

March 1973

Attitudes of Girls in Senior Forms (in a girls public school).

At the beginning of February a questionnaire was distributed to all girls in the 5th, 6th, 7th & 8th Forms in which they were asked, among other things, to give their views on a wide range of social and political issues and to indicate their career preferences and expectations. Altogether 305 forms were handed out and 216 were completed and returned, i.e. 70 per cent of them; the rate of response was slightly above average in the Fifth and slightly below in the Eighth.

In analysing the forms it was decided to group them according to the replies to a question in which people were asked to rate themselves on a 7 point scale stretching from 1 (= left wing) to 7 (= right wing). Very few girls placed themselves at the extreme ends of this scale and, indeed, one-third indicated their political position by marking the centre point of the scale. The ratings are shown in Table 1 in detail, and from this it would seem that in political outlook the girls who replied fall into three roughly equal groups - 35 per cent left-wing, 34 per cent centre, and 30 per cent right-wing.

These proportions varied from Form to Form. Thus, in the Fifth and Sixth almost half the girls (44 per cent) placed themselves in the Centre, and the rest divided roughly equally between Left Wing and Right. In the Seventh and Eighth, on the other hand, appreciably more indicated either a Left-wing (41 per cent) or a Right-wing position (34 per cent); only 1 in 4 of these older (more mature? more knowledgeable?) girls picked the central point in the scale to describe their political views. It would be interesting to see in two or three years' time if today's Fifths and Sixths have moved towards more 'committed' political positions.

As a check on the meaning that people gave to these terms (left-wing and right-wing) we looked at the answers the three groups gave to another question when people were asked whether or not they approved of socialism; only 7 per cent of the left-wingers disapproved of socialism, and only 8 per cent of the right-wingers approved of it (see Table 2). This result strongly supports our decision to divide people into three groups - left, centre, and right - for analysing the answers to most other questions.

Table 1 Self-description: Left wing/Right wing

		%	
Left wing:	1	5.6)
	2	19.0) 34.7
	3	10.1)
Centre	4	33.8)
	5	15.7)
	6	8.8) 29.6
Right wing	7	5.1)
Don't know		1.9)
		<u>100.0</u>	

Table 2. Attitudes to socialism: by political self-description

	<u>Left</u> <u>wing</u> %	<u>Centre</u> %	<u>Right</u> <u>wing</u> %	<u>All</u> %
Agree with socialism	66	22	8	33
Uncertain	27	68	41	46
Disagree with socialism	<u>7</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>21</u>
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

Attitudes to protests, demonstrations

One of the distinctive features of most democratic societies today is that people are not content to express their dissatisfaction on social and economic matters solely through voting at elections; increasingly they turn to forms of protest that fall outside conventional party lines and that usually make their point by disrupting the orderly humdrum workings of society. To see how far such behaviour is acceptable the

questionnaire asked: "As a means of protest or protecting rights or securing justice etc. how often are the following actions justified?" There followed a list of 15 types of protest action, and people replied by marking 1 = often, 2 = sometimes, 3 = rarely, 4 = never. To reduce the replies to a simple index of approval three points were allotted an answer of 'often', two points for 'sometimes', one point for 'rarely', and 0 for 'never'. The points were then expressed as a percentage of the maximum obtainable if everyone had answered 'often'.

Of the 15 listed forms of protest, five are supported by a clear and sometimes solid majority of all girls, irrespective of their political inclinations; they are: signing a petition, writing to a newspaper, taking part in a non-violent demonstration, attending a protest meeting, and boycotting goods and entertainments. At the other extreme there are five forms of protest that are overwhelmingly condemned, and again this is an attitude shared by girls of all political viewpoints. The rejected protest actions are: sabotage in factories, the use of guns or explosives, damage to buildings, assassination, and personal violence. And then in between there are the remaining five forms of protest which really distinguish the Left from the Right in that they receive much more support from the former than they get from the latter; these significant discriminators are: refusal to pay rents or taxes, unofficial strikes, sit-ins, obstructing traffic, and painting slogans on walls.

Table 3. Approval of Protest Behaviour

<u>Method</u>	<u>All</u> %	<u>Left</u> %	<u>Centre</u> %	<u>Right</u> %
Signing a petition	89	92	88	87
Letter to a newspaper	85	89	82	84
Non-violent demonstration	78	82	74	77
Attending protest meeting	69	74	69	65
Boycott of goods, sports, etc.	53	56	50	53
Refuse to pay rent, taxes etc.	43	52	34	44
Unofficial strike	39	48	39	28
Occupy buildings, sit-in	38	47	35	32
Obstructing traffic	35	45	31	25
Painting slogans on walls	30	42	25	25
Sabotage in factories	13	23	9	8
Guns or explosives	10	14	11	5
Damaging buildings	9	17	5	5
Assassination	9	12	8	7
Personal violence	<u>8</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
Average	41	46	38	37

Women's Lib.

As an indirect way of measuring attitudes to Women's Liberation people were given four statements about women's roles and status and asked to say whether they agreed or disagreed with them. The two pro-Women's Lib. statements (half all top jobs for women, and beauty contests are degrading) each received very little support (25 per cent and 23 per cent respectively); support for them was higher among left-wingers than among right-wingers, but even among them the assenters were no more than 25 per cent and 30 per cent respectively.

Table 4. Proportion agreeing with various statements

	<u>All</u> %	<u>Left</u> %	<u>Centre</u> %	<u>Right</u> %
Half all top jobs should be reserved for women	25	25	28	12
Beauty contests are degrading to women	23	30	21	16
Careers are fine, but real fulfilment is home and children	13	9	18	12
In marriage a man must.... take decisions for all family	13	7	18	16

But at the same time the two traditional views (home and children come before career, and family decisions should be made by husband) received even less support - 13 per cent for each; and, again, there was really very little difference between left-wing and right-wing; both groups solidly rejected the proposition.

The Overprivileged

Most girls named various groups who they thought "have an unduly privileged position in our society", and they have been classified into five main groups - including three types of rich people; these - the idle rich, the rich, and the nouveaux riches - were between them named by over 40 per cent of the girls as examples of those who get more rewards than they deserve. The only other substantial group mentioned were 'greedy workers' (18 per cent). Well over half the left-wingers nominated the various types of rich people as overprivileged, and 25 per cent of right-wingers agreed with them. Only 9 per cent of left-wingers described greedy workers as overprivileged, but right-wingers saw such people as far and away the biggest group of overprivileged people (36 per cent). It should be remembered though that 40 per cent of all girls could not think of any overprivileged groups in British society.

Table 5. Named as overprivileged

	<u>All</u> %	<u>Left</u> %	<u>Centre</u> %	<u>Right</u> %
Idle rich	15	25	6	14
The rich	15	25	13	5
Nouveaux riches	11	8	18	6
Greedy workers	18	9	12	36
Feckless poor	4	1	4	8
Others	7	12	1	8
No one	4	4	4	3
Don't know	<u>40</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>33</u>
Total *	<u>114</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>107</u>	<u>113</u>

*Comes to more than 100 per cent because some named more than one type.

