
Interview with Professor David Donnison

Part 1: on the Poverty in the UK 1968-69 study

Okay thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed. So first of all I just want to talk generally about the memories you have of the time that the Poverty in the UK survey was being carried out, if you were aware of it and any conversations or input or knowledge of people that were involved, like Peter Townsend and Brian Abel-Smith?

Yes I was a colleague and friend of Peter and Brian, and had nothing really to do with the study and I had no responsibility for it, but one would meet and chat over coffee, one would, there'd be the occasional seminar or something. So I was aware of it as a major project within our department in at the LSE and was of course very interested in what was going to emerge. But that's about all I can tell you about my involvement in it.

That's fine. Can you tell me about the sort of atmosphere at the time in terms of the kind of will to address poverty and the sort of commitment of researchers at that time?

My memories that Brian and Peter and Tony Lyons were playing a very important part in bringing poverty back to public consciousness as a policy issue. After post-war years when people on the left as well as the right tended to assume that the problems were if not solved at least on the way to solution and we knew what to do about it. And it was this was as relative of course to action as well as research and, you know, *The Poor and the Poorest* was the publication that kind of launched that process. The finding of CPAG was another action step. And we were as friends, I mean I was sort of immediately offering to subscribe to CPAG along with other colleagues, we thought this was a good initiative, and we were looking forward to results of the study, which of course took far longer than intended, and Brian and Peter kind of came apart before it was over.

They came back together again in other ways later. It wasn't a very serious break. But they had different roles in the policy debate and needed to play it in different ways. They both shared very much the same ideas. And since this was the first national study of poverty and neither, well nobody had done anything quite like this before, it was not surprising they got out of their depth sometimes and there were problems just in research method that held them up and, you know, Rowntree, the main backer, was sometimes at their wits end to know how to bring this to a conclusion, but they were remarkably generous and patient.

Research foundations rarely are these days, it was a different world. And it was great when it eventually emerged.

What did you know of the kind of problems that they had then?

I didn't really no, and I was very busy with other things and was not wanting to get too much involved, although I was looking forward to results when they appeared.

And what do you think was the impact of the results when they came out in the book?

I think the book gave authority and credibility to things that they'd been saying much earlier, and it became a continuing source of discussion and reflection about policy and about Britain and how it was going and gained a kind of worldwide significance. And it was and still is referred to.

Part 2: on social policy research and radicalism

Just going to check my questions, do you think that there was a more of a passion in the kind of research world then than there is now or do you think it's similar?

I think the similar things were going on probably. One was that Richard Titmuss always conveyed to his people in that department that it was our job to think about the moral and political problems, as well as the more strictly academic this is, our research dealt with, and also to contribute to public debate, to get involved in adviser roles to politicians and so on. You weren't expected to do that last bit but you were encouraged to and supported in doing so. And Richard himself his life kind of demonstrated those values and aims. I don't think you can devote years to research on poverty that involves fieldwork, or for that matter public health, without it being a really radicalising experience.

So that we tended all to be what people nowadays would call centre left I guess. Not all of us but most. And there was both in terms of the research questions took up and the way they tackled them and the life in the wider world the development of what some people called 'the Titmuss School' - that had I think some productive effect because we all learned from each other and our work in other fields. I worked mainly on housing and education and later on social security, and social work and social administration in the classic sense too, but we drew on each other's ideas and we talked about our work together and there were

the usual kind of academic seminars where we could share what we were thinking about.

I think it had some less positive effects. I'd come via a two year stint in Canada in the University of Toronto from the University of Manchester in a department led by another great head of department, Bill Mackenzie. That's the department of government, and most of the professors of politics had been Bill's students or colleagues at some stage in their lives in later years and he had the same kind of influence in his field that Richard had in the social policy field. But Mackenzie would have been appalled at the idea that there was a Mackenzie school when he deliberately recruited people of widely varying disciplinary interests and widely varying political stances. You know, he thought that was part of the job of a head of a department in the polite social sciences.

So I came with a bit of that background, plus PPE, which was my degree at Oxford, which was cautious about too wholehearted a commitment to a particular political kind of stance and. I don't think it did us much harm, but I think it alienated from the subject, from the field, because it's a field rather than the subject. People who came to it from a conservative standpoint, some of them went on to do social policy in one form or another, but they did it as economists or political scientists or philosophers. And I can quote examples of that. And that meant they didn't bring those disciplines to bear as effectively as they might have done in the discussions of social policy we were having at the LSE. It also meant that they didn't do fieldwork much, and they might do interview studies, social surveys as part of their research method, but they probably didn't spend a lot of time going out and interviewing people themselves.

And I think fieldwork is a vital part of the kind of approach to social policy that we had. It doesn't mean that everybody in the department has to do a lot of it, but at least you need to be among people many of whom are engaged in fieldwork so that when they talk about policy and maybe even get to the stage of main policy proposals to ministers in the Government, they do actually have real human beings in their heads that they're thinking of and what this policy would mean for people like that. And I think that's very important requirement if you're to contribute to policy debate and Peter had it in spades. Brian was not a fieldworker but he was an egalitarian and he was a human being and he mingled constantly, reminded me of Peter, but with others in the department who were doing that kind of fieldwork. So that there was never any doubt about his human sympathies for and understanding of people who would be affected by any policy he was debating.

So do you think some of the, you could call it radicalism of that time came out of having greater contact with the people that you were trying to help...

Yes I think so. And again Richard himself didn't do that kind of work but he was very much that kind of person and the very last thing he wrote, as far as I know, it was published anyway, was about the man in the next bed in the hospital where he ended his life. And it's a very sensitive, poignant humane discussion through an account of one person of the whole point of the NHS. And I think still deserves to be read and pondered.

Part 3: on influencing change then and now

So, as well as being a time of reflection and learning, do you think it was exciting because people thought they were really going to change things?

Yes I think the mid-60s particularly was a time of hope and particularly for our kind of academic there was a sense that we had in our work a contribution to make that to an understanding of social issues and problems, human needs that from time to time might actually affect policy and underdevelopment of our society. I think we were overoptimistic, as it turned out, but it was a great time to be there and to be in that kind of group and to be based at the LSE, you know, just a short bus ride from Whitehall and Parliament, and it was a great privilege to be part of that. There were other features of it that were important. All my first jobs, and the same went for other people in that group, I started at Manchester University and then Toronto and then the LSE and then on to directing the Centre for Environmental Studies.

I was the first person in the job; I never had a predecessor. At the Centre for Environmental Studies I did at last have a predecessor but he was only a part-time predecessor; I was the first full-time director. So you arrived without having to slot into somebody else's curriculum or research agenda. You could make your own way and formulate your own questions and choose what you wanted to work on.

Choose what you taught. Obviously you discussed with colleagues any lectures or teaching you were involved in, because you didn't want to overlap with other people in unhelpful ways but you wanted to slot, you know, to mesh with the rest of the teaching going on and to contribute to a general programme. But you had great freedom. And we also had the support of some remarkable research

foundations, and notably what was then the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust, who were a very independent group of people their directors, who were prepared to give people time and they had a policy they had a set of priorities, you knew what they were, but if the work you wanted to do fitted in to some part of that then, well it was really Lewis Waddilove, their Secretary, who was a man you could talk to and learn from. He knew as much as we did about most of the things that they were supporting research on. And that was another wonderful privilege of those times.

My impression, I'm not, no longer applying, it's years since I applied for a research grant, but my impression is that research foundations are much more business-like and brisk; they want a clearly defined theme and set of questions and they want a report in six months, a year at most. Whereas the housing research my colleagues got involved in backed by Rowntree was something that began with a grant for a year or two, and they gradually evolved and went into, we had researchers in other universities we recruited to work with us. There were four team, small teams, and we took years, I can't remember precisely how long, it must have been five years or more before it was through, and that gradually developed - I think it would be very difficult to find supporters of research who would be as thoughtful and as generous as that these days.

There's been quite a lot of changes then since those times, yes.

I mean I should also add that the Labour Party at that time had amongst its leading figures quite a lot of former academics, who knew how to use academics, who enjoyed working with them. You know, Attlee and Crosland and a number of others who Peter and Brian worked with, Durbin, there are, Crosland, they used us in different ways, but they were always challenging and they were great people to work with. And Harold Wilson too himself, and it's difficult to find ministers of that sort of calibre these days or leading figures in any political party of that kind of intellectual calibre and kind of policy wisdom.

There seemed to be much more connection between academics and ministers and campaigners. It seemed to be a similar world of people, whereas now it's much more separate I think.

Yes well it exists. I mean if just occasionally happens I meet a student who wants to contribute by research that leads to some contribution to policy debate and analysis, I tend to say look you need to get in to a think tank rather than a university, or at least you should consider that. It means living in London almost

certainly. It is a different world, you operate in different ways. But the people we're talking about, Peter and Brian and Richard, made their contributions to policy debate partly by forming quite strong relationships of friendship with politicians of a like-minded sort, and that's still is a part of the game. It's done in different ways.

In the think tank you won't have to place your work in peer review journals, you won't have to do any fieldwork, though you might do a little, but that's not really an essential part of your work, your career. And I think to be honest the kind of strike record, the success rate of people in think tanks that are actually getting their proposals into policy, into legislation or government programmes is a good deal higher than ours was. Proceeding through in Brown's case, close collaboration as an adviser, policy adviser with ministers, but Peter really basing himself in the academy and in various voluntary agencies and pressure groups, and all of us contributing in various ways to the rituals of Royal commissions and committees of enquiry, which probably took three years to report, and by which time there'd be a new minister and very probably a new party in power.

So your chances of actually following through on your research into action were much less than those of somebody working in the think tank. On the other hand some of the great disasters of British public administration I believe are partly accounted for by this think tank model, because they haven't in fact been exposed to peer review. They haven't gone under the harrow of public discussion and criticism of the sort you get in a committee enquiry or Royal commission. They haven't had to talk seriously even to civil servants who could tell them whether the computer programmes exist to implement the proposals they have in mind. So that I think that we were in a world where the follow through into applications was slower and much chancier and frequently failed to deliver. At least some stupid errors were avoided because of the process of enquiry and public discussion and debate that these arenas obliged you to go through.

Part 4: on being chair of the Supplementary Benefits Commission

Could you tell me something about your time as a chair of Supplementary Benefits Commission? What kind of changes you implemented and how that kind of linked to your academic work and?

Yes again it was a due to the accidents of personal connections. I went from the LSE to the Centre for Environmental Studies in 1969 and was there until 1975. In 1973 Richard Titmuss was dying. He was the Deputy Chair for Supplementary

Benefits Commission. Keith Joseph was the Secretary of state at the time, the Conservative Government. I don't know but I think it's fairly clear that Richard persuaded Keith to approach me to take his place on the Commission. And he knew he didn't have long to go. And Keith Joseph asked me if I would be the Deputy Chair which was a one day a week job in principle. So I could continue being Director of CES and social security was quite a new field for me. I'd never done any serious research on poverty or social security.

I was viewed I think with a good deal of suspicion by some people in that industry who very understandably had doubts about any contribution I was likely to make. It was a great learning experience and it meant that I was going regularly to accompany social security officers who in those days still visited their claimants. I was visiting social security officers all over the country on my one day a week and I was exposed to fieldwork in effect and I met on the commission people, particularly some of the civil servants who knew a lot about the subject, and I learned from them too. I met the pressure groups. And then the Chair of the commission Arthur, sorry I'm having a senior moment it'll come back to me in a moment.

I can't help you I'm afraid.

Don't worry, no it'll come back to me I usually remember his name very well, ex-General Secretary of the Agricultural Workers Union, Chairs of the SBC and before that the National Assistance Board had often been retired trade unionists. And he was retiring, he was coming to the end of his term of office, and by then Barbara Castle was the Secretary of State with the Labour Government and Wilson Government. I knew that she must be thinking of me as a possible candidate for the Chair, and I went to see her and said do remember that most of the people who depend on supplementary benefits are women, that we've never had a women in the Chair, and if you thought it right to appoint Kay Carmichael – who was the kind of Scottish representative on the commission I knew her as a colleague, later got to know her much better, but it was a personal relationship at that time – if you thought it right to appoint Kay I think that would be a very good choice and if you and she wanted me to me to continue to be Deputy I'd be very happy to do so.

Everything then went quiet for quite some time. And it was only shortly before Kay died that I verified what I'd guessed was going on, which was that Barbara had asked her to do the job and she declined. I was then asked to be Chair and that was a four day a week job and Kay became my Deputy. She'd been on the Commission longer than me, I mean I first met her when I joined the Commission

and that meant I really was much deeper into it and doing more visiting and going to more meetings relevant to social security. I said I'd take on the job if Secretary of State said in the House that the Commission would make an annual report to Parliament about the scheme and the problems it was dealing with. And we got that. And then I was probably overoptimistic about what such reports could do, but I had a good deal of experience of playing a part in those things. I'd been on the Committee on Primary Education, Committee on Housing, London housing, and in the Central Housing Advisory Committee which produced several reports on housing. So that I saw the blue book – it's very Victorian idea – as an instrument for contributing to policy debate. And it meant that we began to get a very good team of civil servants to work with us.

I think the writer, young people, we had some very good top people, but the brighter young people, principles, people of that sort of grade sensed that supplementary benefits was going live. It's one of the areas of policy in the DHSS that was going to be interesting. And we got great people and it became quite a team. And the Commission too, that changed, I mean people left and others came. And the need to write these reports every year brought us together I think.

More effectively because we had to agree; it was a commissioners report not mine. And we had a regular seminar once a month in the Commission's offices which brought in not academics and pressure group people, claimants union, CPAG and so on, to debate and discuss things that we were dealing with. And that was a marvellous experience for me and I think was useful. I think, you asked and I haven't responded to the question what have we achieved, and to be realistic not a lot. I think we opened up a long established but rather ossified bureaucracy. It was at first absolutely horrified at the thought of this seminar and resisted it, but they became accustomed to dealing with the outside world, including some very expert people and people who were either users of supplementary benefits and independent on it or working every day with people living on this kind of scheme.

I think getting around the country, because every time I went to visit, I was now going to visit social security offices once a fortnight, two offices in one day and, or one visit took two days usually, and meeting not only people concerned with poverty and with social security but we met the local authority. We met the local social workers. If there was a university in town we always had a seminar in the university. We usually went to visit whatever local industry people were proud of; went down coal mines, went to power stations. There were different things in different places and to talk to the people working there. And it gave me a kind of

ticket to cut a slice through the whole of my society of Britain and learn about it. I found that it certainly informed our thinking.

And I think another feature of this was that I was doing that job at a time when graduates were entering the Civil Service at executive officer level. In former years graduates entering the Civil Service usually came in as principals. They were high flyers and they expected to go on to be under-secretaries or deputy secretaries or permanent secretaries. But now, certainly in London, which to be working in London I got a lot of access to, many years, who were bright graduates and an increasingly they were spreading out over the five years that I was in the Chair into other parts of the country, at executive officer level and sometimes at more junior level. Which meant that if you went in to a social security office and asked to talk with staff, you met some people who were accustomed to the seminar, who were accustomed to challenging you as a speaker, to argument amongst themselves who were much more open to discussion of policy issues, and I think I mean they played a part and helped their colleagues, non-graduate colleagues to play a part in the development of ideas about policy.

If you're asking did we make any change in actually specific policies I think the only thing I can readily recall that we made a contribution to was the slightly accidental chance that we helped to create housing benefit and rationalise the weird mix of housing subsidies that were operating when I came to the job. You know there were council subsidies for council housing, but then there were rent rebates for tenants on low incomes. And there were rate rebates for people on low incomes, and there were supplementary benefits which paid a rental house. So there were four quite different subsidy systems that worked in different ways to help people get a home. And partly because of Lewis Waddilove, whom I was still in touch with, and he was on the Commission for a while - was he? I'm not even sure about that.

It may have been the [unclear] committee, but anyway I worked with Lewis in commission which kind of generated the idea that we really needed one kind of housing subsidy for low income tenants. And that was outside the DHSS remit I mean that was ministry of housing and local government and treasury, but I think we played a part quite modest part and others played probably more important parts in rationalising housing subsidies. If I thought very hard I might come up with one or two other modest ideas but not a lot. I mean after all we ended with Margaret Thatcher. And this was not a government that wanted to work with people like us. And we weren't the kind of people who were well equipped to work with her and her colleagues.

Keith Joseph you could work with. He was a highly intelligent man who had also got an academic background and he was a fellow of all souls and understood about how to use academics. But Margaret Thatcher was not in the least interested in people like us. I did once participate in a meeting shortly after she, it was before she was Prime Minister, it was when she was Secretary of State for Education. I'd just come to office which other academics who knew a lot about education and been working on it for years. And when we were brought together to be introduced to her to see if we could offer any help and she quickly made it clear she didn't want to hear from us.

So was that the end of the Supplementary Benefit Commission then or it just changed...?

The Commission ended in 1980. I was there from '75 to '80. And I was due to move on anyway. I'm not sure if I had a five year stint. I don't think it was as formal as that but I was not wanting to go on any longer. I was asked if I wanted to be considered as Chair of the next Social Security Advisory Committee which had less powers but was still operating in the same field and still is. But I said no I wanted to go back to the academy and get a job. And also I wanted to get out of London for various complicated reasons. And some of which were political but also personal. And so I went to Glasgow eventually and finished my job there and got a Chair at University of Glasgow.

Part 5: on poverty and inequality

Okay great well is there anything else you want to say about the struggle to eradicate poverty over all these years and how far we've come and haven't come and what the role of academics are in that?

Let me try one thought and if you want to pursue it further push me to see if I can take it further. I think in this whole poverty analysis and debate there's an important distinction one always needs to bear in mind between those essentially concerned about poverty and those concerned about equality. I think if you get seriously into poverty studies you see that you have to move on to look at inequality, you can't stop with poverty. And Peter demonstrated that very clearly in his definitions of poverty and how he researched it because he spoke about it and wrote about it as meaning exclusion from the mainstream of society. He didn't use that word quite but that's what he meant. And was asking questions in his research about the things people could do that most families expect to be able

to do and the things you can't do because you're too poor, and using this in definitions of poverty.

I think Peter and Brian and Richard Titmuss were fundamentally egalitarians; they wanted a more equal society, a fairer society, but the fundamental issue was resistance to gross inequalities. And that was part of a central tradition it goes back a very long way in British history as we know and to the Middle Ages and Tawney was the most famous recent example of it in previous years who had been a presence in the LSE common room when I arrived and met him there. I think Peter in his writing didn't, probably thought no need to clarify distinction between the egalitarian stance and the central concern about poverty. He wouldn't have, he would have thought you had to be concerned about equality. But in his writing he was talking about poverty, mainly, and this was the of the title of the great book and I think that was, as it had been for [unclear] Rowntree and Charles Booth in earlier times, probably a political necessity.

Inequality was and still is a highly contentious issue. If you talk about inequality as your main concern you attract a lot of flak. And if you make proposals that lead in equalising directions you'll have serious opposition to contend with - doesn't mean that it's wrong to do so. But if you're seeking in Britain to gain political support for your proposals, a country which still retained at that time, I don't know if it does now, a kind of noblesse oblige tradition, among Conservatives too, then you talk about poverty and you get a response. And particularly talk about poverty of children, anyone stops to think about it seriously understands that our future and the future of our own children depends on the kind of society we create, and this will depend partly on how all children are growing up, whether they are productive law abiding and happy people, and all of that's a bit less likely if you're exposed to hardship and poverty.

But if one's looking for a kind of inheritor to the tradition of Tawney and Titmuss I think Richard Wilkinson is your man, [unclear], and they have indeed provoked a lot of hostility and conflict in the academy as well as in politics and media. And I think in a way the Titmuss, Townsend, Abel-Smiths group, for reasons I can understand, I think, because of the greater political purchase you got by talking about poverty, did not clarify that distinction. And also of course until about 1971 Britain was slowly and stumblingly growing more equal. Both through a convergence of income ranges from top to bottom and through the growth of welfare state, and it was only in the mid-'70s and then sharply in the mid-'80s that we started moving in the opposite direction into increasing inequality, which has gone much further since.

And it was understandable that they stuck to the poverty last, as it were, as the base for their work and campaigning and their public statements of research findings. I think therefore it was left to Richard Wilkinson and Michael Marmott and a lot of other people, many from the public health world, to pose the questions about inequality more sharply and Michael Marmott is always very cautious (one baby - inaudible) whereas Richard Wilkinson won't as a result of Wilkinson's much more forthright, aggressive kind of policy stance on inequality and his increasing move from establishing the correlation between inequality and life expectancy and poor health and then a range of other social problems and then now working on the reasons for that and increasingly the policy implications, what can we do about it, which leads him into very contentious kind of world but I think that while Richard and Brian particularly but Peter too had good friends in the public health world and had that kind of link, people like Gerry Morris and others London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in particular though not only there, Brian's work on the Gilberg (?) committee which is enormously important, in effect saving the National Health Service, that gave them roots in the public health world and the people coming from a public health stance were those led into more serious analysis of inequality and then an egalitarian policy agenda, in some case not in all, though I don't know whether that is a thought worth unravelling or exploring further but it was something that really interested me about Peter's whole approach to the whole poverty issue and the way he wrote about it.

Part 6: on the importance of inequality

Do you think in some ways it might have been a mistake to focus on poverty because it allowed people to talk about the troublesome family and those kind of agendas?

I think if you were with Peter and talking to him and indeed reading his work, you couldn't miss the egalitarian implications of what he was saying and his whole definition of poverty was an egalitarian one. And also you understood the man, he was a natural egalitarian and he could form strong relationships of mutual respect with people of all classes and income groups and the like and the same time I think we were slow in that department and school of thought in exploring the inequality issues and there are still people in that department in the LSE who would be quite hostile to Richard Wilkinson academically critical and suspicious of him and that may in a way be an endorsement or confirmation of the political nonsense, political good sense of Peter and Brian's decision, if it was a conscious decision, I don't know whether they did discuss it to focus on poverty rather than inequality in their writing and in the formulation of their research questions and the rest. They may have been right, I am not saying they were wrong, but I

think the result was that that group of people and their successors at the LSE and remember the importance of that group in the development of social policy across the country because new universities, post Robbins widen the universities, were constantly recruiting people from that school to be heads of their departments and came to be what was called Professors of Social Policy so that tradition became very much a British tradition, social policy research, and it was left to people in the public health world to develop the inequality kind of agenda.

Or to put it another way which is a different way of saying some of the same things, to develop that agenda on a nationwide scale, on a broad social scale effecting the whole of society, there was an inequality agenda developing very fruitfully and vigorously over these same years on behalf of women, on behalf of the race issues and the ethnic minorities, on behalf of gays and lesbians and people of various sexual orientations, and they have been actually much more successful in terms of policy change than what you might call the Richard Wilkinson and Michael Marmott school of egalitarian research because that school has lost all along the road since the 1970s, you know, things have been going in the opposite direction, whereas we have made progress on behalf of women and the other groups. I think it was significant that although Peter and Brian and Richard their hearts were in the right place on those issues, they would have been sympathetic to the concerns of people concerned about gender and race and sexual orientation and disability, Peter played a central role in that world, they didn't go out front other than Peter on disability in a campaigning way of that kind of egalitarian nature. I think, I never discussed it with them and I don't know too late now, but I think they felt coming from a kind of Tawney stance that while it was very important that women and the ethnic minorities and the rest gained a fairer share of opportunities and recognition and a fuller place in society, just to get more of the gravy in an increasingly unequal world for women or whatever wasn't good enough, you had to ask whether society needed to be so unequal in the first place and those were the more important issues but that's onto the Wilkinson agenda if I can call it that but they didn't really venture into that. I don't know what Peter thought about Richard Wilkinson's work, never discussed that with him, I think he would be broadly sympathetic to the things Wilkinson was saying, but I don't know whether he felt that was something he wanted to get into or should have got into, I never discussed it.

Interviewer: Is there any last thoughts, anything I haven't asked you, you want to say about the Poverty in the UK study or poverty or what we need to be doing?

I probably made it clear in the way I talked about it that I think that what I rather crudely call the Wilkinson agenda is in the long run the more important one even if politically less successful. I think, I understand some of the criticisms of

Wilkinson's work and I think those need to be thrashed out, taken seriously, and I think there are some very good replies to most of them but I was slightly saddened when I went to the hundredth birthday party of the LSE, which was a good conference it was a day-long conference of very good speakers brought in from the United States and elsewhere as well as home grown and serious talk about some very good papers and important issues. Until I raised the question, I should explain poverty and inequality, or rather they mainly called it social justice, were the main themes of this day-long conference and very expertly discussed they were, nobody mentioned Michael Marmott or Richard Wilkinson until I did rather late in the day and said why are you not taking about that work, you may disagree with it but it needs to be discussed and I think they were depriving themselves of an opportunity of learning and of carrying an important debate forward, which was a pity and I am curious I'm not sure understand why. I think it is partly doubts about Wilkinson's methodology and his approach to his work generally but I think it is partly what Richard Titmuss never had a sense of disciplinary boundaries, this is public health and that's a different department of the academy, which is nonsense of course. You can't do serious work in public health, as I said right at the beginning, without becoming, it's a radicalising experience you become concerned about poverty because you see what poverty does to people's health and now if you buy most of what Wilkinson is saying, along with Pickett now, you are concerned about inequality and have to be. A public health base is really rather an important one to start from and bring into the debate whenever we are talking about poverty. They ask slightly different questions and pursue them in different ways, I am not sure I have anything more to say than that.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you very much.

Thank you for the opportunity.