Britain in 2014

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE ISSUES THAT MATTER

WORKING FOR LESS?
Insights from the new economy

100 YEARS OF CHANGE
How have we progressed since World War One?

THE EFFECTS OF INDEPENDENCE
GROWTH: PLAYING TO OUR STRENGTHS
LOW-CARBON ENERGY OPTIONS
EDUCATION POLICY IN PRACTICE

132 PAGES OF KEY DATA & EXPERT OPINION
Britain in 2014, the Economic and Social Research Council’s (ESRC) magazine, showcases how research the ESRC funds influences life in Britain today. This issue, with the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War in 2014, journalist and former ESRC Council member David Walker asks experts on social science, history and economics how Britain has changed in the past century. The issues they discuss set the scene for Britain in 2014.

The state cares for us more now but, with a growing older population, is the pension and benefits system sustainable? How has the class system evolved? Have we abandoned our values in the pursuit of money and celebrity? How have immigration and migration changed society? And, as a once world-leading nation of innovation and manufacturing, what do we make today?

Britain is a tale of social progress but contradictions remain: today, equality of opportunity is recognised in law yet the labour market remains unequal for many. Education is available to all, yet still some gain an advantage. War today is waged as much through technology as troops but our support for military action has dwindled. It’s hard to imagine living in an age when so many went willingly to the battlefields of Belgium and France cheered on by their families and friends.

Today there are other threats: from climate change, a fast-increasing global population and limited or declining resources. But where once empire fought with empire, some of these new challenges have started a spirit of global co-operation.

Perhaps one of the greatest changes is in politics. Traditionally we held politicians in esteem, believing that office made them right. Now many regard those who run the political system with cynicism, suspicious of their motives and sceptical of their promises.

Britain 100 years ago is a different place, but many of the principles and skills that once made it great apply still. Most of us believe honesty and hard work deserve reward. Charity and informal care thrive despite the most severe recession in recent history. British science, innovation and enterprise lead the way in many sectors.

And Britain in 2014 – although no longer an empire – still has a role to play on the world stage, despite the century of change.

Nick Stevens
Editor, Britain in 2014
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