

SCHOOLS BRIEFOCCUPATIONAL SHIFTS IN THE SCOTTISH WORKING POPULATION 1851-1971

The figures which accompany this article represent the occupational classification of the working population in Scotland as revealed by the decennial censuses 1851-1971. One of these censuses is missing, namely 1941, because of the Second World War. There are also some doubts about the exact classification into the different occupational categories. They may not always be consistent from one year to another, and it is obvious that the category "indefinite" is a large and fluctuating one. Nevertheless, the examination of the figures shows some fairly clear trends, which are distinctive enough to stand independently of the possibility of any errors of collection and classification.

First of all, it would appear from the figures that the total working population of Scotland in 1971 was slightly more than twice the level which obtained in 1851. The increase in the male and female components of the working population was just about the same proportionately. However, there are some interesting points to be made about the profile of the change of composition of the sexes in the working population over the period from 1851 to 1971.

It is noticeable that while the number of men gainfully occupied remained roughly constant between 1901 and 1911, the number of females, and thus the total working population, fell sharply between these two years. There is no obvious explanation for this. Another curious feature of the data looked at from the historical point of view is that between 1931 and 1951 there was a remarkable increase in male working population, it is only after 1951 that there has been a significant increase in the female working population. Apart from the peculiar leap forward in 1901, followed by a leap back in 1911, the female working population had remained remarkably constant until 1951. The increase in that year was sustained in 1961, and there was a further significant increase in 1971. It is not difficult to think why this increase in the last twenty years has come about. The increased participation of women in the labour force has become a feature of contemporary Western European society. It is not clear whether there is any association between this phenomenon and the lack of growth in the male labour force in the same period.



Source: *Census of Population*

Turning now to the five different occupational categories which are shown by the figures (leaving out "indefinite"), each of these represents a characteristic profile of development through time. In tracing the development of these changes over time small decennial changes (and some large ones) may be overlooked where it is clear that there are offsetting classification problems. For example, in the year 1911 there is an unusual decline in the commercial category which may partly be accounted for by an annual rise in the professional category. In 1921 on the other hand, the professional category increases ten fold while the indefinite category is eliminated. There is evidently considerable substitution between professional, commercial and indefinite categories. However, it is difficult to see how there could be any confusion about the categories domestic, agricultural and manufacturing.

So far as the professional category is concerned the most remarkable change in the period under consideration is in the decade from 1961 to 1971, so that the total number of people who listed their occupations in this category more than doubled in the space of one decade. Since the numbers engaged in 1961 were already quite substantial, this is a remarkable achievement. It presumably reflects the diversification of sophisticated business and consumer related services which characterised the development of the economy in the 1960's. Manufacturing accounted for about one half of the total employment in 1851 and about one third in 1971. The profile over time is an interesting one. From 1851 there is a steady increase until 1901 when there is a pause with the 1911 total being slightly below that for 1901. Interpretation of the trend thereafter depends upon how we view 1931. If 1931 is an aberration, and the figures reflect the degree of unemployment in the manufacturing sector in that year, then it is possible to see a levelling off of manufacturing employment at the 1921 level which has continued virtually unchanged until 1971, with the exception of course of the 1931 figure and the unknown 1941 figure. Alternatively, one could view there being a rapid decline from 1911 to 1931 followed by an upturn to 1951 restoring 1921 levels, and maintaining them thereafter. Whichever interpretation of the second half of our time period is accepted, there can be no doubt that those who talk in terms of the de-industrialisation of our economy and express concern about the shrinking of the manufacturing base should know that the origins of the problem (if it is a problem) go back to 1901.

The trend in domestic service exhibits quite a different time profile. It is rising from 1851 onwards less rapidly than manufacturing, it reaches its peak in 1891 and thereafter declines with a brief revival for females, and therefore for the total figure, in 1931. The other most significant feature of the time series is its rapid extinction from the level of 80,000 in 1951 to only 4,000 in 1971. In that