

PBT/MKB

H. L.
15 August 1967

Mr. Douglas Brown,
Audit House,
Eastcote,
Ruislip, Middlesex.

Dear Mr. Brown,

It was good of you to arrange a meeting so quickly at Audit House this morning. As a basis for further discussion, I am sending a batch of papers direct to Mr. Wicken. I shall comment on them in turn.

(i) The Preliminary Questionnaire on Household Resources and Social Problems in the U.K. This may seem very long but in practice the interview starts on page 4 and there are a number of questions which can only be put to certain kinds of people. We recognise that adjustments will have to be made, both before and after piloting. Since our conversation this morning I have looked at the possibilities of dividing the questionnaire into four quarters. This is not quite as straightforward as we all assumed, because most of the questions on pages 4 - 9 on household composition will have to be collected in all four quarters, and because questions in the sections on wages, (pages 15 - 16) and disability (17 - 19) depend to some extent on some of the questions on employment (pages 10 - 14). No doubt it would be possible to pursue some such grouping as (a) pages 4 - 9, Fatherless Families page 8, Housing page 9 and Immigrants page 20; (b) pages 4 - 9 and Employment (pages 17 - 19); (c) pages 4 - 9 and Wages (15 - 16); and (d) pages 4 - 9 and Disability (pages 17 - 19). But some interviewing time will be "wasted" because certain questions will have to be repeated in all four quarters and certain kinds of cross-tabulations in analysis will of course not be feasible. My guess is that it might be possible by dividing up the questionnaire to reduce the interview to about 10 - 15 minutes on average in duration. On the other hand, it may be more economical and more efficient to undertake a completely independent screening survey, using those of your interviewers who can best handle the delicate questions on marital status and disability.

(ii) Commentary on Preliminary Questionnaire. This gives part of the background and some of the calculations about the minority groups. However, since this document was prepared we have revised the calculations and/

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On 11/11/1964, the following information was received from the
 Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C., regarding the
 Census of the United States, 1960, for the State of
 California, County of Los Angeles, City of Los Angeles, and
 the City of Long Beach, California.

[illegible]

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and also added a tenth minority - single women and their dependants. The attached sheet gives our latest best estimate of the numbers we expect to derive from a "screened" sample. If you were to undertake an independent survey of some kind it might be a good idea to arrange this in two stages, for example, 1,000 interviews in stage 1 in a few areas a few weeks before another 6,000 or 7,000 interviews in stage 2. It is difficult to know how much "overlap" there may be among different groups of households. We have predicted 2,400 for stage 2 from information about 8,000 households (though the low-earners in Group 9 might be reduced by modifying the definition). The information from a preliminary 1,000 interviews might be useful, however, in controlling the size of the total screening sample and hence the exact numbers left for stage 2. You might also like to bear in mind the possibility that if our own random survey of 3,000 can be started before your own survey it will also begin to produce useful information for controlling the scale of the screening operation.

(iii) Multiple Interviews and Length of Interview. This is merely a note justifying our belief that at the second stage we may need to undertake two interviews instead of one to complete our income schedules and that long interviews may be necessary in some complex households.

(iv) A Questionnaire from the Cross-National Survey of Older People in Great Britain. This is of roughly the same sort of length and complexity as the questionnaire we are now preparing for the second stage of the poverty project, though the subject matter is somewhat different. This questionnaire on old people was worked out in 1962 with the Government Social Survey and was administered by them. The interview took an average of one hour to complete.

You may need other kinds of information. We have a small team of two Research Officers, a Research Assistant and an Administrative Research Secretary, as well as others who are associated with the project. Two of the drafts on our pilot work have been completed, and two others will be completed during September. It is hoped that these will be published during the next winter and spring, as also a few methodological papers which we have prepared. The publication The Poor and the Poorest by Brian Abel-Smith and myself gives a good indication of the scope and nature of the present inquiry.

Our Advisory Group consists of Professor Richard Titmuss (chairman); Miss Jean Rowntree and Mr. Ford Longman (Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust); Professor David Marsh (University of Nottingham); Mr. J.L. Nicholson (Central Statistical Office); Sir Donald Sargent (Ministry of Social Security); Professor John Yudkin (Queen Elizabeth College) and ourselves.

Originally we received a grant from the Rowntree Trust to (i) undertake and complete pilot work on four minority groups and (ii) undertake in 1967 and 1968 a national survey of an original sample of 5,000 households (expecting/

(expecting 3,000+ to cooperate). For much of the past 12 months we have been exploring the possibilities of carrying out an additional large screening survey, and gaining further information from inquiries from that survey, and have consulted the Advisory Group, the Trustees and Government Ministries. Official collaboration is now no longer possible.

We are therefore approaching ADB in the hope that an administratively feasible plan for the screening survey can be made and sent, and submitted first to our Advisory Group and then to the Board of Trustees in early October. If the plan is approved we could then formally commission the survey.

As we said this morning, we attach special importance to the sampling, because of the difficulties of locating a representative proportion of low-income households. We are also conscious of the need to do everything possible to secure a high response rate. As for the interviewing, we are uncomfortably aware how tricky and involved are some of the subjects on which we seek information, and this is bound to impose special demands on your field-work organisation. We would be extremely grateful if, when convenient, you could let us have some comments on each of these points so that, with an eventual survey plan, we can present our Advisory Group with full information.

I will be pleased to meet Mr. Wicken while Professor Abel-Smith is abroad, to try to answer any queries and make it possible for you to draw up a plan. We would welcome suggestions for close collaboration at all stages of the work.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Townsend
Professor of Sociology