**Economy**

**Working life**

Traditionally British people lack enthusiasm for work in general. It is mostly due to the fact that in the past leisure has always been the main sign of aristocracy. “Blue collar” – manual worker, “white collar” – non-manual worker. Blue collars get much higher salaries than white ones. Pay is more important than job satisfaction. The majority call themselves working class. The working day compared to most European countries starts rather late(8-9 o’clock). The normal lunch break is an hour or less. Usually people work until 5 o’clock or later. The normal retiring age is 65. Annual holidays are short. When there is a dispute between employees and management, they can go to arbitration, where an independent investigator settles an argument. Or workers can go on strikes. 3 ways of finding a job: through newspapers, through the local job centre and through privately-run employment agencies. The level of employment is gradually rising. Most new job opportunities are in the service section.

21st century jobs – hairdressers and other bodily improvers: beauticians, personal trainers, manicurists and even baldness experts. This kind of work can never be outsourced or computerized, so it offers job security. E-commerce is getting popular.

**Work organizations**

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) – represents employers in private industry

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) – organization for groups of employees.

The National Farmers’ Union (NFU) – for agricultural employers and independent farmers.

Inland Revenue – the government organization is responsible for collecting taxes.

The old lady of Threadneedle Street – nickname of the Bank of England.

**The distribution of wealth**

The gap between rich and poor is wide. One reason is that rates of income tax have changed. Also rates of pay for the best-paid jobs continue to increase faster than those for badly-paid jobs.

**Finance and investment**

Britain is still one of the wealthies countries. London is one of the centres of financial world. The Financial Times Stock Exchange Index (FTSE) is one of the main indicators of world stock market prices. The reason Is preference for continuity and tradition rather than change of the emphasis on personal contact as opposed to demonstrated ability when deciding who gets the important jobs are exactly the qualities that attract high finance. When people want to invest a lot of money in what matters to them is an atmosphere of stability and a feeling of personal trust.

An indication of the importance of banks in people’s lives is the strong dislike of them. People are always grumbling about the charges they impose or other inhumane treatment of customers. The improvement of high street banks is that the opening hours have got bigger. High street banks – Lloyds TSB, HSBC, Barclays bank, The Royal Bank of Scotland.

**Shopping**

The British are not very adventurous shoppers. They like reliability and buy brand-name goods wherever possible. Shopping also isn’t fun for them, they go into a shop, grab what they want and get out. High street is the area in town where the local shops are concentrated. Normal time for shops to open – 9 a.m. closing – 8 p.m for supermarkets, 5 p.m for small shops.

The best known supermarket chains are Sainsbury’s and Tesco. Only one department store with a large number of branches – Marks and Spencer.

Interesting fact is that in the past all shops didn’t worked on Sundays, today they work, but there are still some restrictions with less opening hours.