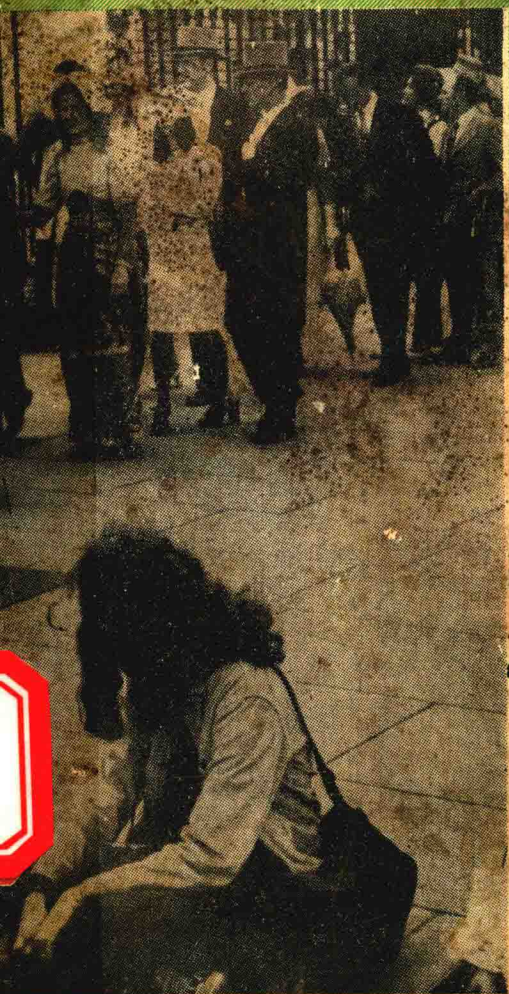


Britain Today

R. MUSMAN

LONGMAN
BACKGROUND
BOOKS



government has no more
over Mexico or China.
wealth', and she is still
Malaysia and the Pacific
and India, Ghana, Pakistan.
Not all the new
British form of parliament
"Some now have for
better," Charles said to
surprised and shocked
"A lot of the British

LONGMAN BACKGROUND BOOKS

Britain Today

Richard Musman



Longman

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Great Britain and Northern Ireland: county boundaries

Introduction

Britain is changing more rapidly than ever before in her long history. In some respects the new British society reflects general world trends. In other respects it has kept its own particular flavour. British society is evolving, that is to say, developing and suiting itself to rapidly changing conditions. Evolution rather than revolution or violent change is a special characteristic of the British way of life.

This is shown in one way by how the British people vote at elections. The Conservative and Labour Parties have controlled the political scene for the last fifty years, but today neither party can any longer be sure from which class or income group its support will come. Not long ago you would have expected the working classes always to vote for the Labour Party. The word 'labour' means 'hard work' — especially hard work with the hands. The Labour Party is the party which is supposed to represent the 'working man'. You would also have expected the upper and middle classes to vote for the Conservative Party. The word 'conservative' means 'keeping things as they are'. The Conservative Party is supposed to be the party which represents property owners, businessmen and the self-employed. In some respects traditional British 'class distinctions' are becoming less clear, and you can be less sure how people will vote. Many members of the middle class support social reform. Many ordinary working people enjoy a better standard of living and are suspicious of any change which might affect them. But the old divisions between the classes remain. Many Conservatives fear that the sovereignty of Parliament is being threatened by the Trade Unions. Many workers are afraid that the Conservative bosses are trying to keep their wages down. But class feelings have not reached a personal level yet. Middle-class and working-class men can stand together at a

football match and be the best of friends.

During the 1950s a Frenchman wrote: 'For nearly 900 years, safe from invasion, the island fortress of England has defended herself against ideas as if they were poisons. She has protected her way of life with a passion which to outsiders sometimes seems blind.'

Britain is no longer an island fortress. The English Channel can no longer protect her either from invasion or from the 'poison' of new ideas. The views which many foreigners have of Britain and the British are already out-of-date. So are some of the views which the British have about themselves. How then do the modern British live? What opinions do they hold about all the problems which face them, their country and the world in general?

In this book the British way of life is presented in two different ways: (1) through short, factual accounts supported by lists, graphs, diagrams and statistics, (2) through imaginary characters who represent different social backgrounds, income groups, generations, political and religious beliefs. However, the things these characters say have not been invented by the author. They are things which are being said somewhere in Britain every day of the week.

Note to the second edition

Extensive revisions have been made in this new edition to cover political and social developments in Britain in the mid-1970s, including changes in local government, events in Northern Ireland and Britain's entry into the Common Market.

Notes

The superior figures in the text refer to the Notes at the end of each chapter. There is additional information in the Notes which is not always directly connected to the text; in these cases there are no superior figures.

Tape recordings

The dialogues from this book have been recorded, and remain the same in the new edition. The beginning of the taped extract is marked ●, the end is marked ○.

Further reading

In some cases suggestions for further reading are given at the end of the Notes. All books are published by Penguin unless otherwise stated.

The Characters

GWYN WILLIAMS (aged 45), a factory worker

MARY WILLIAMS (43), his wife

JIM WILLIAMS (17), their youngest son—works in a fish market

GARETH WILLIAMS (18), Jim's brother—still at school

CHRISTINE (19), Gareth's girlfriend—a typist

IAN MACDONALD (28), a bank clerk

PEGGY MACDONALD (27), his wife—a secretary

SIR ERIC BLAKENEY (64), a country gentleman and managing director of an industrial firm

HESTER (LADY BLAKENEY) (55), his wife

SUSAN BLAKENEY (20), their daughter—a student

CHARLES BLAKENEY (32), their son—director in the family business

ANNE (25), his Australian wife

PENNY MARTIN (23), a friend of Susan's—a photographer's model

JEREMY MARTIN (22), Penny's brother and Susan's boyfriend—of no fixed job

HERBERT PERKINS (44), owner of a supermarket chain

CULVER JONES (50), an American friend of Charles Blakeney

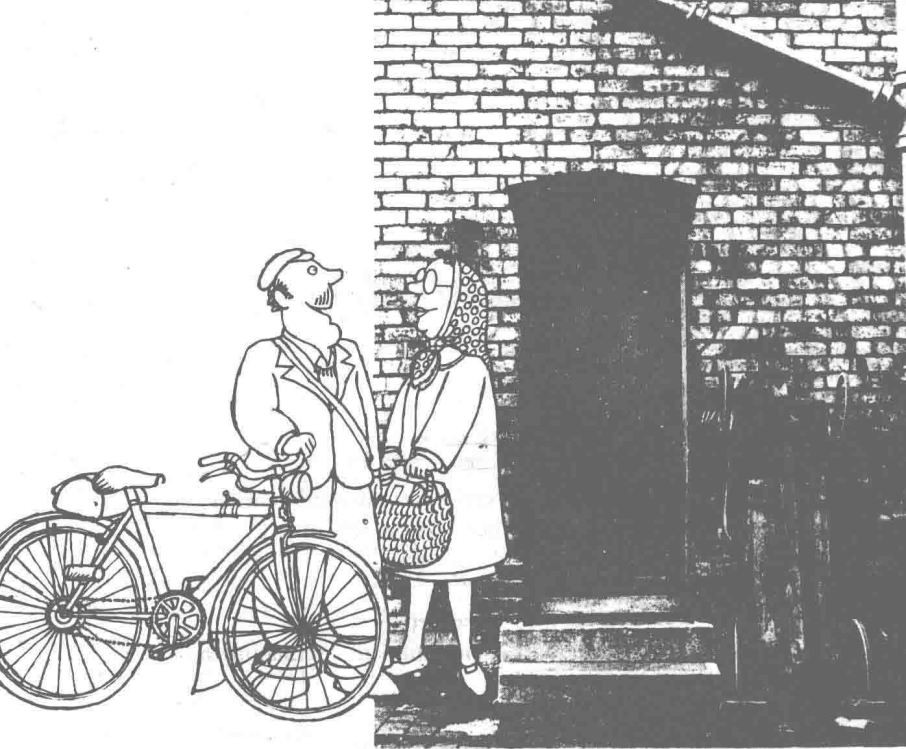
CARLOS GARCIA (45), a South American friend of Charles Blakeney

GEORGE and PHYLLIS BLANDFORD, neighbours of the Blakeney

LEONARD TOWNSEND (32), a television interviewer

ELIZABETH TOWNSEND (29), his wife—a social worker.

Characters taking part in radio and television interviews and discussions with Leonard Townsend: The headmistress of a primary school, the secretary of a West Indian Association, an Indian doctor, a politician with right-wing tendencies, an American professor, a sociologist, a councillor in a new town, a chief inspector of police, a militant left-wing student, a Church of England parson, three students from three different universities, a television dramatist, the president of the 'Keep Television Clean' society, two Conservative M.P.s, two Labour M.P.s.



*Gwyn and Mary Williams
outside their home. They live a
very different life from Herbert
Perkins, seen here entertaining
Charles and Anne Blakeney.*



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