

THE CLERICAL WORKER'S SONG

You young school-leavers who roam so free, with your O-level, A-level, GCSE:
Going to join the bureaucracy – what does the future promise?

A five-day week and a nine-to-five day, regular work and regular pay,
But all the old clerks to their children say: “Don’t go down to the office.”

(chorus) Push that paper, push that pen. Stamp that rubber stamp again –
You clerical women and clerical men, working in an office.

Now the office worker on an average wage is pushing paper to a ripe old age,
And if you added up every page it’s the equivalent of a fair sized forest.
But the only thing that he ever makes is gallons of tea and a few mistakes.
If you want adventure and you’ve got what it takes – don’t go down to the office.
(chorus) Push that paper, etc.

You’ve got writer’s cramp and a telephone jaw. Paper-clips are breeding in your
desk drawer –

With your in-tray out-tray your brain feels sore - you’ve got the occupational
disease:

Boredom strikes at the very soul till you think that you’d rather be mining coal,
Hunting the whale or the herring-shoal but you’re working in an office.

(chorus) Push that paper, etc.

Like the hand-loom weaver and the ploughman’s mate, your clerical skills go out
of date,

For every office must automate, with information technology.

Then your only ambition will be taken away, for that was to reach retirement day
And you’ve had to take early severance pay and you don’t go down to the office.

(chorus) Push that paper, etc.

When you’ve finally ceased your clerical toil and shaken off this mortal coil,
You think there’s nothing can ever spoil the eternal holiday.

But when you arrive it’s hard to tell whether you’ve come to heaven or hell
For you’re met by a clerical archangel, working in an office.

(chorus) Push that paper, etc.

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*I was struck by ironic image of late 20th century office workers piling out of their
trains back in the suburbs, changing into their grubby sweaters and heading down*

to the folk club to sing songs of work – in the mines and factories and on the high seas. Not realising that all the time they were writing their own chapter in our industrial history. Now their story can be told!