

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP¹

LOOKING back, it seems as if the social structure of the town fifty years ago was fairly clear-cut. At the very peak of the social hierarchy, in a category by themselves, were the members of the Howard family, the only people in the town who would be ranked as aristocratic in the wider society of the county or the nation. Beneath the Howards were the industrialists who comprised the town's upper class. They were wealthy men, some of them wealthier than the Howards and some even millionaires, who had either grown up in Glossop or moved into it at an early age, and who owed both their fortunes and their social status to their success in developing the town's industries. At the bottom of the hierarchy were the great mass of factory hands and their dependants who comprised the working class. In an intermediate position were a relatively small number of shopkeepers, professional people, and office workers. The only clear way to rise in the social scale was to make money in business. Given the right qualities, however, this was not particularly difficult, and if success was achieved there were no cultural barriers to social acceptance. Some of the millowners had themselves come from humble origins, and in Glossop nobody thought any the worse of them for that.

The structure of influence and political power in the town corresponded almost exactly with this social structure. The Howards had great potential influence but by the last years of the nineteenth century they had become rather aloof from local affairs. The real rulers of the town were the industrialists, who dominated its political and social organizations. They led the political parties, controlled the Borough Council, took turns to be mayor, and competed with each other to represent the constituency in Parliament. They also played a major part in the life of the churches, the sports clubs, and the charitable organizations. Their common leadership of business, social, and political affairs served to unify the community.

Today the social system is a good deal more complicated. The departure of nearly all the leading industrialists has left a gap which

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nobody has filled in the same way, and the present leaders of industry play a much less active part in social and political affairs. To explain this we must mention two aspects of the social revolution that England has experienced in the first half of the twentieth century.

The first of these is the development of new avenues of social mobility. Fifty years ago the standard way to get on in the world was to leave school at fourteen, go into industry or commerce, and rise to fortune by a combination of hard work, bright ideas, and good luck. People who succeeded in this way generally made their careers in the towns in which they were brought up, and they were normally keen to raise their status in the community by participating fully in its civic life.

In recent years this avenue of advancement has been largely replaced by the examination system. The way to grammar school and university is now open to all children who can pass the required examinations, and the importance of this is not lessened by the fact that, because of class differences in intelligence and home environment, the proportion of middle-class children who pass is higher than the proportion of working-class children who do so. At the same time, formal education has become a requisite for economic advancement in more and more fields. To an increasing extent, it is the educational system itself which now selects the people who will fill positions of responsibility in industry and commerce, and the main stepping-stones to a successful career are the selection for grammar school at the age of eleven, the selection for technical college or university at the age of eighteen, and the academic and professional qualifications that are subsequently acquired.

From the national point of view, this development has been almost wholly advantageous: it has opened a new avenue of social advancement for the children of poorer families and it has widened the field of recruitment to managerial and professional occupations. However, from the point of view of small- and medium-sized towns, it has been a mixed blessing. For although intelligent young people in such places have greater opportunities than ever before, most of those who benefit move to other parts of the country and thereby deprive their home towns of their services. People who get ahead in this way tend to become geographically as well as socially mobile, and to join the increasingly large class of professional and managerial workers who do not have strong roots in any local community.

In Glossop a relatively high number of grammar-school places

are available. In 1954, for instance, 27 per cent. of the children who entered for the eleven-plus examination obtained a place in Glossop Grammar School, together with a number of Roman Catholic children who preferred to go to one of the Catholic grammar schools in Manchester. This proportion is appreciably higher than the national average of 19 per cent., and it ensures, as well as examinations can, that all the children who have the ability to benefit from a grammar-school education are given the opportunity to do so. The point was emphasized by one of the secondary modern school teachers, who complained that 'the grammar school takes not only the cream of each year's primary school leavers, but the skimmed milk too!' Of those who go to grammar school, just under one-third have gone on to some form of further full-time education in the years since the war. Tables 5 and 6 show the extent to which recent school leavers have found employment in Glossop.

TABLE 5

Proportion of School Leavers Entering Employment in Glossop, 1952-5

Year	Proportion of leavers entering employment in Glossop			
	Grammar school		Secondary modern school	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
	%	%	%	%
1952-3	27	53	77	82
1953-4	39	70	75	88
1954-5	18	70	68	89

Note. These figures were kindly provided by the Youth Employment Officer. Many grammar-school leavers do not register with this officer. See Table 6 for fuller information regarding grammar-school leavers.

Taken together, these tables show a marked difference between grammar- and modern-school leavers. A much higher proportion of the grammar-school leavers tend to take posts outside the town, and this tendency is particularly strong among the boys. Moreover, those grammar-school leavers who take up work in the town tend to be the less academically able, and between 1945 and 1955 over 40 per cent. of them were early leavers. Of the grammar-school leavers enjoying further education, very few indeed returned to

Glossop, and all of those came back as school teachers. There are, it is true, a few grammar-school leavers who work outside the town but continue to live at home. Their numbers, however, do not affect the generalization that the more able grammar-school pupils tend to be lost to the town. One of the effects of the enlargement of educational opportunities has thus been to siphon off the brightest young people and channel them into careers in other parts of the country.

TABLE 6

Grammar-School Leavers, 1945-55

Period	No. of leavers	Leavers taking further education		Other leavers	
		Total	Subsequently employed in Glossop	Total	Subsequently employed in Glossop
1945-52	407	129	No. 9 % 7	278	No. 146 % 53
1952-5	171	54	117	58 49
1945-55	578	183	395	204 52

This does not mean that there are no professional and managerial workers in Glossop. On the contrary, there are more than ever before, for one of the other social changes of the present century is the great increase of numbers in these categories. There are far more trained scientists and engineers than there were, more industrial-welfare officers, more public officials, and more office workers, and this development has affected Glossop as it has affected every other town. But these people, unlike the self-made men of an earlier generation, have rarely worked their way up in the town in which they were born. Most of them secure advancement either by moving from one post to another, which may well be in a quite different area, or by promotion within an organization which has branches in several places. Except in London and the biggest provincial cities, the majority of the managers, scientists, lawyers, clergymen, surgeons, and senior public officials in a town are likely to be immigrants rather than natives. In Glossop this is certainly the case.

The sample survey we conducted indicates that something like 60 per cent. of the professional and managerial workers are immigrants to the town, compared with only 35 per cent. of the adult population as a whole. If only the persons in the most influential positions are

included—the chief industrialists, the senior public officials, the clergymen, the headmasters—the proportion is higher still. Our estimate, based not on the sample survey but on our discussions with local people, is that about four-fifths of these people are immigrants.

In the industrial field, the wealthy millowners of the past have been replaced by men of two types. In the first place, there are the owners of seven or eight small firms that have moved into the town in the past twenty-five years, several of them central Europeans who came to England during the age of Hitler. Secondly, there are a larger number of salaried managers of the factories that are owned by combines, some of whom may move on to other branches in the future. When posts fall vacant in these firms, they are advertised over a wide area and the local man does not have any appreciable advantage over the outsider.

One of the results of this situation is that the present leaders of industry are not rooted in the community in the way that their predecessors were, and they do not play a prominent part in its social and political life. Many of them belong to the Golf Club and some of them are members of Rotary, but there is no other field in which they are particularly active. They show little interest in political, religious, or educational affairs, and in the last few years only one business leader has stood for election to the Borough Council. Since they may not look upon Glossop as their permanent home and they are not generally interested in acquiring prestige among the townspeople, this is not at all surprising. The consequence is, however, that the influence of the leaders of industry is largely confined to their own firms and they play very little part in the public life of the community as a whole. The effects of this on the political parties and the Borough Council will be described in later chapters.

Unlike most of the people in managerial positions, the majority of the other residents have lived in the town all their lives. Of the general sample of electors whom we interviewed, 65 per cent. had been born in the town, while a further 16 per cent. had lived there more than twenty years. Ten per cent. had lived in the town between eight and twenty years, which means that they had moved in between 1933 and 1945, and only 9 per cent. had moved into the town since the end of the war.¹

¹ These figures allow for new-comers who had arrived too recently to be on the electoral register but do not allow for alien residents, of whom there were between 300 and 500 in 1951.

It follows that we are dealing with a remarkably stable community. Memories in the town are long, and the activities, personalities, and social relations described in the preceding chapter are still clearly remembered by many of the older residents. Indeed, as we shall show, many of the attitudes and habits that were formed in an earlier era survive to this day, and do much to shape social relations in the town. New-comers do not always find it easy to become part of this community, and often retain over long periods a consciousness of being slightly apart. Several people who had lived in the town over twenty years described themselves as 'outsiders' or, in two cases, 'foreigners', and offered us their views on the characteristics of 'the Glossop people'. One elderly person, on being asked whether he was a local man, replied 'Oh! no. I come from Hayfield. I didn't move to Glossop till 1901.' Hayfield is five miles away. A younger man was at pains to explain to us that he was not really a Glossopian because his parents came from Sussex, even though he had been born in the town himself.

The people with whom we talked at length nearly all emphasized the importance of the distinction between the 'natives' and the 'immigrants'. They told us that people who had moved into the town, no matter how long ago, tended to differ in some of their attitudes from people who had been born there, and that local people were well aware of these differences. For this reason we have taken birthplace, and not length of residence, as the basis of the distinction between natives and immigrants, and we shall use the terms in this sense throughout the book.

The people of managerial and professional rank, although accorded superior status by the rest of the townsfolk, do not constitute an established *élite* as did the industrialists of a generation ago. Since most of them are immigrants and they do not play a prominent role in civic affairs, this is not surprising, but two other elements in the situation need to be noted. One is that these people are not so wealthy as their predecessors and do not spend money so conspicuously, either for their own or for the public benefit. The other is that although the economic gap between them and the industrial workers of the town is much smaller than it was, the cultural gap is somewhat greater. Most people in the managerial and professional groups have enjoyed a higher education, and in consequence have developed interests which are not generally shared by people who left school at the age of fourteen. One result of this is that there is much

less contact between people of different economic groups in their spare-time activities than used to be the case.

Only a few of the numerous social and sporting clubs in the town provide a meeting-place for people of all types of occupation. Many clubs cater specifically for certain groups, like the works social clubs and the working-men's clubs. The former are provided by industrial firms for their employees, while the latter are essentially public houses for regulars only, in which there are rather more facilities than in the pubs themselves for the traditional pub pastimes of darts, dominoes, and shove-ha'penny. At the other end of the social scale are the organizations whose membership is limited to business and professional people, of which the most important are the Rotary Club, the Inner Wheel, the Chamber of Trade, and the Employers' Association.

Many of the other clubs, in which membership is open to all who care to join, in fact draw most of their members from one or two economic groups. Thus nearly all the members of the Golf Club are business or professional people, Tennis Club members are mainly professional or white-collar workers, and the supporters of the Amateur Bowling League are largely industrial workers. Cultural tastes are as closely bound up with education and type of occupation as are sporting tastes, and it is not surprising to find that the members of the Brass Band are mainly industrial workers while the Music and Repertory Clubs draw most of their support from white-collar and professional people. Not all the social clubs are like this—the Townswomen's Guild and the Women's Institute are notable exceptions—but the general picture is of a community in which spare-time interests now do relatively little to bridge the gap between the classes.

The churches, which performed this function effectively in the period before the First World War, have greatly declined in influence. Of the people we interviewed in the sample survey, only 35 per cent. claimed to attend church as frequently as once a month, and this is likely to be an overstatement rather than an understatement. About a third of these belong to the Roman Catholic Church, the membership of which is now very largely working class and includes only a handful of people from the professional and managerial groups. It follows that not more than about a fifth of the townsfolk—and probably the proportion is much smaller—are brought into contact with people of a different social class through their common membership of church congregations.

All these facts, taken together, indicate that the community is less unified than it was in the past. This conclusion is strengthened by the answers people gave to our question: 'Who would you say are the most influential people in Glossop?' It seems almost certain that if such a question had been posed fifty years ago an overwhelming majority of residents would have named the Howards and the leading industrial families in their replies. Today there is no such consensus.

The question was put to the 600-odd people who were interviewed in the course of the sample survey. They were each asked to give six names, together with the positions these people held, but were not pressed to give six if they could not readily think of that number. In the event, as many as 25 per cent. of the people interviewed could not name anyone at all, and the other 485 gave an average of rather less than three names each. It is noteworthy that about a fifth of those who gave no names, or 5 per cent. of those interviewed, made a direct reference to the past with some such comment as 'all the influential people have gone'. One old lady added a little to this by saying 'the best people in the town have all died', while another complained that 'there's nobody really you can look up to these days'. A further 3 per cent. of the respondents gave the names of one or more of the old leading families without mentioning any living people, and another 5 per cent. mentioned the old families as well as one or more living persons. That so many people should spontaneously refer us back to a situation that ended more than thirty years earlier is an interesting reflection on the attitude of Glossopians to their community: it is, after all, as if people who were asked who governs Britain were to mention Asquith and Bonar Law in their replies.

The votes (if such they may be called) that were cast for living people show remarkably little consensus considering that the town is small, self-contained, and has relatively few new residents. Two persons were each mentioned by a quarter of the respondents, another 3 were each mentioned by 1 person in 8 or 9, 5 more were named by at least 1 person in 20, 3 more by 1 person in 25, and 2 more by 1 person in 30. Nobody else was mentioned by more than 1 person in 50, and no fewer than 124 other names were given, making 139 names altogether. It is clear that Glossop is no longer a closely knit community with a well defined system of leadership, familiar to all.

However, further examination of the answers discloses that, while

there is little agreement on individuals, there is much wider agreement on the kind of people who are thought to be influential. By and large, it is members of the Borough Council who are cast in this role. Of the 13 persons most frequently named—that is, those named by at least 1 person in 25—11 are Council members. One of the others was generally referred to as a councillor, although this person, while active in welfare work for 20 years, had been on the Council for a term of only 2 years ending 2 years before the survey. Only 1 person of the 13 was named for his activities in other fields. The predominance of the local politicians in the public eye is further emphasized by the figures in Table 7. It should be noted that the percentages in this

TABLE 7

Types of People Popularly Regarded as Influential

<i>Category</i>	<i>% of persons named</i>
Politicians	72
Public officials	2
Magistrates	1
Industrialists	7
Shopkeepers and publicans	2
Lawyers, doctors, &c.	3
School teachers	2
Ministers and priests	3
Voluntary welfare workers	1
The leading families of the past	4
Others	2

table are of the total number of names mentioned, not of the number of people interviewed, and that there is no overlapping between the categories.

It is interesting but perhaps not really surprising that people should reply in this way. The powers of the borough councillors have been considerably diminished in recent years, but their status in the eyes of the public may well have increased relatively to that of other groups, for three reasons. One is that the other groups in the town concerned with the provision of social and public services, such as those engaged in welfare work, have become progressively more bureaucratized and anonymous. Another is that while many institutions in the town have become obviously no more than local branches, taking their orders from head offices in other places, the Borough Council has retained the appearance and trappings of independent authority. Within a certain field of activities it has the formal power

of deciding what shall be done for the town, and the importance of this as a symbol of the community's independence is not much reduced by the fact that the field of activities is now very closely restricted. A third factor is that as the bonds of community life have slackened, people have come to depend less on direct contacts and more on the local newspaper for their knowledge of what is going on in the town, and politicians generally get more publicity than industrialists, educationists, or welfare workers, whether or not they have more power.

This takes us straight from the social to the political scene. The people of Glossop appear to regard their elected representatives as persons of influence. How these representatives are recruited, how much influence they have, and how they use it will be examined in the following chapters.