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7th July, 1971

Professor P. Townsend,  
2 Mansfield Place,  
London, N.W.3.

Dear Peter,

Thank you very much for sending me your paper on the older worker. As you say, it is a seriously neglected subject, and I found your paper a very interesting foray into the subject.

My only general comment is that you could have given more attention to the industrial structure of employment (you mention this near the beginning but do not refer to it). It would be interesting to know the industry (by S.I.C.) in which the older workers in your sample were employed (if that is possible). Is it true, for example, that 'new' industries - with higher wages and faster growth - require skills that older workers do not possess? Is there a Leachian-economic explanation for the decline in participation?

I think also that you tended to underplay the effects of higher unemployment levels. I suspect that the availability of jobs is an important factor determining whether or not people retire - when unemployment rises they tend to retire earlier. Thus your statement on p.7 that it is not due to unemployment is possibly misleading - the 'deterred' workers would not be unemployed.

Some minor comments:

✓ (i) P.5 first full paragraph - "it is only a small factor in the explanation". Support?

✓ (ii) The last column in Table 1 is not very meaningful since the absolute numbers relate to cohorts of different sizes.

✓ (iii) P.15. As far as the relationship between education and participation is concerned, there are 2 factors operating: (i) better educated people are more likely to retain their skills, (ii) they are more likely to have occupational pensions. It is hard to separate them out.

I talked to Adrian Sinfield last week about possibly having a joint seminar on income/wealth distributions etc. There are a number of people from outside it would be interesting to invite (such as H. Lydall) as well as those in the two departments working in this field.

It was nice to see you on Wednesday.

Yours,

*Jul Adlington*

pp. Tony Atkinson

7th July, 1971

Professor F. Townsend,  
2 Mansfield Place,  
London, W.1M.2.

Dear Peter,

Thank you very much for sending me your paper on the other workers. As you say, it is a seriously neglected subject, and I found your paper a very interesting foray into the subject.

My only general comment is that you could have given more attention to the industrial structure of employment (you mention this near the beginning but do not refer to it). It would be interesting to know the industry (by S.I.C.) in which the other workers in your sample were employed. It is possible, for example, that 'other' industries - with higher wages and faster growth - require skills that other workers do not possess. Is there a teaching-skill explanation for the decline in participation?

I think also that you tended to underplay the effects of higher unemployment levels. I suspect that the availability of jobs is an important factor determining whether or not people retire - when unemployment rises they tend to retire earlier. Your statement on p.7 that it is not due to unemployment is possibly misleading - the 'other' workers would not be unemployed.

Some other comments:

(i) 2.8 does not say 'unemployment' - it is only a small factor in the explanation. Support?

(ii) The last column in Table 1 is not very meaningful since the absolute numbers relate to cohorts of different sizes.

(iii) 2.12. As far as the relationship between education and participation is concerned, there are 2 factors operating: (i) better educated people are more likely to retain their skills. (ii) they are more likely to have occupational pensions. It is hard to separate them out.

I talked to Adrian Smith last week about possibly having a joint seminar on income/wealth distribution etc. There are a number of people from outside it would be interesting to invite (such as H. Ludvigsson as well as those in the two departments working in this field).

It was nice to see you on Wednesday.

Yours,

John Williams