

Advance Praise for *Tipping Point for Advanced Capitalism*

“D.W. Livingstone’s *Tipping Point* is the culmination of an illustrious career dedicated to scholarship aimed to make a difference. This is a far-reaching engagement and reflection upon class matters and structural transformation in the new economy at a critical juncture. The main empirical claim is the growth of professional employees as the skilled trades of the 21st century ‘knowledge economy’ and as pivotal agents of change. The book also contains a refreshingly new take on economic democracy. Livingstone’s substantial evidence-driven work merits serious consideration and provides both a proud legacy and look ahead.”

— Wallace Clement, chancellor’s professor emeritus, Carleton University, co-author of *Relations of Ruling: Class and Gender in Postindustrial Societies* and author of *The Challenge of Class Analysis*.

“Nothing is more important than class for explaining how advanced capitalism works (and doesn’t work). Yet simultaneously there is no single analytical concept more misunderstood, in both intellectual discourse and public consciousness. In this timely and powerful volume, D.W. Livingstone brilliantly wields quantitative and qualitative data to show that, yes, class still exists — and that understanding the dynamics of class conflict is vital for confronting the fearsome multiple crises facing humanity.”

— Jim Stanford, director, Centre for Future Work and author of *Economics for Everyone: A Short Guide to the Economics of Capitalism*

“D.W. Livingstone’s detailed and highly crafted study demonstrates the ongoing power of capitalist class divisions in Canada, and marks a welcome renewal of a focus on work and employment within class analysis. Anyone who doubts the importance of class divides in affluent nations should ponder this book with care.”

— Mike Savage, Martin White Professor of Sociology, London School of Economics and author of *Class Analysis and Social Transformation* and *Social Class in the 21st Century*

“In this important book capping a distinguished career, D.W. Livingstone argues that class analysis remains fundamental to understanding the

multiple crises of advanced capitalism and the possibilities for social transformation. A key argument is that changes in the class structure and in class consciousness since the 1980s are heightening the contradiction between capitalism and growing public access to knowledge, setting the stage for new class alliances for democratic socialism.”

— Andrew Jackson, former director of social and economic policy, Canadian Labour Congress and author of *The Fire and the Ashes: Rekindling Democratic Socialism*

“Are classes dead in modern capitalist societies as often claimed? *Tipping Point* clearly demonstrates that most citizens of the rich democracies don’t think so. They have clear ideas about their own class locations and their social, economic, and political consequences. *Tipping Point* scans the changing class topography of the contemporary world and its likely implications for the future. Must reading for all those who have forgotten about the most fundamental cleavages of our daily lives.”

— John Myles, professor emeritus, University of Toronto and co-author of *Relations of Ruling: Class and Gender in Postindustrial Societies* and *Old Age in the Welfare State*

“Most accounts of class now stray too far from relations at work. Livingstone redresses the balance, using a unique set of empirical data collected over decades to chart the comparative changes in class structures and class consciousness in developed capitalist societies. Central to these trends is the growth and proletarianization of non-managerial professional groups. This development provides cautious hope that forces are gathering that may make fundamental change possible. The challenges this book poses deserve serious engagement if the multiple crises facing the world are to be overcome.”

— Bob Carter, professor emeritus, University of Leicester and author of *Capitalism, Class Conflict and the New Middle Class* and “A Growing Divide: Marxist Class Analysis and the Labour Process.”

TIPPING POINT for ADVANCED CAPITALISM

Class,
Class Consciousness
and Activism in the
“Knowledge Economy”

D.W. LIVINGSTONE

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EXCERPT

Notes

1. For a guide to the full set of research projects, publications and data bases, see <https://discover.research.utoronto.ca/27054-dw-livingstone/>.
2. As summarized more fully on its website, the Comparative Political Economy Database (CPEDB) is an SPSS file including twelve advanced capitalist countries and over 600 variables, most for over a forty-year time span.

EXCERPT

Foreword

This book asks large questions — and answers them. It deals with social structure and social change in a time of massive inequalities, when we face great uncertainties about our collective future. It locates responsibility for the crises we face, and it gives us a new way of thinking about how to face those crises.

The landscape for D.W. Livingstone's discussion is the rich capitalist countries of the global North, since about 1980. They are seen against a long historical background and in the worldwide context of capitalism. The focus is class.

That is no easy matter to deal with. There is a huge, confused and inconclusive debate about class in modern societies. Class sometimes disappears from the public agenda, then is re-discovered. Some voices claim that class no longer exists, some say that it takes entirely new forms, and others declare that we already know all that needs to be known.

Livingstone takes a stance against this confusion and also against dogmatism. He draws from Marx's work some basic ideas about how capitalist economies work and how we might examine them — and then studies the evidence.

This book is full of the evidence. Since the 1980s, Livingstone and his colleagues have built up a remarkable information resource, in effect a rich library of data from carefully designed survey research (some already in the public domain and more to come). The information concerns occupations, education, labour forces, social consciousness, change over time and the character of social divisions. *Tipping Point for Advanced Capitalism* puts this resource to work, giving us many of the highlights — it is really worth reading the detailed tables in this book — and pinning the argument constantly to the relevant data.

Tipping Point works step by step through the big issues about class. It proposes a way of mapping class structure, particularly focused on employment class. It has much to say about the different forms of labour we now see in and around a complex capitalist economy. But it isn't simply

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economistic. The argument moves on to class consciousness in its different forms and the social contours of attitudes to class-linked issues such as poverty, profit and climate change.

Livingstone is well aware that class structures are not static — social change has long been a theme of his research, whether on the steel industry, on schools or on occupations. So *Tipping Point* tackles questions of class dynamics, the directions of change and the reasons for change. Here it confronts questions about the growth of middle-class identification, the growth of the knowledge economy, the decline of the industrial workforce and the paradoxical degradation of conditions among highly educated workers. On these issues Livingstone has distinctive and carefully argued views, which I find entirely convincing.

I won't try to summarize his arguments — readers can have the pleasure of following the track for themselves — but I do want to say something about his methods. For a book so packed with data, *Tipping Point* is unusually explicit about its logic. Livingstone carefully sets out the conditions for each step in his analysis and the background assumptions for the analysis as a whole. He makes a careful critique of the relevant concepts. His account of what is meant by the “knowledge economy“ is particularly helpful and so is his demolition of the attractive but misleading idea of a “professional/managerial class.”

But as well as patient argument and systematic presentation of data, the book is rich in insights, unexpected conclusions and striking phrases. I love the image of “trace elements” in the politics of class and the blunt recognition that a capitalist economy centres on “profits stolen from wages.” I'm particularly impressed by the book's account of the underemployment of the capacities of an increasingly well-educated workforce. It makes one weep to see all the potential in knowledge and creativity that is simply wasted by an advanced capitalist economy!

Livingstone doesn't use the term “ruling class” for corporate capitalists, but I do, and I've learnt a lot about them from this book. The corporate rich are statistically almost invisible but are enormously consequential in their power. The way their power is used, promoting the unfettered pursuit of profit at the expense of others — including the natural environment and the majority of humankind — is at the heart of the crises we now face. *Tipping Point* brings together some key pieces of information about the group that holds this power, especially its ideological coherence despite its economic divisions. The book raises excit-

ing questions about the connections between the owners of corporate capital and key support groups, showing how those connections might be fraying.

It is easy to feel despondent when thinking about the ruthlessness of power, the deepening environmental crisis, rising inequalities of income and wealth, the persistence of violence and the degradation of living conditions for so many of our people. Yet *Tipping Point* is not a pessimistic book. The title itself calls up the idea that social change does happen and can be catalysed by activism. So the final part of the book addresses the possibilities that emerge from the situation that the analysis has revealed.

Some important news is in the data itself. *Tipping Point* shows that even in rich capitalist countries, capitalist hegemony is far from total. Oppositional ideas are quite widespread across major groups, including those who mostly identify as middle class. Overall, belief in the unrestrained pursuit of profit has been falling, while concern about climate change has been rising. What Livingstone calls revolutionary class consciousness is not widespread in the population as a whole but is present, at far from trivial levels, among the most exploited.

There are, then, social bases for system change, more extensive than usually thought. Livingstone adds to this information his reflections on the direction of change that is now possible. The ingredients for economic democracy are known; many examples of the cooperative production of goods and services are already present. System change is by no means a plunge into darkness.

Tipping Point for Advanced Capitalism is an important book, not just for empirical social science but also for social movements. It provides a mass of new information and ideas about key issues in class analysis. It offers new perspectives on large-scale social and economic change and the forces that might produce change. It recognizes that we are living in distinctive times, which demand new thinking. It sees the self-destructive dynamic in our present social and economic order. And it is, at base, optimistic, showing real potentials for fundamental change. We are not trapped in the current swamp — there are ways of digging ourselves out. If we have the courage to try.

— Raewyn Connell, professor emerita, University of Sydney, and author of *The Good University* and *Knowledge and Global Power*