

# *Labour at the crossroads\**

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The position of a worker who is neither the manager of an enterprise nor a member of the professions — if I may be allowed to define the concept 'labour' in this rather vague and negative manner — has changed so radically within a comparatively short period of time that attempts must obviously be made to re-determine his position.

## **I. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PRESENT AND FUTURE POSITION OF LABOUR**

### *1. The shift from manual to white-collar work*

When speaking of 'labour', we still tend to refer chiefly to the manual worker and to forget that the number of persons in dependent non-manual occupations is growing at an ever-increasing rate both in the absolute sense and in relation to the number of manual workers. In 1960 in the Netherlands, the ratio of white-collar workers to manual workers was approximately 51 : 100, as against 41 : 100 in 1947 and 25 : 100 in 1930. Industrial statistics show that the shift evidenced in industry in this respect has increased rapidly during the last few years. In 1946, non-labourers represented 20 % of the total industrial labour force (firms employing more than 10 people). By 1952, this percentage had risen to 22, and by 1957 to 25. From 1957 to 1963, however, it rose by not less than 7 % to 32 %. If American conditions are any criterion, further developments in this direction may be expected, so that the predominance of manual workers in the category of non-independent industrial workers will be even further encroached upon.

### *2. The concentration of the labour force in large enterprises*

In 1889, there were 2.73 employees to every self-employed person

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in industry, including the trades. By 1960, this figure had increased to 9.20. Here, also, is evidence of a protracted process which has undergone rapid acceleration during the last few years. In 1947, the number of employees per self-employed person was still only 5.50, so that the greatest increase in the number of workers per employer has taken place since World War II. The increase in the number of employees per self-employed person is partly attributable to the enlargement of firms in the industrial sector. Industrial statistics show that the average number of workers per enterprise in firms employing more than 10 people increased from 78 to 94 in the period 1947 to 1960. Yet this is probably not the most striking aspect of this development. It is noteworthy that during the last 10 years, the period generally accepted as being the most spectacular as regards the post-war economic development, the average number of workers per industrial enterprise has not increased, but has fluctuated around the 1953 level of 93. Increase of the average labour force per enterprise in industry proper, therefore, cannot be accepted without further comment as being characteristic of recent developments. No less important as a factor in the increased ratio of employees to self-employed, and probably particularly characteristic of the last few years, is the decrease in the number of small industrial firms, including the trades. According to industrial statistical standards, these represent firms with a labour force of less than 10. Censuses show a continuous increase in the number of self-employed in industry (+ trades and handicrafts) from 1889 to 1947, even though the increase in the number of employees in this branch was relatively stronger. From 1920 to 1947, in particular, the number of self-employed rose sharply, amounting to 178,000 in 1947. If this increase had continued during the period 1947-1960, the number of self-employed would have been approximately 200,000 by 1960, and the number of employees per self-employed in industry as a whole (again including trades and handicrafts) would have been about 7 instead of 9.20. In fact, however, something entirely new appears to have taken place in that the total number of self-employed in this branch decreased during the 1947-1960 period to approximately 153,000, notwithstanding the increase in the number of firms with a labour force of more than 10. A special characteristic of this post-war period, therefore, is the rapid decline of small industrial and handicraft firms. Concerns of this sort do not, of course, form a homogeneous category. It is apparent from the available data that a shift has taken place within the group towards firms with a larger labour force. This strengthens the conclusion that an

extremely rapid decline has taken place during recent years among the smallest type of industrial enterprise, the family firm.

### *3. Shifts between different branches of industry*

In 1889, slightly less than one-third (31.8%) of the working population was employed in the agricultural sector, almost the same number in industry, and rather more than one-third in the occupations usually referred to collectively as 'services' in the wider sense of the term. In 1960, 10.8% were still employed in agriculture, as against 42.2% in industry, and 47.1% in the services sector. The decrease in the number employed in the agricultural sector is very striking. The increase in the percentage of industrial workers seems to have occurred almost entirely during the period prior to 1951. Since then, that percentage has remained almost constant, although with some fluctuations. The reverse is true of the services sector, where the percentage first decreased in no small measure up to 1951. Since then, however, the percentage of persons in the service occupations has steadily increased. In itself, this also signifies a change in the nature of the 'labour' phenomenon. However heterogeneous its composition, the services category has its own characteristics in this respect. In the first place, the services sector contains a very high percentage of white-collar workers among the dependent workers as compared with the industrial sector, to say nothing of agriculture. Although, as we have already mentioned, white-collar workers formed 51% of the manual workers in 1960, the services sector at that time contained 129 white-collar workers to every 100 labourers. The shift in emphasis from industry to the services sector thus simultaneously indicates a quickening infringement of the predominance of manual workers amongst those in dependent occupations. Moreover, a great many of those classified as labourers in the services sector work under conditions different from those usually found in industry. Bus and truck drivers, café and restaurant personnel, the lower-ranking post office workers, and various other groups of workers in the services sector, usually have a greater measure of independence in carrying out the work assigned to them than is the case in the industrial sector. Moreover, their work brings them far more into contact with the public than does that of their industrial colleagues, and they are expected to be able to determine their own attitude during such contacts. Although the services sector also shows a relative decrease in the number of manual workers, and internal shifts

in other respects as well, it seems that this typical characteristic of 'manual work' in the services sector will not only be maintained but even strengthened in the future.

#### *4. Improved education and training*

In 1938, of the 100 male pupils who left primary school, 20% went to advanced elementary schools, 8% to secondary schools, 16% to technical schools and 3% to agricultural and horticultural schools, making a total of 47% who attended full-time educational establishments after leaving primary school. In 1948, these percentages were 23, 10, 27 and 5, making a total of 65% who continued their education after primary school. In 1960, they amounted to 33, 17, 37 and 4, together 91%, and in 1962 to 31, 17, 39 and 4, again 91%. So it is now normal practice in the Netherlands for primary school-leavers to attend a post-primary school of some sort. The increase in elementary technical education is particularly noteworthy. In 1900 approximately 3,000 boys attended elementary technical day schools, in 1948 approximately 45,000, and in 1962 122,000. As late as 1960, a census revealed that 56.7% of the *total* working population had received no further education after leaving primary school, and it is evident that among manual workers, in particular, this percentage was considerably higher. It is equally evident, however, that this percentage will decrease very rapidly in the near future, and that the time is not far distant when it will be a normal state of affairs for the labourer to have received further education. This will obviously cause a considerable change in his mentality and position. It is hardly necessary to add that this development receives added stimulation from the numerous opportunities for further training now available to the labourer after leaving school.

#### *5. Technical changes*

Notwithstanding the widespread discussion on the tremendous significance of the technical changes wrought in our economic life by the dramatic development of the pure and applied sciences, it is remarkable that, with the exception of the agricultural sector, we possess comparatively little information about this technical development and its consequences. That is why we in the Netherlands are still in the speculative stage as regards the possible social consequences of progressive automation. The continuing mechanization and automation will, how-

ever, undoubtedly be of far-reaching influence on the nature of the future labour force in the various branches of industry. Manual labour as such, especially unskilled labour, will show a relative decrease; a large proportion of the remainder will be engaged on more advanced work, such as electronics.

#### *6. Wage increases*

Although increased wages are dependent on a number of factors mentioned in this study, they deserve particular attention as part of the background of labour's changed position. Higher wages are not only responsible for major changes in the external behaviour of the dependent worker, but have also markedly influenced his mental attitude and will probably continue to do so to an increasing extent. Release from continual preoccupation with the material aspects of existence, which is largely attributable to the general wage increase, has engendered a different attitude towards life. Other concerns and other interests come to the fore, and other problems arise. In his attitude towards his work, the worker can now permit himself to take note of aspects other than the purely financial one, which means that they become more problematical for him. He can now satisfy new needs for himself and his family, which in turn opens up new horizons, both socially and mentally. Utilization of the mass communication media, the old as well as the new – books, newspapers, journals, radio, TV – has shown an extremely rapid increase among workers since World War II, and foreign travel is now quite a normal phenomenon.

#### *7. Consolidation of the trade union movement*

The development of the trade unions during the last half century from a rebellious and barely tolerated movement among a relatively small percentage of the workers, to a stabilized, generally accepted and socially adapted institution to which most workers belong, and by which the remainder are in fact represented, is undoubtedly one of the most important chapters in the history of labour. The influence exercised by the trade union movement is multifarious, but one of its most significant functions, although originally probably not meant as such, is that its almost complete monopolization of labour has caused it to become one of the most important factors in the dynamics of the late capitalistic society. The continual pressure brought to bear by the movement with

regard to increased wages forces entrepreneurs to an equally continuous effort to reduce wage costs by rationalization, mechanization and automation. These few brief comments are of course not sufficient to give a complete picture of the significance of the trade unions for the position of the labour force or of the developments which have taken place. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that this function is the most significant for the position of the labour force, now and in the future.

#### *8. Social security*

The relationship between the factors responsible for the changes in the position of the working population naturally becomes more evident as the discussion continues.

Special mention should be made of the increase in social security, however, and not only because of its direct, material significance for the people concerned. Equally, if not more important is the fact that increased social security has done more than any other factor to free the labourer from the bondage to which, particularly during the 19th century, he had become increasingly subject. The dread of illness, unemployment and old age meant that the worker had little freedom to decide his own fate and that, consciously or unconsciously, almost every action caused him to wonder about the subsequent reaction of the person on whom he was dependent for his living. The dependence of the labourer was an integral part of the social and cultural pattern of the time, and was accepted as a matter of course, even as almost a divine institution. Looking at it in its historical perspective, we are inclined to consider the comparatively rapid break-through of a greater measure of independence as one of the wonders of this century, even though many after-effects of the previous situation are still clearly visible.

#### *9. The decreasing significance of work*

It is not so very long since, to all intents and purposes, the lives of the great majority of Dutchmen from the age of twelve onward were divided into two compartments: work and rest. With the exception of Sundays, a 'third life', a life of leisure, i.e., time not spent in rest or in occupational activity, was the good fortune of only very few. As we know, this situation underwent a radical change within a comparatively short space of time. Here, too, developments accelerated strongly

after World War II. Relatively little change took place for some time after the legal introduction of the 8-hour working day. The post-war period saw, firstly, the almost general introduction of annual paid holidays and the free Saturday. The introduction of old-age pensions and the growth of industrial pensions whereby a fairly long retirement is guaranteed to the greatest part of the population, was also of great significance. Finally, the extension of compulsory education with the consequent raising of the minimum employment age, and the voluntary attempts of parents to ensure better educational opportunities for their children, have resulted in the absorption of young people in the labour process at a later age than was the case not so very long ago. It is probably no exaggeration to say that throughout his life, the present-day labourer probably works only half as long as his father or grandfather at the beginning of the century. This development signifies a fundamental change in the worker's position, the final consequences of which are difficult to estimate. He now has new activities and new interests, and his work is no longer the pivot on which everything turns.

The influence, both now and in the future, of the availability of leisure time and of the ways in which it can be used on the labourer's position in the world and on his own conception of that position, are just as important as his actual use of that time, if not even more so. In general, it may be assumed that the considerable shortening of the 'working life' will help to reduce the gap between labourers and other layers of the population, and that this will be realized more and more by both sides. It would be interesting to know in how far the increased leisure has already contributed, and will further contribute, to effacing the external differences between the labourer and the 'others.' Not so very long ago the labourer was immediately recognizable in village or town because of his workman's clothing, symbolized by the cloth cap. Moreover, he was obviously not at ease in his 'Sunday best' which, traditional, severe and unfashionable, formed as great a contrast with the daily wear of the rest of the population as his working clothes. His increased leisure time awakened in him an interest in a more casual type of apparel, which was further strengthened by his higher income and the ready-made clothing industry. Informal clothes became more and more his normal wear and working clothes became less important. The almost general use of overalls is typical. Nowadays, it is often quite difficult to judge from external appearances whether a man works in a factory or an office.

## 10. *The scarcity of labour*

The scarcity of labour has obviously strongly affected the position of the worker in the Netherlands. His bargaining position has become stronger, and his independence with regard to his employer greater. If the labour shortage had been less acute, a number of official wage increases would certainly have been granted less easily, and the phenomenon of the 'black' wage would have been almost unknown. It is a paradoxical fact that the scarcity of labour helped to achieve the 5-day working week so quickly.

## II. CONSEQUENCES OF THE CHANGING CONDITIONS

The factors discussed above would seem to be sufficient to show how many partly inter-connected forces are involved and, at the same time, to make us realize the extent of the influences affecting the position of the working population. 'Development' is far too weak a term for the changes which have taken place since the war, and for those which seem likely to occur in the near future; they can better be characterized as 'a social explosion'.

Once the significance of these various factors is realized, many questions could be raised with regard to possible longer-term developments, but an attempt at a more or less exhaustive discussion does not fall within the scope of this paper. The subject must therefore be restricted and a definite choice made. *A very important and, in my opinion, the most vital question which a survey of the current influences calls to mind is whether present developments will cause the gradual disappearance of the working class as a clearly discernible social group, or whether it will continue in existence as such for a long time to come.* The answer to this major question will automatically bring various other aspects of future developments to the fore.

It is perhaps advisable to stress once again that there is a definite social barrier between labourers and other classes which, even though it may have lost some of its rigidity, is still very real. Like all physical barriers, it is characterized by two aspects: firstly, that it separates, and secondly, that it is difficult to cross. These two aspects are naturally inter-connected to a considerable degree, but the nature of the social stratification of Dutch society in general makes it necessary to distinguish between them. That society has an infinite variety of groups of differing social status, all characterized by a greater degree of actual or potential

inter-action between members of the group than with social levels of higher or lower status.

The most fundamental social barrier is still that between labourers and non-labourers. There is very little contact between the two groups, either socially or during working hours. Until quite recently, the lowest ranks of the white-collar workers, the new 'middle class', were particularly concerned to keep aloof from the labourers and to avoid anything that could give the impression of 'proletarianization of the new middle class'. In their behaviour, language, clothing, manners, recreation, children's education, etc., they did their best to keep at a distance from the labourers, and were generally aided in their efforts by the higher ranking 'non-labourers', particularly the works management. In many respects, office workers and other non-labourers were treated differently from the labourers. They had different working hours, were paid monthly salaries instead of weekly wages, and had holidays and, often, pensions long before the labourers were entitled to them. They were addressed differently, and were generally considered to belong to a different class, even though the wage difference was perhaps minimal or non-existent. What is particularly striking is that in the non-labourer group the term 'labourer', without further specification, was usually sufficient to determine a man's position with regard to the group. Whilst infinite differentiations were needed to place a man in his own group, this was not necessary with regard to the labourers, notwithstanding the many disparities in status which also proved to exist in the labourer's world. The labourers were all on the wrong side of the great barrier.

While it is true that the gap was so wide that no attempt to bridge it had much chance of success, the institutional structures in the Netherlands which could have channelled and supported such attempts have never been very dynamic. This country has never been notable for institutions which could offer the worker a reasonable chance to improve his situation by his own efforts. Obviously, this can only have strengthened the separative effect of the barrier. It should be added in the interests of objectivity that in the Netherlands, as in various other countries of north-western Europe, the strong influence which the citizens have already exercised for some centuries on state and society has had the effect of keeping social differences within certain limits. Social relations in this country contain none of the feudal and semi-feudal elements which in other parts of Europe have magnified the distance between the worker and the top layer of society and made it

even more difficult for him to achieve a higher social status. This does not alter the fact, however, that there is a barrier between labourers and other classes in the Netherlands, and that it is still the major element of social inequality in our society.

Before attempting to answer the question whether the working class will shortly disappear as a clearly discernible social group, it would seem advisable to elucidate the term 'disappearance of the working class'. What it does *not* mean is a situation in which differences in social prestige or social status would no longer exist. In a differentiated society such as ours, one in which, moreover, both government and industry are increasingly constructed of large, more or less strictly organized blocks, equality of that sort is purely utopian. Neither does it mean a society in which social prestige is determined by personal capacity, if for no other reason than that 'capacity' is a multi-dimensional heterogenous concept with innumerable aspects that do not admit of comparison. Who can compare the capacities of General de Gaulle, Picasso and Sartre? Or those of a professional footballer and a garage mechanic?

What it does mean is a social situation in which it is regarded as perfectly normal, in accordance with the prevailing prestige evaluation, for a labourer, as labourer, to achieve, or even start from, a level of prestige higher than that of some members of other classes. It is therefore a social situation in which certain groups of labourers will find their equals in certain groups of non-labourers who, in turn, will consider it the normal thing that some of their friends and acquaintances are labourers, that some of their children will perhaps choose a labouring occupation, and that these children may find eligible marriage partners among the working classes.

Is this to be our future? Let me state at the outset that this is not a utopia. The great barrier which separates the Dutch working class from the rest of society is virtually unknown in the United States, notwithstanding the great differences in social standing which undoubtedly exist there. There are unquestionably workers who are ranked relatively low on the American social scale, particularly those who perform personal services such as waiters, hairdressers, etc. As far as social status is concerned, however, the peaks of the working class thrust substantially into the other groups, and there is a general openness of contact between them which contrasts strongly with the European situation. It is not necessary to idealize the social relations

prevailing in America, but it cannot be denied that white Americans are now very close to an open-class system.

The above-mentioned social changes undoubtedly signify an onslaught on the barrier between labourers and the other classes, but this of course does not imply the removal of this barrier within the near future. Some changes, such as the rapid disappearance of the small craftsman and tradesman, even have a negative effect in this respect, for this was traditionally the group with whom workers had the most contact.

Notwithstanding the new Education Act and the technical schools, the Dutch system of post-primary education helps to retain the great social barrier. Now that almost everyone benefits from post-primary education, the influence exercised by the structure of this educational system on the continued existence of social divisions is, to a certain extent, even greater than before. Under this system, the sheep are separated from the goats at the age of 12. Those who go on to the lower technical school, to say nothing of the general intermediate school, are almost fated to become labourers and to continue as such, with the few exceptions who will risk it as independent artisans. But the child who goes to a more advanced school, even though it is only an advanced elementary school, is being prepared for work other than that of a labourer, and is therefore separated from the working class at an early age.

The difference between the labourer's position with regard to other groups in the work environment, on the one hand, and in the community 'outside' on the other, should be kept in mind during our further discussion. The tendency at the moment would seem to be for the barrier between labourers and other classes to be disappearing more quickly in the working sphere than in society as a whole. This is hardly surprising. Any circumstances necessitating a re-orientation of the relationship between the classes are bound to become apparent in the work environment, where it is impossible for people to ignore each other. Elsewhere, in the social sphere, people can usually avoid each other if they so wish. There are particular reasons, however, why this development should be more advanced in the work sphere. The problem of relations between labourers and non-labourers in industry has clearly reached an acute stage, for the labourer's attitude to industry as a whole is now extremely ambiguous and needs to be placed on a new footing as soon as possible. In effect, this pertains to the labourer's

work motivation. Modern history since the 18th century has shown two basic attitudes of the dependent worker towards the firm as the institution by which he is employed and, related hereto, towards the people in whom the firm takes on tangible form for him as employer. In the 18th century still prevailed the situation in which a farmer or craftsman lived and worked together with one or two farmhands or apprentices from the same social and cultural background as himself, and most of whom would eventually hold the same position as himself. It had its roots in the traditional agrarian-artisan economic system. The farmhands or apprentices formed part of a patriarchal family enterprise, and were faithful to and dependent on their employer who, in turn, assumed a paternal authority towards his workers and felt responsible for their welfare. Apart from external motivations – security, possible future independence – the farmhand or apprentice was internally motivated by his loyalty towards the family of which he formed part and which at the same time constituted the enterprise for which he worked. Many people continued to base their conception of the employer-employee relationship on this patriarchal family pattern after the actual basis had long since disappeared from the greater part of our economy and the relationship had therefore ceased to exist.

It is difficult to understand why, despite the protests occasionally voiced against untenable conditions, it took so long for people both in the Netherlands and elsewhere to realise that to go on saddling the workman with obligations originating in the traditional relationships whilst depriving him of the rights traditionally accompanying those obligations must necessarily lead to social tensions which would eventually burst out into the open. In this case, the unique historical constellation is probably of greater importance than the sociological law. The concept of the employer-employee, master-servant relationship anchored in century-long tradition has gradually lost its basis because of the development of a new economic reality and a new approach to economics. To the people concerned this did not appear in the beginning, however, to be directly opposed to the traditional concept and therefore did not immediately change this concept. In effect, however, it was not very long before the old concept was completely undermined. Though coarse self-seeking undeniably played a large part in this development, we would be overlooking a good deal of the truth if we were to accept this as the sole explanation. The traditional myth proved tenacious, and the often surprising success of the socialist movement is perhaps largely due to the fact that it suddenly

tore the old concept asunder, and equally suddenly presented the worker with a new image of himself: a wage slave who, passively allowing himself to be exploited, was even grateful to his employer, who showed no personal interest in his well being at all.

The creation of this new self-image of the exploited man, doing his work under the compulsion of economic necessity, greatly influenced the worker's attitude towards his work and his employer. For a long time, the new image largely coincided with reality; the labourer indeed had no choice. To avoid the risk of unemployment, hunger and poverty, he was compelled to work, and to work long and often unreasonably hard. The individual worker had no means of resistance against the superior strength of his employer, except perhaps through surreptitious slacking. But time-clocks, foremen and the fixed tempo of the assembly-belt made this impossible. Cooperation and collective action on the part of the workers seemed to be the only feasible means by which the equilibrium could be restored. And in this way, the worker's discovery of his new image led almost automatically to the creation of the trade unions which have since grown ever more powerful. The shattered equilibrium was restored. Two powers now stood face to face: the employers, who had monopolized the capital goods and thereby gained the power to force men to work in the way they wished, and the trade unions, with a monopoly of labour by which employers could be forced to follow a reasonable course with regard to wages and other working conditions.

The most conspicuous element in post-war developments, particularly during the last few years, is the fact that this balance of power has been impaired to the point where it in fact no longer exists. The ever-increasing social security, the concentrated and stabilized power of the trade unions and – an additional factor during recent years, but no more than that – over-employment, have all contributed to the fact that the employer is essentially lacking in tangible means of power.

Because of this development we are faced with a problem of immense significance, one of which the large enterprises are becoming more and more aware, and which is also gradually penetrating the consciousness of the general public. The workers will be less prepared to tolerate patterns of behaviour on the part of management, in the wider sense, which are still based on former power relationships; more and more frequently, the worker will ask why he should exert himself if his work and environment are not satisfactory. Increasing tensions and difficulties will undoubtedly be the result if the removal of the compulsion to

work and its resultant effects are not counterbalanced by the gradual building-up of another motivation.

The point at issue here is a psychologically difficult process of adaptation. Industrial management is still so accustomed to thinking in terms of authority and demonstration of power, that it has difficulty in realizing that things can be done differently. At the same time, many workers have not yet realized that he who repudiates force must be prepared to accept responsibility. The work situation, in the more extended sense, will have to be changed in such a way that, without feeling himself to be under any sort of compulsion, the worker will be sufficiently motivated to cooperate in a positive way. It is now generally accepted that responsibility is a particularly important element of his job satisfaction. This is closely connected with the desire to do something worthwhile, something of which he can be proud. It is also extremely important that the positive contribution made by the workers should be appropriately acknowledged. A particularly negative effect can result from irritation and dissatisfaction with the way in which the immediate bosses, the foremen, supervise the work, and with rules and regulations which seem to limit the workers' freedom or to lessen their self-respect.

To return to our point of departure – after this somewhat lengthy detour – it seems obvious that this development, which is already clearly apparent in many enterprises and is consciously being aimed at by the larger enterprises in particular, will greatly influence the relationship between white- and blue-collar workers. If the latter's aspirations regarding his work and work environment are ranged side by side with the previously mentioned differences between the traditional positions of white- and blue-collar workers, it becomes obvious that what the labourer really wants is to be approached and treated by his employers in the same way as that to which the white-collar worker has long been accustomed.

Not only does the way in which the worker reacts to industrial relations, behavioural patterns and regulations signify a longing for a position similar to that of the office worker, but the discrimination shown in favour of office employees is for many workers a concrete and permanent cause for resentment. It is understandable, therefore, that now there is a growing realization of the need to adopt a different approach to the worker, industrial management is showing a correspond-

ing tendency to discard all real differences between the employment conditions of the labourer and the office worker.

Complete abolition of the distinction between office employee and labourer will undoubtedly give rise to many difficulties. On the other hand, industrial interests necessitate not only greater equality in the formal positions of white- and blue-collar workers, but also more open relations between the two groups and a substantial improvement in the social status of the labourer. An important point here is the fact that, with a few exceptions, each of the changes relating to the formal status of labour summarized above indirectly facilitates the trend towards the integration of labourers and office workers in so far as it does not directly necessitate new industrial relationships.

The shift from blue-collar to white-collar work also contributes to the gradual disappearing of distinction between office workers as the favoured few close to the highest level of management and the great body of workers who lack any direct contact with management. The formers' expressed or unexpressed claim that they represent management in their contact with the labourers is gradually losing its point. Moreover, their large numbers have resulted in collective agreements having to be drawn up with regard to their salaries and other employment conditions, so that their traditionally unique position has deteriorated in this respect as well.

The effect of the shift in the total labour force from blue- to white-collar workers on the relationship between the two groups is further augmented by the increasing concentration of labour in large enterprises. For it is precisely in enterprises of this kind that the non-manual worker, like the labourer, has gradually become a mass phenomenon, which means in effect that management, for rational considerations of commercial interest, will be more readily prepared to introduce similar conditions for both types of employee.

The position of the services, which is growing relatively stronger, will probably prove to be a particularly significant factor in the development of the relationship between the white- and blue-collar worker. In the first place, as we have already mentioned, the shift in the direction of the former is hereby strengthened, and thus helps to equalize the position of the two groups as far as their actual numbers are concerned. More important, however, is perhaps the fact that the special nature of manual work in many of the services will to an increasing extent determine the nature of manual work as a whole. We have already noted that in contrast to the manual worker in industry, many manual workers

in the services regularly perform their work in public and act in this sense as representatives of their enterprise or institution.

With regard to educational developments, we would again emphasize the fact that the more advanced education received by today's average prospective worker as compared with former generations is in itself an important factor in the removal of the barrier between white- and blue-collar workers. The technical changes which are now becoming more and more apparent would seem to be of particular significance in this respect.

Two aspects of this development are of particular relevance to the subject under discussion. Firstly, the fact that its principal effect, though not its only one, is a reduction in the unskilled labour force. Developments in America show a definite trend in this direction. Large numbers of labourers who did comparatively simple work are being replaced by a few people trained to operate extremely expensive and ingenious machines. In this way, the average level of training of industrial workers is becoming higher, and the gap separating them from white-collar workers narrower. Moreover, operating these expensive machines implies an especially heavy responsibility, not only because any damage or carelessness would inflict a considerable financial loss but, more particularly, because the daily output of even one such machine is frequently of decisive significance for the entire production process. He who is entrusted with such responsibility is an important man. He no longer needs a time clock to spur him on to punctuality.

The increasing de-massification of labour is, to me, a particularly interesting aspect of present developments. Remarkably enough, while laments about modern society repeatedly conjure up the spectre of man's massification, this is becoming less and less true of industry, where the situation did indeed once answer to this description. For it is precisely in industry, where so many do identical work, that we find the greatest potentiality for successful mechanization and automation. One of the most important results of modern technological progress seems to be less uniformity and greater diversity in the work. The consequences cannot be other than far-reaching. This greater diversity restores the worker's self-respect as it were, and even if only for that reason brings him closer to the office worker, who now finds it more difficult to preserve his individuality. It seems reasonable to assume that demassification, by improving the social status of the worker, will thus indirectly strengthen his work motivation. In addition, it will probably have a more direct influence in this direction as well.

One of the most important motives for good, regular work is without doubt the possibility of advancement through personal achievement. Apart from other factors, the former situation whereby opportunities for advancement were so much greater for the office worker than for the labourer meant that the former's work motivation was never an actual problem. It seems reasonable to suppose that a reasonable chance of promotion will have a similar effect on the labourer.

It is obvious that industrial wage increases have strengthened, and are continuing to strengthen, the worker's position in industry. The fact that he is becoming an expensive commodity will cause his employer to treat him with greater care; in other words, to pay more attention to his personal, human qualities.

The significance of social security scarcely needs special mention here. For as we have seen, it was this greatly increased social security, augmented by the prevailing labour shortage, which debarred industrial management from using social compulsion as a weapon and was thus primarily responsible for a complete reassessment of the labourer's position in industrial society.

Surveying all the factors which influence the relationship between white- and blue-collar workers in industry, services, etc., even though discussion on the effect of diverse factors must necessarily be speculative in many respects, one has difficulty in avoiding the conclusion that elimination of the social barrier between the two groups in the work environment is inevitable, but that they can usually avoid each other after working hours. Avoidance of each other outside the working environment is still indeed the rule rather than the exception. Where the size of the town makes it feasible, residential areas are divided into working class and non-working class districts. This frequently means that the primary schools in urban areas are unable to function as meeting places for the various social classes, as is usually the case in smaller towns and villages.

Even sports show a fairly clear division as regards social status. Working class children and young workers rarely practice the 'smart' sports such as hockey and tennis. Members of the other classes have largely abandoned the 'lower-class' football. In the cultural and recreational sphere, audiences for the drama and symphony concerts are rarely drawn from the ranks of the working classes. There are still numerous cafés and restaurants which are never patronized by workers, even though the price differences between the various categories in this field give very little reason for this aversion. Finally, the separation

of the classes is still very much a fact in their informal social intercourse.

Notwithstanding all this, the status and class structure which, influenced by the growth of modern economic relations, was built up in the 19th century on the traditional agrarian-artisan society, is undoubtedly breaking down. An important factor is that the moral aspects of status differences have gone underground. Although a generation or two ago these differences were not only openly recognized but were even hedged around with a certain degree of moral sanction, they are now much more concealed.

Although in general the workers have not yet closed the mental gap between them and the other classes, many have passed through the first stage of their emancipation, namely, aggressive opposition against real or imagined discrimination. The gradual disappearance of the specific behavioural patterns and living habits partly forced on the worker by the attitude of other layers of the population and partly resulting from the circumstances under which he grew up, lived and worked, and which distinguished him externally from the others, is especially significant. Nor should the important role played by modern mass communication media in accelerating the cultural conformity between the classes be forgotten.

There are thus clear indications of a changing attitude, even though in many respects the social barrier between the workers and the other classes is only just beginning to be levelled. In the end, this will disappear just as inevitably as the barrier in the working environment. The general living conditions of the workers have changed so radically within a short period of time that a fundamental reaction by society is inevitable although, on the other hand, it is understandable from the socio-psychological point of view that mental attitudes and social behavioural patterns should lag fairly far behind the changing circumstances.

A question which arises with regard to this development and to so many others now in progress is whether we have sufficient time to let them run their own course without interference, to wait until they finally come to an end. If we wish to avoid unnecessary frustration, this will probably not be possible. As a result of the social tensions, numerous problems and conflicts ostensibly stemming from other causes will acquire a greater emotional content and sharper proportions than would otherwise be the case. The uneasiness felt by the workers in their social situation will in all probability have definite repercussions on their attitude towards their work. It seems justifiable to conclude that

a healthy social development requires that every encouragement be given to the levelling of the social barrier between the classes. It will hardly be necessary to add that since this refers to a change of mentality, we should not expect too much from formal measures. Our efforts must primarily be directed toward exerting socio-pedagogical influence on the population to induce them to realize the injustice of the continued existence of this barrier. A formal measure which eventually will probably contribute most towards the elimination of the barrier is a change in the present educational system whereby the maximum number of children would be enabled to receive a general education up to the age of 16, after which age a distinction could then be made between those who intend to follow vocational training and those who see their future in terms of further general or university education.

It is to be hoped that the problem of relations between the workers and other members of our society will receive the attention it deserves during the next few years. I have already stated my opinion that the demolition of the social barrier between the classes is inevitable. The time is probably not far distant when people will wonder why in statistics, in drawing up collective labour agreements, and in all cases relating to persons in dependent occupations, our generation should have gone to such trouble to ascertain whether those persons were white- or blue-collar workers, instead of determining the real significance of their contribution to the production process. The disappearance of the social barrier will of course not end the struggle for social status between the various groups. Social inequality, once again, is inherent in our highly differentiated society. Its dynamic character, which will become even stronger in the future, ensures that there will be no lack of flexibility in the interrelations of the different groups. Perhaps it can be expressed in this way: in future, the various groups of workers will be able to play their part in the game of continuous social change without suddenly coming up against a blank wall. Disappearance of the barrier separating the workers from the other classes will also mean the disappearance of the unity of the working class. In the mobile social hierarchy of the future, different groups of workers will occupy different positions. An appeal to the solidarity of the workers, which in the past so frequently elicited powerful reactions, will find a less ready response, even though the traditions of the past will still linger on for some time. But, after all, everything has its price, socially or otherwise.

### *Le travail au carrefour*

La position de l'homme qui n'est pas dirigeant d'entreprise et n'exerce pas une profession libérale – si on peut définir ainsi en des termes vagues et négatifs la notion de 'travail' – a changé en peu de temps d'une façon aussi radicale, que des tentatives doivent être faites pour trouver une nouvelle définition.

Le nombre de travailleurs professionnels dépendants, non-manuels augmente fortement. L'expansion de l'enseignement, l'évolution technique, l'augmentation des salaires, la consolidation du mouvement syndical, la sécurité sociale, l'accroissement du temps libre, tous ces facteurs ont exercé ces dernières années une influence sur le changement de position de la population ouvrière.

Quelles sont à long terme, les évolutions possibles? Dans cet ordre d'idées une question essentielle subsiste, notamment celle de savoir si on doit s'attendre, du fait du changement en cours, à ce que la classe ouvrière en tant que groupe séparé disparaîtra petit à petit de notre société, ou si au contraire elle peut encore subsister longtemps.

La barrière la plus importante dans notre société est toujours celle qui se dresse entre ouvriers et non-ouvriers. Ainsi, par rapport à cette barrière, le système néerlandais d'enseignement professionnel a eu une influence surtout conservatrice. Dans la sphère de travail, on observe clairement les symptômes d'une suppression de cette barrière; dans la société hors de l'entreprise, l'évolution va moins vite. Si on veut éviter des difficultés stériles, il faut favoriser cette évolution.

Naturellement la disparition de la barrière sociale indiquée, ne supprimera pas, dans notre société, la lutte des différents groupes pour le prestige social. Différents groupes ouvriers continueront le jeu de changements sociaux dans la stratification sans se trouver tout à coup face à un mur insurmontable. Evidemment, la disparition du mur entre ouvriers et non-ouvriers signifie aussi la disparition de l'unité de la classe ouvrière.

### *Die Arbeit am Scheideweg*

Die Position der nicht als Leiter eines Betriebes und der nicht in einem freien Beruf arbeitenden Menschen – auf diese Weise wird der Begriff 'Arbeit' bewusst einigermassen unbestimmt und mit negativen Ausdrücken umschrieben – hat sich in relativ kurzer Zeit so radikal verändert, dass die Versuche einer erneuten Ortsbestimmung sich geradezu aufdrängen.

Die Zahl abhängiger Berufspersonen, die keine Handarbeit verrichten, nimmt schnell zu. Erweiterung der Bildungsmöglichkeiten, technische Entwicklung, Steigen der Löhne, Konsolidierung der Gewerkschaften, soziale Sicherheit, zunehmende Freizeit, alle diese Faktoren haben in der jüngsten Geschichte ihren Einfluss auf die Veränderung der Position der arbeitenden Bevölkerung ausgeübt.

Was sind die möglichen Entwicklungen in einem längeren Zeitraum? Eine wesentliche Frage ist in diesem Zusammenhang, ob man auf Grund der sich vollziehenden Entwicklung erwarten muss, dass die Arbeiterklasse als deutlich abgeschiedene Gruppe in unserer Gesellschaft allmählich verschwinden wird, oder ob diese auch in einem langen Zeitraum gesehen noch bestehen bleiben wird.

Die wichtigste Barriere in unserer Gesellschaft ist immer noch die zwischen Arbeitern und Nichtarbeitern. Einen konservierenden Einfluss hinsichtlich dieser Barriere hat vor

allem das niederländische System des Fortbildungsunterrichts. Innerhalb der Arbeitssphäre können wir deutliche Symptome eines Abtragens dieser Barriere feststellen; in der Gesellschaft außerhalb des Betriebes verläuft die Entwicklung weniger schnell. Wenn man unfruchtbare Schwierigkeiten vermeiden will, muss diese Entwicklung gefördert werden.

Natürlich wird das Verschwinden der genannten sozialen Barriere den Kampf um soziales Prestige der verschiedenen Gruppen in unserer Gesellschaft nicht aufheben. Verschiedene Gruppen von Arbeitern werden in Zukunft an diesem Spiel der ständigen gesellschaftlichen Verschiebungen mitwirken können, ohne sich dabei plötzlich vor einer Mauer zu befinden. Das Wegfallen der Mauer zwischen Arbeiter und Nichtarbeiter bedeutet im Wesen natürlich auch das Verschwinden der Einheit der arbeitenden Klasse.

### *La bifurcacion del trabajo*

La posición de la persona que trabaja, y que no es jefe de empresa ni ejerce una profesión liberal – tal como se circumscribe un tanto vaga y negativamente la noción de ‘trabajo’ –, ha cambiado en un espacio de tiempo relativamente corto tan radicalmente, que se impone un renovado intento para ubicarla.

Aumenta rápidamente el número de personas dependientes que no ejecutan un trabajo manual. La extensión de la enseñanza, el desarrollo técnico, el aumento de salarios, la consolidación del movimiento sindical, la seguridad social, el creciente tiempo vacante, todos estos factores han influido últimamente en el referido cambio de posición de la población productora.

¿Qué evolución se ve posible a largo plazo? A este respecto es esencial plantearse la cuestión de si, en virtud de la evolución en marcha, cabe esperar que la clase trabajadora vaya desapareciendo de nuestra sociedad gradualmente, en cuanto grupo social diferenciado, o si seguirá subsistiendo aún a largo plazo.

En nuestra vida social sigue siendo la barrera más sólida y sustancial la que separa a trabajadores de no trabajadores. En este sentido, ha ejercido una influencia conservadora sobre esta barrera el sistema holandés de enseñanza prolongada más que otra cosa.

En el ámbito del mundo laboral aparecen claros síntomas de erosión y derribo de esta barrera; aunque este proceso se cumple más lentamente en las sociedades no industriales. De ahí que convenga acelerar este proceso, si se quiere evitar dificultades estériles.

Por supuesto, no hay que contar que con la desaparición de la barrera social de que hablamos quede suprimida toda lucha por el prestigio social entre los diferentes grupos de nuestra sociedad. No faltarán grupos de trabajadores que en el futuro se entreguen a este juego de constantes traslaciones sociales, sin que por eso se topen de pronto con un muro. Y de paso, el derribo del muro que separa a trabajadores de no trabajadores, entraña esencialmente que también se hunda la unidad de la clase trabajadora, como es muy natural.