Beds were made, floors were scrubbed, food prepared and served, children minded, the sick tended long before people were hired to do any of these things. And even after the hiring of servants to do them had begun, these activities were of no interest to the capitalist except in terms of his comfort and household expenses. They became of interest to him as a capitalist when he began to hire people to do services as a profitable activity, a part of his business, a form of the capitalist mode of production. And this began on a large scale only with the era of monopoly capitalism which created the universal marketplace and transformed into a commodity every form of the activity of humankind including what had heretofore been the many things that people did for themselves or for each other.

As a quick glance at the list of service occupations will make apparent, the bulk of the work is concentrated in two areas: cleaning and building care, and kitchen work and food service. Female workers outnumber male, as in retail sales work. Training prerequisites for most of these occupations are minimal, a job ladder leading upward is virtually nonexistent, and unemployment rates are higher than average.
The Debate on White-Collar Labour

The Rise of ‘Service’ Occupations – II
Ernest Mandel

*Late Capitalism*, pp. 383–4, 401–3

Under conditions of increasing objective socialization of labour, yet generalized commodity production, a growing division of labour can only be realized if tendencies towards centralization prevail over tendencies towards atomization. In capitalism, this process of centralization is two-fold in character: it is both technical and economic. Technically, a growing division of labour can only be combined with growing objective socialization of the labour process by an extension of intermediate functions: hence the unprecedented expansion of the sectors of commerce, transport and services generally.¹ Economically the process of centralization can only find expression in a growing centralization of capital, among other things, in the form of vertical integration of big companies, multinational firms and conglomerates.

The separation of previously unified productive activities makes the extension of intermediate functions indispensable. If handicrafts become separate from agriculture, peasants must be guaranteed the mediation of work-tools and consumer goods which they previously made by hand, and artisans must be assured of the mediation of previously self-produced foodstuffs through trade. The extension of these intermediate functions tends to result in their growing independence. The separation of agriculture and handicrafts leads ultimately to the insertion of independent trade between the two. The more generalized the production of commodities and the more advanced division of labour becomes, the more do these intermediate functions have to be systematized and rationalized in order to ensure continuous production and continuous sales. The tendency towards a reduced turnover-time of capital, inherent in the capitalist mode of production, can only become a reality if capital (commercial- and money-capital) increasingly gains mastery of these intermediate functions. . . .

The apparently homogeneous notion of the expansion of the services sector, that is typical of late capitalism, must therefore be reduced to its contradictory constitutive elements. This expansion involves: