects from private practice posed rather more difficulties and a number of strategies were adopted in finding a suitable sample. The most obvious source was the Royal Institute of British Architects - to which the majority of architects in this country belong. However, although the institute has a reduced rate for retired members, it is probable that only a small number would keep up membership, going on R I B A membership lists alone would thus have produced a quite inadequate sample. The only alternative here was to use a variation of the "snowball" method and ask individuals who had been practicing architecture for some time to name - if they could - any retired architects. Here, the regional secretary for the R I B A in the West Midlands was of great assistance, and through asking the above question to a number of senior architects, the initial group derived from R I B A lists was expanded considerably.

These two sources gave 26 architects in Birmingham and six architects in Coventry who were at some stage of retirement and who had formerly worked either in private practice or for an industrial corporation - the latter being a much smaller group than the former. The remaining problem was that it was still possible that a number of the 32 would still be working full-time, or that they had only very recently retired. However, it was decided to go ahead with this group - starting with the Birmingham list. I also decided to ask those who were interviewed to name - if they could - any retired architects, this acting as some sort of check on whether there was a large group of people whom I had not tapped. In fact, the majority named by those asked were people already on my list, indicating that my informants had been reasonably thorough. On the other hand, this finding could merely reflect the relationships and contacts within a fairly

circumscribed group - clearly there is no definitive way of knowing. There were just two people found in Birmingham who had not been on the original list and both of these were subsequently interviewed.

Of the original 26, six were found to be still working virtually full-time (some of these having yet to reach 65), two refused to be interviewed (a fortuitously low number given the small size of the group I was sampling from), two had only very recently retired, finally, one person had moved out to Ross-on-Wye, this was considered too far to travel for one interview. This left 15 who were eventually interviewed. Out of the Coventry architects just one person was interviewed - this making up a total of 25 interviews.

Despite the difficulties encountered above the group probably provides a good coverage of retired Principal Architects in Birmingham. Similarly, as a sub-sample, the list of local authority architects was also adequate. The deficiencies in the sample are probably an under-representation of salaried architects in private practice and those architects working for large industrial corporations.

The Inner-city Residents

Finally we come to the selection of the inner-city residents. Here, once again, there were some serious problems in respect of sampling - mainly because of the considerable amount of population change affecting the area. The individuals contacted were drawn from two sources. First, as part of a study of the needs of the elderly, the local Community Development Project had carried out a complete coverage of all households in three contrasting areas of Benwell (including a pre-war council housing estate, and an area of privately rented and owner-occupied housing). After excluding all those households not including a person over

pensionable age, a 1 in 3 sample survey was carried out. From the completed questionnaires from this survey, 21 males were identified as satisfying the criteria for inclusion in this study. Of this group, three had subsequently died, four refused to be interviewed, and one person could not be contacted (after 3 calls). To expand the number of interviews I then contacted a group medical practice in the area and from their records selected a group of 24 men born between 1905 and 1908. Eighteen of these were eventually visited: eight men were interviewed, there were three refusals, the remainder had either moved away or died.

APPENDIX 2. THE INTERVIEWS

1 The Interview Situation

I have already discussed (see Section 2) some of the aims and intentions behind the interviews. Here, I want to say more about how the interview was conducted and the nature of the preparation and organisation behind each interview.

The first stage in the preparation for the interviews comprised of research in the individual's community and research on the characteristics of his main occupation, this stage was particularly influential both as regards questions asked in the interview and in the selection of topics which were thought might have some influence in shaping perceptions about retirement. Following this research, and after selection of the sample, all individuals were sent a letter telling them briefly about the nature of the project - saying also that I would be visiting them to discuss it in more detail. Virtually everybody in the study was in fact seen at least twice. The first time to talk about the study, to see if they were interested in taking part, and, if they were, to arrange a convenient time for the interview. On this occasion use of the tape-recorder was also raised. Here, I explained to people who it would be helpful to use the tape recorder, what would happen to the finished tapes, and so on. At this stage a minority of people in three of the groups - two miners, four car workers and four architects - whilst expressing willingness to be interviewed, had some doubts about use of the tape recorder. In these cases I agreed to go ahead without using it, taking written notes both within and immediately after the interview.

Seeing people at least once before the formal, tape-recorded interview, turned out to have a number of advantages - these being principally ones of clarifying the issues likely to be of importance to the individual and the sort of questions which

would need to be asked in the interview situation. The only exception to the above procedure was in the case of the architects, who were too geographically dispersed to be visited twice. The tactic adopted here was to telephone people after an introductory letter had been sent out. My concern here was that that might well have increased the number of refusals - particularly when the issue of tape-recording the interview was raised. This fear turned out to be unfounded - the only two refusals coming from the small number who lived close enough to the centre of Birmingham to be visited twice.

Having been visited or telephoned beforehand, therefore, a date was set for the formal interview. This interview would last on average around two hours with a minority at one end going on for three - three and a half hours, and a minority at the other end lasting one - one and a half hours. The general format of the interview was for me to first give a brief summary of the aims and intentions of the project - clearing up any queries from the last visit. I would then ask the respondent if he could begin first with a general outline of his occupational career. After this I would usually ask some specific questions about attitudes towards work, leisure-time interests, general social relationships, and so on. The interview would then go on to examine the last years at work (from, say, 60 - 65) exploring any changes occurring in this period, and, in addition, discussing thoughts and perceptions the individual can recall having about retirement. This discussion served as an entry into the examination of the retirement experience. Here, I would question the individual about the early period of retirement (the first 3 - 6 months), asking respondents to recall their exact feelings in this period, and what changes (if any) they felt occurring in their immediate everyday relationships. If difficulties in adjusting to retirement were reported, the nature

of these was explored, with particular attention being given to any strategies which may have been adopted to ease those problems encountered. The discussion would then usually move on to a number of subsidiary themes e.g. what did the individual do on an ordinary day? How had retirement changed relationships with the immediate family and friends? How had the use of leisure and leisure facilities changed in retirement? What were the reasons behind any changes? After going through a number of factual areas, e.g. finance/health/housing, the interview would then conclude by people being asked to state (if they could) any advantages to retirement, or, conversely, any disadvantages.

As a purely factual summary of the interview the above will suffice. But, inevitably the interview was much more than an arrangement of neatly worded questions and replies. Often, the interviews would explore painful and emotional areas, people would perhaps describe the wife they had lost and the impact this had had on their lives, or they might describe the loneliness and alienation felt in being both single and elderly and living in an inner-city area. Alternatively there might be joyful descriptions about the freedom and release felt as the tensions and constraints experienced in work were discarded, people would sometimes talk about discovering a new side to themselves, or discovering a new happiness and contentment through being released from the obligations of work. These were profound experiences, and the depth of distress or enthusiasm would often transform the shape and content of the interview - as people gave full voice to what had sometimes been inchoate feelings and emotions. This process is, perhaps an inevitable by-product of the interview situation. As I remark elsewhere in this thesis only a minority of people are likely to have regular two to three hour conversations about their relationships and feelings concerning areas such as work and retirement. They discuss them of course - often at length and

with much enthusiasm. But to sit down with just one other person and to discuss at length their particular views, their particular feelings, this is not an everyday occurrence. The interview situation is "unusual" in this respect, imposing a shape and firmness to areas which - either because people are not asked or because they draw back from replying - are left vague and uncertain. In this sense, the interview is a transforming medium, giving clarity and perspective to what may be confused and uncertain areas of the individual's life.

If it true, of course, that there were some interviews where such a process hardly developed, where the two participants struggled unsuccessfully to communicate with each other. In such instances, replies (and questions) were often clipped and guarded, the interview becoming filled with gentle conversational manoeuvres - this, in direct contrast to the intense, concentrated discussion characteristic of most of the interviews.

Such differences cannot really be controlled or removed entirely, with chance factors - the mood of the participants, the compatibility of their personalities and their perceptions of each other - playing an important role in dictating the success or failure of the interview. These factors aside, there are many things that can be controlled and accounted for. Preparing people for the interview, making the objectives clear, arranging a convenient time, being sensitive to worries and doubts, or strong emotions and fears - these items can be prepared and controlled, and the quality of this preparation will do much to determine how far the aims of the interview are fulfilled.

When the interviews finally came to an end there were some 215 hours of transcribed interviews, and notes on 25 hours of interviewing carried out without use of the tape-recorder. In general, most of the interviews were transcribed

by myself on the day of the interview, or the day after. This turned out to be a useful procedure, since the transcribing was done with the interview still fresh in my mind, a factor which was useful for helping to clarify statements made in the interview. On the debit side it meant a very costly exercise in terms of the total number of hours spent on each interview. If one assumes an average of three and a quarter hours spent at each person's house (i.e. including both the first and second interviews), a further one and a half hours for travelling, and three hours for transcribing, this adds up to a total of seven and three quarter hours to produce one interview. Multiplied by the total number of interviews (counting only those where the tape-recorder was used) gives 645 hours spent in interviewing, travelling and transcribing alone. I shall leave to the judgement of the reader whether this number of man hours was justified.

2 Analysing the Interviews

Analysis of the interviews was made somewhat easier by the combination of specific questions with more open-ended ones. From the former two profiles of the individual were built up: one relating to his occupational career, the other to his retirement. The occupational profile listed the main shifts in the person's work career: his feelings about work; his leisure time interests, his family and social relationships, and so on; it then listed the changes in the last years at work and any feelings and perceptions about retirement. The retirement profile listed reactions to the early period of retirement, specified the relationships people were tied into in retirement, listed leisure time interests, detailed people's financial position, housing conditions, and so on. From these profiles it was possible to extract the basic data behind the experiences of each group, summaries of this data being presented at various points in this study.

After the construction of these profiles, attention was then focused on a

detailed reading of the interviews themselves. The procedure adopted here was to extract from each interview those sections illustrating a trend thought to be of importance. These extracts then being attached to the relevant profile for the individual concerned. As regards the writing of the study this summary of the data has been presented first, with the extracts from the interviews illustrating in more detail characteristics of the groups interviewed. In terms of the final selection of each extract, it was first juxtaposed with analagous statements or comments from other individuals, if these various extracts emphasised similar aspects of the point under discussion, just one might be chosen for inclusion in the text. On the other hand, if each extract illustrated some interesting variations on a particular theme, a selection would be included - the order of presentation being partly dependent on the structure of the narrative itself.

Of course, there are formidable problems both in respect of interpreting the interviews and, from this interpretation, selecting and highlighting particular extracts. On the problem of interpreting the interviews, the experience of transcribing them, combined with a close and detailed reading of the transcription, allowed me to become more aware of ambiguities and contradictions within each interview. On the way certain extracts have been highlighted, I am probably not entirely guiltless of using some to support my own viewpoint that people have a right to a poverty-free retirement. On the other hand, if a particular extract has been highlighted, that it is an individual's viewpoint has usually been emphasised, in addition, the salient facts about each group stand independent of any particular interviewee. Further, I do not claim the interviews to reflect the views of all retired people, or even all retired car workers, miners or inner city residents (as the sampling problems will doubtless have made apparent), the purpose of the interviews was essentially to provide a more detailed description of the

retirement experience and this demand remained the overriding one as regards the selection of interview material

On the question of understanding how the individual has adjusted to retirement, I have relied mainly on the individual's own account of the early and later stages of retirement - presenting these accounts within a wider analysis of the relationships and structures running through this period. Where figures are given saying x per cent experienced few or no problems, or a lot of problems, these figures refer to problems of adjustment as detailed by the individuals interviewed. Where, for example, I say x per cent experienced no problems in adjusting to retirement, individuals may still have referred to difficulties of health or finance which they had experienced, in this instance, however, perceptions of health or difficulties of finance were not so serious as to distort feelings about finishing work and becoming retired. The point should be made, however (if it is not clear already) that remarks made about given adjustments to retirement should not be read as "once and for all" statements, on the contrary, as the retirement period progresses initial adjustments may become unsatisfactory, or, alternatively, "poor" adjustments may improve dramatically. To re-state an earlier argument retirement is a dynamic period in the life cycle, enclosing numerous points of crisis and achievement. In this respect, given adjustments may yet be undermined by poor health, by the loss of a spouse by the departure of children, by a deterioration in the person's financial position. Numerous adjustments and re-adjustments are thus possible in this respect retirement is little different from other periods in the life cycle.

One final point needs to be made concerning the presentation of the interviews in the text of the thesis. I have avoided here imposing a strict grammatical structure on the interviews, in the case of the Durham miners and

Newcastle retirees in particular (where regional and local dialects were noticeably strong) this would have involved a re-shaping of the interviews to a far greater extent than I felt desirable. In addition, since one of the purposes of interviewing people in different social contexts and occupations was to illustrate the variety of responses to retirement, I was concerned as far as possible to retain the distinctive voices and arguments of each group. To facilitate this, the extracts from each interview have been left mostly unedited, with pauses and repetitions (where they were made) being retained. To secure their anonymity I have altered the names of all those people interviewed who are quoted in this study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE BIBLIOGRAPHY

A J O	American Journal of Orthopsychiatry
A J S	American Journal of Sociology
A S R	American Sociological Review
Am Bev Sci	American Behavioural Scientist
Annals A A P S	Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science
B J P S M	British Journal of Preventative and Social Medicine
B J S	British Journal of Sociology
B M J	British Medical Journal
Dev Psych	Developmental Psychology
Geog Jrnl	Geographical Journal
Geron	Gerontologist
Hu Dev	Human Development
Hu Rel	Human Relations
Ind Geron	Industrial Gerontology
Ind Wel	Industrial Welfare
Int Lab Rev	International Labour Review
I S S J	International Social Science Review
Jrnl Geron	Journal of Gerontology
Jrnl Psycho Res	Journal of Psychosomatic Research
Jrnl Soc Iss	Journal of Social Issues
Jrnl Soc Pol	Journal of Social Policy
N L R	New Left Review
Occ Psych	Occupational Psychology
Psych	Psychiatry
Rur Soc	Rural Sociology

S M J.	Scottish Medical Journal
Sociol	Sociology
Soc Forces	Social Forces
Soc Pol	Social Policy
Soc Probs	Social Problems
Soc Rev	Sociological Review
S S Q	Social Services Quarterly