

Class-Conscious New Zealanders

WHEN New Zealanders protest, as they often do, that no class distinctions exist in this country, they are stating not what is, but what they think ought to be. There is perhaps as much social class consciousness in New Zealand as there is in older countries. The average New Zealander apparently finds no more difficulty than the Englishman in assigning a social status to a particular occupation.

This is revealed in a survey conducted by A. A. Congalton, of Victoria University College's Department of Psychology, and published in *The British Journal of Sociology*. Mr. Congalton submitted a questionnaire to groups of Carterton, Feilding and Wellington citizens and to a number of University students, asking them to rank the social status of 30 different occupations. The broad result of his survey is shown in the table below, with the median judgment indicating the average ranking given by those questioned. The median judgment of the doctor's position, for instance, is shown as 1.4, which is the average of all the first, second, third and lower placings given.

Occupation	Median Judgment
Doctor	1.4
Country Solicitor	3.4
Company Director	4.0
Business Manager	5.4
Nonconformist Minister	5.4
Public Accountant	6.0
Civil Servant (Dept. Head)	7.1
Works Manager	8.0
Farmer	8.2
Primary School Teacher	10.1
Jobbing Master Builder	11.0
News Reporter	14.3
Policeman	14.7
Commercial Traveller	15.2
Newsagent and Bookseller	15.4
Fitter	15.5
Routine Clerk	15.9
Insurance Agent	16.1
Carpenter	16.6
Bricklayer	19.7
Shop Assistant	20.1
Carrier	20.7
Chef	22.4
Tractor Driver	22.6
Agricultural Labourer	23.7
Coal Miner	25.0
Railway Porter	25.1
Barman	27.7
Wharf Labourer	28.1
Road Sweeper	28.9

To allow comparison with a similar survey made by the Social Research Division of the London School of Economics and Political Science, Mr. Congalton used a list of occupations con-

WHEN the Industrial Psychology Division of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research revealed, in 1946, that class-distinctions existed in New Zealand industry, "The Listener" sought the opinions of educationists and others on how and where such class-consciousness began. The publication of that brief symposium led to the inauguration of two research projects at Victoria University College. One of these—a sampling of adult opinion—is described below. The other, a survey of class consciousness among secondary school children, will be described in next week's "Listener."

forming as closely as possible with the list used in England. It was found that some of the English terms were not meaningful to New Zealanders and others had to be substituted for them. "Medical Officer of Health," for instance, was replaced by "Doctor—General Practitioner," a term not strictly comparable and likely to upset the result in so far as that occupation was concerned. More than two-thirds of the occupations, however, were described in identical terms, and several others required only slight alteration. "Coal Miner" was substituted for "Coal Hewer," "Primary School Teacher" for "Elementary School Teacher," and "Wharf Labourer" for "Dock Labourer."

In the table, three large jumps can be noticed in the otherwise fairly even distribution of median judgments. These may indicate a division of the occupations into four classes. The first class is led—but, of course —by the doctor, the second by the news reporter, the third by the bricklayer and the fourth by the barman. The median judgments for doctor and country solicitor also differ considerably, so that the doctor could almost be considered in a class by himself, above

people. Those in the "semi-skilled" and "unskilled" socio-economic classes almost invariably rated those occupations somewhat higher in the social scale, and the upper occupations somewhat lower. Of the 11 at the bottom of the list, only the shop assistant and the chef were

not elevated in status by the whole of this group, while the women also steadfastly refused to follow their husbands' example and exalt the barman. Of the upper ten only the works manager and the farmer were not given lower status by the group as a whole.

The women also dis-rated the doctor, and the men the business manager.

The occupations listed in the English survey were originally chosen for their lack of ambiguity. The nonconformist minister, for instance, was chosen to avoid the confusion that might be caused by clergymen with such titles as Bishop, Canon and the like. Professions such as that of engineer have been avoided because of the wide use to which such terms are put. An engineer may be anything from the man in charge of hydro-electric development to the man who wields a spanner on an assembly line. It is possible, though, that the position of some of those listed may have been affected by the existence of stereotypes in the public mind. We know a reporter, for instance, who was greeted by a new acquaintance with the words, "Oh! You're a reporter! Do you carry a gun?" Hollywood, no doubt, is to blame.

As Mr. Congalton states in his analysis, however, any general conclusions drawn can be no more than tentative. The survey is based on the replies of 1033 people. A considerably larger and more representative sample would be required to give a firm result. The magnitude of this task can be

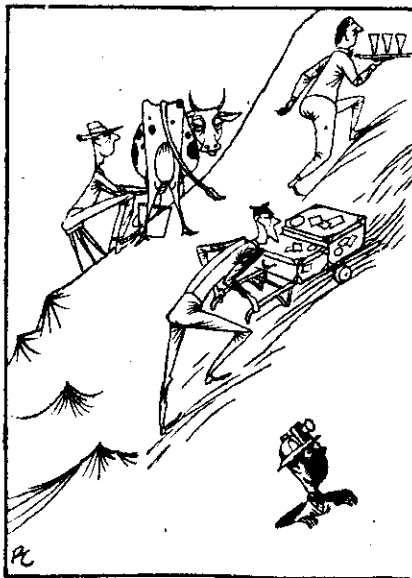


indicated by the amount of work involved in the survey under discussion. The Feilding sample, which was conducted by mail, involved the preparation and posting of 3568 questionnaires, 391 of which were returned. This is a return of 11.56 per cent, which is regarded as satisfactory. In Carterton the personal interview approach was used, the survey being conducted by a team of 25 social science students. Four hundred and seventy-nine satisfactory answers were obtained, with refusals amounting to only 9.5 per cent. A small group of 74 Wellington people constituted the trial run for this survey. The students, of whom 135 answered the questions, were, of course, readily available.

Designed to increase the present scanty knowledge of New Zealand's social pattern, the survey is one of an increasing number being taken by university and departmental researchers. It is possible that future questionnaires will reveal the social status of those who go from door to door with questionnaires, but meantime the researchers are building a foundation of fact on which political judgment and social legislation can be based.



N.P.S. photograph
A. A. CONGALTON
"Do you carry a gun?"



and beyond those who minister to the pocket, the mind or the soul.

The New Zealand results conform closely to those obtained in England, but there are some slight differences. In England the company director, chef, newsagent, bricklayer, coal miner and agricultural labourer are rated slightly higher, and the civil servant, nonconformist minister, primary school teacher, routine clerk and railway porter slightly lower. One is left to wonder how much better the chef might have fared if the survey had been taken in France and what depths the nonconformist minister might have plumbed had it been taken in Ireland.

There are differences, too, as between the rankings given by various classes of