

Hilary

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DCM/MK

10th July 1967

Professor P. Townsend,  
Department of Sociology,  
University of Essex,  
Wivenhoe Park,  
Colchester, Essex.

Dear Peter,

You wrote to me last month concerning my general comments on the summary papers. I very much regret not having replied sooner but, as you will imagine, I have been submerged under a sea of scripts and attendances at examining committees.

I think the sort of points that bother me about the papers were as follow:

Dennis Marsden. On page 4 para. 5 very over generalized criticisms of the old N.A.B. and again on page 9 in the last two paragraphs. On page 10, last para. he seemed not to know the respective responsibilities of the N.A.B. and Local Authorities.

Hilary Land. On page 4, some very generalized statements about the undeserving and the difficulties of obtaining assistance. This paragraph, it seems to me, is more emotional than objective. The same applies on page 8 where references are made in the last paragraph that people were made to feel they were begging.

Adrian Sinfield On page 2 "an allegedly comprehensive system" seems to me again to be generalized rather than objective. Equally on page 8 the reference to the uncertain value ridden distinction in para. 2 and on the same page the final paragraph where phrases like "the now notorious wage stop" are used. In that same paragraph there are very generalized and almost emotive statements about assistance to the unemployed.

These were the kind of things that made me a little worried

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about the tone in which these reports were written and what appeared to me to be so often generalizations not based on the actual research.

I hope these comments may be of some help to you.

Yours sincerely, .

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Edward".

FB7/MKB

17 August 1967

Professor D.C. Marsh,  
Department of Social Sciences,  
University of Nottingham.

Dear David,

Thank you for your comments on the short progress reports and forive me for not replying until now. I wanted to have the opportunity of consulting the three authors involved.

Dennis Marsden You refer to "over-generalised criticisms of the old NAB" on pages 4 and 9. Dennis Marsden was unable to be specific because he had statistics for Seaston (72 interviews) at the time of writing but not Northborough (44 interviews which were still being coded). He therefore had a good idea of the size of the problem but could not put numbers to it. Secondly, you say he does not seem to know the respective responsibilities of the NAB and the local authorities. D.M. points out that it was not himself but the bodies themselves which were confused about their responsibilities and he is sorry if the passage does not make this clear.

Hilary Land You say there are some generalised statements on page 4 about the undeserving and the difficulties of obtaining assistance and that one paragraph is more emotional than objective. H.L. agrees that the argument in the first part of the paragraph is too condensed and should be separated from the reported facts later in the paragraph, but she points out that these are facts, i.e. based on systematic questions on utilisation of services and hence "objective". You also refer to a statement on page 8 about people being "made to feel they were begging or asking for charity". This statement attempts faithfully to reflect the views of families as reported to Miss Land, although the detailed evidence could not of course be given in this summary report.

Adrian Binfield A.B. points out that there are problems of condensation and that the phrase "an allegedly comprehensive system" of course should have read "which is said to be comprehensive". He also feels it is very difficult to summarise officers' attitudes towards the unemployed, which vary from strong prejudice to tolerance, but will look again at the passages you mention.

All three authors would welcome further discussion of the general points/

points you make about "tone" of report and the use of material outside the actual research. These are recurring problems in research. I believe I am representing them fairly in saying that they take the view that all big organisations vary internally in efficiency and effectiveness and that such variation should be faithfully recorded by the research worker so that the means of making them more effective can be discussed realistically. Needless to say, this is a very difficult task but it is one which has the best interests of these organisations at heart.

The progress reports have now been replaced (or are being replaced) by full draft reports and we do hope you will find it possible to comment with such care upon the latter as upon the former. There is nothing like rigorous discussion to bring out the best in everybody! In particular we would value your comments on the passages about national assistance. Dennis Haraden has a long chapter discussing many different aspects of the Board's activities and your views as an expert would be very welcome.

Would you have any objection to my sending copies of your previous letter and my reply to other members of the Advisory Group? Since the matter could not be properly discussed at the last meeting, others might like to see this correspondence. Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely,