PBT

National Poverty Survey

Minutes of Meeting

Skepper House 18 December 1967

present: BAS, DM, AS, HL, MB, SB

apologies: PT

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1 Special areas

Four "poor" areas were decided upon. (The inclusion of one "rich" area was considered and rejected in favour of correlating average income in the 51 constituencies against the proportion of poor households.) Two indicators were used in selection: (i) high proportion of unemployed; (ii) percentage of population leaving school at 15. These indicators yielded slightly different results (the application of a conjoint index is not easy because some of the available data applies to areas whose boundaries do not coincide with those of our constituencies). It was decided that we could justify our choice of:

(a) GLASGOW

(b) TYNESIDE (ie: either Newcastle East or South Shields, depending on further examination of data on and characteristics of the two constituencies)

(c) NORTHERN IRELAND*

(d) SALFORD EAST

by stating that we had roughly divided the UK into four regions and taken the constituency with highest unemployment in each region, with the exception of SALFORD EAST (which topped the list on the school-leaving but not the unemployment indicator): where it was felt we could candidly state that we used the education criterion deliberately as it was not known which of our two indicators would prove the more significant in determining poverty.

* The discussion did not make clear whether Northern Ireland is to comprise both Belfast and Fermanagh or only the urban constituencies sb

2 Screening

It was decided that 250 screening interviews for low-wage earners** should be carried in the space of, say, a week in all four areas in both March and September (which should yield 150 households in each area to receive the long questionnaire). Marie to pursue cost of farming out this operation to Spencer Marketing Services so that we can make a comparison with the cost of using students for the work. It was felt, however, that we would do well to avoid the use of students if possible; and it was pointed out that a random street sample would cost far less than an extension of our present sampling method. Hilary to consult Stuart and Durbin about the alternative method. Dennis in consultation with Adrian to produce as soon as possible a screening questionnaire based on the draft submitted to AGB. Once this is prepared some estimate of financial and administrative costs of the screening and follow-up operations to be arrived at (Marie and Sheila to make rough calculation and also to evolve method and recruit interviewers for the follow-up interviews, bearing in mind the need for particularly speedy follow-up of a proportion of the screened-out households).

** And the disabled ? - I'm afraid I was unsure about this sb

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3 The main survey

Sampling: instructions issued by Hilary for all but 12-15 areas. Fieldwork will probably be delayed in Oswestry and South Worcestershire because of the foot and mouth epidemic. Galloway will be tackled differently to other areas: no local interviewer is forthcoming so that during the year four to six visits of a week's duration will be paid by an interviewer from outside the area.

Coding and checking: The coding manual is delayed by Peter's illness but he and Colin Jacobson will continue work in the near future. Brian to consider handling of income and assets (ie: concepts, definitions in terms of boxes and tables, question of rents, children's earnings etc and ultimately a discussion with Nicholson on family relativity ratios as an alternative to the SBC ratings). Extra assistance will be needed for checking and coding: minimum 1½ persons for coding work and ½ to 1 for checking (editing).

Analysis of data: Hilary expressed wish for involvement with programming but not full responsibility.

Brian to explore possible use of Harwell Atlas (the Chiltern one) which is free for academic work and offers advisory service on processing of data; and to consult further with Frank Land regarding analysis of subsidiary tables on LSE computer.

4 Roles and division of work within the team

The likelihood of Hilary's last two chapters being produced in the next fortnight ruled out by involvement with sampling and the Fortran course. Dennis's availability to help with field supervision similarly limited by completion of study and production of screening questionnaire.

Adrian expressed interest in the area studies: specifically in a secondary analysis of the data collected on low wage earners. Hilary's interest is in a study of attitudes among administrators of the social services in the four special areas so that a correlation can be made with use of the services in those areas. The hope was expressed that such work (and further work by Dennis on fatherless families) could be financed by seeking individual grants to cover salaries from various sources. The results of our application to the SSRC unlikely to be known for three months.

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