Getting the Measure of Poverty

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and Roy Sainsbury

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The early legacy of Seebohm Rowntree

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Preface

SIR PETER BARCLAY, CHAIRMAN
JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION

As chairman of Joseph Rowntree Foundation, I welcome the publication of these volumes containing the proceedings of the conference sponsored by the Foundation.

The Foundation was delighted to support this event for a number of reasons:

- First and foremost, it marks the Centenary of Seebohm Rowntree's first study of poverty in York. It is indisputable that that survey constituted a large milestone in social research in this country.

  It was Beatrice Webb who called it a *'sort of Modern Doomsday Book'* (1980). Seebohm says in his report that *'it was a contribution to the knowledge of facts in relation to poverty that any enquiry was undertaken'* (1903) and it was its factual, evidential base which gave it such impact and authority - with material gathered through unemotional objective, detailed and conscientious research. In doing so, he was making a major reference in establishing the British empirical social research tradition.

- Secondly, the Foundation, being always primarily concerned with translating research into social change, recognises and celebrates the extraordinary social policy influence which was exerted by the survey on the thinking of Liberal party policy makers in the early years of this century, which led to reform, from which, eventually, emerged the Welfare State as we knew it in the years following the last War.

His work and his ideas also had a great influence on his father Joseph and in 1904 were partly responsible for Joseph's decision to establish his three trusts.

If you read about the debates which followed the publication of the survey, in Asa Briggs' (1961) fascinating and comprehensive study of

Seebohm's life, they have an uncomfortably modern ring. The Charity Organisation Society had, throughout the previous century, maintained that poverty was caused by the moral turpitude of the poor (shades of *'benefit dependency?'*) - in answer to which Seebohm was able to show that poverty was a real phenomenon with clear structural causes. He called for a minimum wage and warned his opponents, as Asa Briggs recounts, *'not to pit their uninformed **feelings** about poverty against his **facts**'*. If they saw people who by his standards were in primary poverty appearing to live well (as we see sometimes in TV documentaries today), let them not, said Seebohm confuse *'things that are seen with consequences of poverty which are not seen'* - (in our time, isolation, bad health, bad living and social exclusion in general).

Finally, the Foundation welcomes this publication because it provides a unique opportunity to review the theory method and policy relevance of poverty research. As a consequence, I hope that after 20 years in which such research has been largely ignored - in fact, in recent years only the brave even dared to mention the word *'poverty'* at all - I hope we can bring high quality research in this area back into the centre of both social research effort and informed policy debate and that we shall look back on these conference proceedings as a significant turning point.

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The help and guidance of our colleagues at Ashgate Publishing has been invaluable. Our thanks to them.

And, finally, our support team at the University of York have carried out their contributions to the production of the book with their usual enthusiasm and efficiency without which we would be lost. Thank you Sally Pulleyn, Lucy Bradshaw and Nico Bradshaw.

Jonathan Bradshaw
Roy Sainsbury

University of York, March 2000

1 Editors' Introduction

JONATHAN BRADSHAW and ROY SAINSBURY

The conference to mark the centenary of Seebohm Rowntree's first study of poverty in York has resulted in three volumes of proceedings. This first volume *Getting the measure of poverty* is devoted to papers which explore the early legacy of Rowntree's work before the Second World War and, in some papers, into the post-war period. The second and third volumes *Researching Poverty* (Bradshaw and Sainsbury, 2000a) and *Experiencing Poverty* (Bradshaw and Sainsbury, 2000b) represent a picture of the state of poverty research in the late 1990s, after a period of 20 years when Britain had a government not particularly concerned with poverty and not much interested in funding research into it. That a conference commemorating one man and one book has been held nearly 100 years after the book's publication is testament to Rowntree's enduring influence and, less welcome, to the enduring problem of poverty.

This volume opens with an exhilarating account by **Lord Asa Briggs** of the genesis of Rowntree's seminal work *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* in the context of Rowntree's life as employer, pioneering social researcher, practising Quaker, and family man. Lord Briggs draws on his own analysis of Rowntree's major works in *Social Thought and Social Action* (Briggs, 1961), itself not intended to be a biographical account of Rowntree's life, to build a picture of a shy, hard working, garden-loving, unobtrusively religious man, who prompted contrasting responses from people with whom he came into contact: loved by some, disliked by others. His story draws in a diverse cast, from his close collaborators who worked with him on his series of poverty studies to prominent figures such as Lloyd George and the international spy, Trebitsch Lincoln. Briggs emphasises the contribution of Rowntree in pioneering scientific methods of investigation, for example, in survey sampling and in the comprehensive measurement of poverty.

In Chapter 3, **Graham Bowpitt** examines the contemporary debates at the end of the nineteenth century about the causes and appropriate remedies for poverty between the leaders of the charity organisation movement and social reformers such as Rowntree. The former argued that there was no such thing as 'poverty', only social inefficiency caused by the moral choices and behaviour of individuals. Rowntree's success in countering this argument

through his conceptualisation of poverty as a scientifically measurable phenomenon is evaluated.

In Chapters 4 to 6, the contribution of Rowntree to the study of poverty is debated. **John Veit-Wilson** emphasises the importance of Rowntree. He argues that Rowntree did not intend his measures to define the boundaries of poverty, rather that his 1899 primary poverty measure was a criterion of the *inadequacy* of incomes, and his later Human Needs of Labour measures were standards for minimally adequate wage rates. Hence, his projects were essentially setting 'minimum income standards' and that despite government reviews of the basis of income maintenance benefit levels, both before and since the Second world War, Rowntree's project is still unfinished. **Bernard Harris** takes a different position and argues that Rowntree's original conception of poverty may have been less 'relative' than Veit-Wilson suggests. Harris goes on to discuss the evolution of Rowntree's conception of poverty between 1902 and 1951 and concludes that there are good grounds for believing that it was in the later surveys, rather than his 1899 survey, that Rowntree came closest to anticipating the more modern notion of 'relative poverty'. The aim of **Alan Gillie's** chapter is to reassess Rowntree's work in its historical context. He suggests that the focus on Booth's presumed influence on Rowntree has been unhelpful and challenges the claim that Rowntree's was 'the first attempt to fix a poverty line on scientific grounds'. Gillie presents the argument that the concept of a poverty line was familiar to school boards since the Elementary Education Act of 1870 and the neither Booth nor Rowntree invented it. Hence, he argues that the recent 'rehabilitation' of Rowntree (Veit-Wilson, 1986) is based upon a fundamental misinterpretation of Rowntree's *Poverty*, and that an assessment of Rowntree's work requires an understanding of the relationship between his and earlier concepts and measurements of poverty.

Tim Hatton and Roy Bailey focus on Rowntree's finding from his 1899 study of poverty in York that there were three phases of poverty in the life cycle of the unskilled labourer: in childhood, in the middle years and in old age. They then use the newly computerised records from the New Survey of London Life and Labour (1929-31) to explore the pattern of poverty incidence by age in the interwar period. They conclude that the distinctive pattern of poverty incidence across the life cycle first noted by Rowntree can be clearly identified in interwar London.

In Chapter 8, **Ifan Shepherd** adds to our understanding of poverty in late-Victorian London by critically evaluating the role of *mapping* in Charles Booth's study of poverty which influenced Rowntree's first study in York. By

geographically coding the detailed information recorded in Booth's manuscript notebooks, a set of maps is for the first time created at the family scale. These permit a re-evaluation of Booth's famous street colour maps of poverty, and a micro-geographical analysis of social and economic life in Victorian London. Shepherd draws conclusions about the contributions that family-level mapping can make to the historical study of urban poverty, and on the fundamental issue of which scales are best for the geographical exploration of urban poverty.

In her contribution to this volume, **Patricia Garside** offers an insight into the contrasting approaches to philanthropy of Seebohm Rowntree and the late-Victorian businessman William Sutton (whose business interests in brewing and distilling could not have been further removed from the Rowntrees' temperance background). Sutton's Trust was set up to provide immediate and practical help to the poor in the form of affordable housing, but, as Garside shows, his wider influence on housing for the poor was negligible. In contrast, Rowntree, by emphasising the need to assess, to quantify, and to explain social phenomena, gained a central position in debates about both poverty and housing policy.

Harriet Ward draws on the contribution of Rowntree to explore how poverty inhibits the capacity of parents to provide adequately for their children, and in particular how one of the major consequences of poverty was the separation of children from their parents. The chapter draws on information from a sample of children who were taken into the care of one of the voluntary societies between 1894-1894. Ward compares family incomes data from Rowntree's almost contemporaneous study in an analysis that demonstrates the part played by poverty in parents' decisions to agree to separation. Evidence from modern studies demonstrates how poverty still remains a major precipitating factor in entry to care or accommodation.

While mainland Britain was struggling with the problems of poverty identified by Booth, Rowntree and others, Ireland (still a part of the United Kingdom) was experiencing even higher incidences of poverty. In his wide-ranging historical review of poverty and social policy in Ireland in the first half of the twentieth century, **Séamus Ó Cinnéide** shows that, in the midst of political turmoil around the issue of independence, poverty was not high on the political agenda. Ó Cinnéide goes on to identify changes in the understanding of, and policies towards, poverty in Ireland, and how these were influenced by the historical context, by empirical work and by philosophical and political debates.

The final chapter in this volume by **Mark Freeman** concentrates on an area of Rowntree's work often overshadowed by his seminal studies of urban poverty. In several works over his lifetime Rowntree also investigated the impact of poverty on agricultural workers and their families. Freeman reviews the methods used to look at rural poverty, by Rowntree and other investigators, and argues that studies of the social relations of the countryside complemented the more narrowly focused studies of poverty in providing a fuller understanding of the conditions of agricultural labourers.

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2 Seebohm Rowntree's *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* in Historical Perspective

LORD ASA BRIGGS

The papers being delivered at this Centenary Conference cover a wide variety of themes, historical and contemporary. Some, the most ambitious, point to the future. Most have policy implications - as Seebohm Rowntree himself would have wished. Some have technical aspects which he did not anticipate and which he would not necessarily have understood or liked. All deal with issues and problems in more detail than I have time to do in this opening plenary session, when my task is to place **one book** by Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, in historical perspective.

To pursue that task I have to begin by placing Rowntree in historical context and perspective as a person. One man, more than one book: the last of his books was written more than a half a century later than *Poverty*. Three of the books deal with poverty, and constitute an unusual time sequence, published as they were in 1901, 1941 and 1951. There was a striking gap between 1936, when the material for the second book was collected, and the middle of the Second World War.

Almost as well-known, however, among Rowntree's books were *The Human Needs of Labour* (1918) and *The Human Factor in Business* (1921). The whole collection is now best considered together. Whether they deal with poverty or with industry, they follow similar approaches - and that is how I considered them in 1961 in my book *Social Thought and Social Action, A Study of the Work of Seebohm Rowntree* (Briggs, 1961). This was not in an ordinary sense a biography, although it was chronological rather than thematic in its organisation, and since it was written more than a generation ago, within a few years of Rowntree's death in 1954, I now have to put my own book into historical perspective also. A great deal has changed in those thirty years in attitudes and in politics, particularly the politics of the welfare state. The book, which went quickly out of print, needs a new edition.

In 1955, when I started work on it, Peter Townsend, the speaker at our

third plenary session, had not yet finished his first book, *The Family Life of Old People* (Townsend, 1957) which dealt with Bethnal Green, an early product of the Institute of Community Studies, founded by Michael Young, about whom I am now writing, focusing as in my Rowntree book on the relationship between social thought and social action. That is not the only linked theme. There is a direct link with *The Family Life of Old People*. More than a decade before Townsend started to work with Young, Rowntree in 1944 had been chosen as Chairman of a Committee set up on the initiative of the Nuffield Foundation, indeed on the initiative of Lord Nuffield himself, to look at issues concerning old people. It published its report, *Old People* in 1946 (Committee on the Problems on Ageing, 1946). Rowntree did not like the first draft, and with the help of G.R. Lavers rewrote it. In 1901, when *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* appeared, there were only 2½ million people over 65: in 1946 there were 6½ million, and Rowntree was one of them.

Poverty was published in the year when Queen Victoria died. In pre-Suez 1955 the Victorians were only just coming back into fashion: their virtues were still suspect. The term 'Victorian values' had not yet been invented - or disinterred. Margaret Thatcher had not yet entered Parliament. There was no University of York, although it was rather more than a twinkle in the eye of J.B. Morrell, for long a Quaker member of the Board of the Rowntree Company, and a newspaper director, and another non-Quaker member of the Board, Oliver Sheldon. When Sheldon died in 1951, the year of the Festival of Britain, the Archbishop of York, who delivered the memorial address on him in the Minster, noted that it had been 'his great hope that York should found a College which would presently become a university which, situated in a city possessing so many treasures of the past combined with modern business activities would be able to make a special contribution to the culture of the North.'

In 1955 Rowntree's as a company was still very much Rowntree's. It had a distinctive, confident and proud culture of its own, independent of the Minster. The main context was a family context, and the University of Leeds, where I had just been appointed a Professor, had no associations with it, intellectual or social. A Rowntree, Peter, Seebohm's son, was still living at the Homestead in York, where Seebohm had lived until 1936 when he moved south - first to North Dean near High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire and later, with more than a touch of irony, to Disraeli's old house in the same county at Hughenden. It was in Seebohm's study at the Homestead - he had first moved there in 1904 after work on *Poverty* was finished - where I carried out most of my research with the surviving, but sadly depleted, Rowntree papers, only a

remnant and largely unsorted, at my immediate disposal. I was aware of their strengths and their limitations - many of them had already been destroyed before he moved south - and inevitably I was drawn to what came to be called 'oral history'. Fortunately some people of key importance were still alive, including Bruno Lasker, his private secretary before Frank Stuart, and a few of his other helpers. I have been re-reading the transcripts of some of the interviews which I carried out myself or were carried out by my own invaluable helper, Ian Smart. They bring Rowntree back to life as a person. Sadly I had never met him myself except when I received an essay prize of £1 from him while a boy of ten.

I do not wish an autobiographical element to intrude too much into this lecture. That is almost enough of it. Nor do I want to repeat all over again, even if in different form, what I wrote in my book. I do intend, however, to turn back to the transcripts of the interviews which are the main sources now, primary sources, if you like, of this lecture. What do they tell us about Rowntree as a person? Some of the people I interviewed - two, in particular - did not like him. Even they, however, stressed how hard he worked - even in his last years he observed a six-day working week - and how willing he was to listen to people without pontificating. He was patient and forbearing. His religious views were not obtrusive. He rarely mentioned God. All the people I interviewed stressed too how practical he was, hard-headed and down-to-earth. Any scheme he proposed, Sir Robert Hyde, founder of the Industrial Welfare Society, stated had to justify itself 'by more than moral virtue: it had to work and pay dividends'.

Nonetheless, Rowntree was not a reliable judge of character and he was easily duped. For those who did not like him it was manifest that he often duped himself. One of the people who duped him, Trebitsch Lincoln, international spy and later Buddhist Abbott, has his place in what Hugh Trevor-Roper, an authority on the subject, has called the 'rogues' gallery of history'. Lincoln has had an admirable American biography devoted to him, Bernard Wasserstein's *The Secret Lives of Trebitsch Lincoln* (1988) which places Rowntree's connection with him in proper perspective. Rowntree employed him as Secretary (salary paid in advance) from early 1906 until August 1909 with the initial task of investigating temperance policies and land systems in Holland, Belgium, Denmark and Germany. Yet he travelled with a remit not from Seebohm but from Joseph Rowntree. He also taught in York's Adult School. As Seebohm stated later in 1916, when Lincoln's war-time activities were under close scrutiny, he (Lincoln) 'handled large amounts of money for me virtually without control'. It was Rowntree who secured him

access to the European facilities of the Foreign Office which he quickly exploited to the point of scandal. The main book which he helped Rowntree to produce - *Land and Labour, Lessons from Belgium* (1911) - is very different in style from *Poverty*. Yet although Lloyd George is said to have waved *Poverty* from the platform it was *Land and Labour*, a study of rural, not of urban, life that brought Rowntree and Lloyd George into close touch with each other. By then Lincoln, still a Hungarian, not a British citizen, had become Liberal MP for Darlington at the election of January 1910, with powerful Rowntree support exercised through the local newspaper, the *Darlington Echo*. It was not just Rowntree Trust support, however, that propelled him into politics, for Winston Churchill, then Lloyd George's ally, sent Lincoln a message wishing him 'success in the fine fight you are making for Free Trade, Land Reform and Popular Government'. Within a year Lincoln was declared a bankrupt at the Station Hotel in York (shades of George Hudson) with Seebohm among the creditors.

It is difficult to resist this story. And Seebohm could not. He prided himself on his sense of humour and was annoyed when the writer of a 1950s *Observer* profile on him did not refer to it. Humour was one of the main themes in the evidence provided by Colonel Lyndall Urwick, pioneer of 'scientific management' whom Seebohm attracted to the Cocoa Works in 1922 but could not hold there. (He wanted to become a Director.) The first job he was offered at York, which he turned down, was that of Head of a new Psychological Department. Sociology was not the only social science to tempt Seebohm. He was something of a psychologist himself. 'He was very sensitive to any tension in a meeting', Urwick reported, 'and would often save awkward situations by breaking in to tell some amusing but totally irrelevant story.'

The interviews bring Rowntree back to life as a person more than profiles of him. They also bring back to life the people I interviewed, many of them now dead. Unfortunately their memories did not stretch back to the writing of *Poverty* - Urwick did not seem to have heard of it - but people like Bruno Lasker, an able and invaluable private secretary - and much more - in the years before 1914 and co-author with Rowntree of *Unemployment, A Social Study* in 1911, or Mrs Stuart, the widow of Frank Stuart, if possible an even more able and invaluable helper and ally - far more than an assistant - were asked specifically what Rowntree himself remembered about the writing of *Poverty*. What they reported was invaluable.

One of the two people who did not like him was Jimmy Mallon of Toynbee Hall whom I knew quite independently and about whom I was to write later in a study of Toynbee Hall and the East End. Appropriately he was

interviewed not at the Hall but at the Reform Club. According to him the person who duped Rowntree most was Lloyd George. He was taken in, Mallon claimed, by Lloyd George's panache. This I thought - and still think - was a grossly over-simplified judgement on a complex relationship, the kind of relationship between researcher and politician (and industrialist and politician) that Booth never 'enjoyed'. Rowntree was not an outstanding speaker, Mallon went on, 'his delivery was boring and uninspiring, though he had the ability to expound a complicated problem extremely clearly - 'an ability which Lloyd George signally lacked'.

I was surprised by this comparison, and got a quite different impression of Seebohm's gifts from Mrs Stuart, for example, living near High Wycombe, who started working at the Homestead in 1919 seven years after her husband had joined Rowntree there. She quoted an American friend - and Seebohm had many of these whom I met - 'The radiance of his life and friendship will long sustain us'. Mrs Stuart, like Frank, started work at 8.30 am - she made a point of arriving at 8.15 - and was in regular communication with his business secretary in the Cocoa Works. Seebohm, she recalled, 'dictated' notes beautifully. He liked a tidy desk - and all papers cleared away and filed. Unfortunately, as I have already mentioned, he destroyed as many as he could - and, in particular, those relating to the first *Poverty* survey - when he moved south from York.

Seebohm's wife, Lydia, whom Mrs Stuart liked and Mallon disliked intensely - Urwick did not like her either - called the two secretaries Rowntree's 'white slaves'. She was never a slave herself. Very different from himself, she introduced an element of tension into his life which led some, but not all of the people who knew him, to conclude that it was his family circumstances - and, above all, later on, problems with his own children - that made him such a committed student of society. I was not writing a biography in 1961 or I would have been forced to investigate this and other private relationships in greater depth, but I do not believe that such relationships accounted for the genesis of *Poverty.*

In addition to the transcripts of the interviews, which provided a variety of interpretation of that genesis, all after the event, I also had at my disposal a direct exchange of letters in 1952, less informative, between Rowntree and D. Caradog Jones who had been asked to write an article on *Poverty* for a 'little journal' published by the Industrial and Social Order Council of the Society of Friends to which he belonged. He had also just reviewed for the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* Rowntree's third *Poverty* survey of 1951 with Lavers as a co-author. Jones asked Seebohm specifically 'what led you in the first

place to make your original survey? Had you been inspired by Charles Booth's example? Had you met him before you made your own plans? Or were you simply concerned about the state of the poor in your own city?' 'Forgive me for troubling you', he concluded, but in common with many other members of the Society of Friends, I should welcome some light on the early history of the great undertaking.'

'If I were to reply in detail to your letter', Rowntree replied, 'then I should be practically writing the article you have been asked to write.' Nonetheless, he did give him a few particulars, significantly, perhaps, not mentioning the Society of Friends once:

> I have always felt great sympathy with working people. I taught in an Adult School in York for about 20 years and visited my scholars in their homes and thus got to know the conditions under which they lived. When I was about 28 years old [Seebohm was born in 1871] I read Booth's *Life and Labour of the London People*, and it made a profound impression upon me, as it did upon the public generally in this and other countries, but I thought to myself, "Well, one knows there is a great deal of poverty in the East End of London, but I wonder whether there is in provincial cities", and I determined that I would make a social survey in York. I was, of course, able to do it in very much greater detail than Booth could. I got investigators to visit every working-class house in York. There were rather more than 11,000 of them [the houses]. They never made enquiries as to what people were earning but they got full particulars with regard to rent paid, the housing conditions, the number and ages and relationship of the people living in each house, etc. Booth, in his book, spoke of the working people as being fairly well off, poor, very poor, but he didn't define poverty in scientific terms.
>
> The whole science of nutrition was in a very elementary state then, but I got the best information that was available. I [also] got a good deal of information from Professor Attwater in the United States who had made a study of the subject, and I got two or three medical men in this country to help me. ... Furnished with this information, my next task was to fix upon a diet which would supply families of different sizes with the necessary nutriment. This could, of course, be supplied in an infinite number of different ways. I decided to base my poverty line upon a dietary which supplied the necessary nutrient but which was more austere than that provided in workhouses and prisons. I did this because I didn't want people to say. "Rowntree's crying for the moon."
>
> When my book was published - I think it was in 1901 - it created a great impression in England, and the principles which I adopted in fixing my poverty

line have been adopted in all social surveys since.

Seebohm stressed one other point about the interviewing methodology.

> I never asked any of the house owners called upon what were the wages of the wage earner. My investigators visited the houses mostly in the daytime and only saw the women. Many of these wouldn't know what their husbands were earning, they only knew what portion of their wages they gave to them, and even if they had known they would not have told me. My figures with regard to the earnings of the different wage-earners were based upon information supplied to me by employers. In our own factory, of course, I got mathematically accurate figures and I also got accurate figures with regard to a certain number of people working elsewhere, but for the most part I had to satisfy myself with getting information with regard to the standard rate for different kinds of jobs. For instance, bricklayers, bricklayers' labourers, different grades of men working on the Railway, painters, plumbers, and so on.

This was very much the official version, and it was concluded with two paragraphs not about the genesis of *Poverty* but about the later surveys.

> In my second social survey of York, made in 1936, I followed the same principles but was able to get fuller information with regard to wages, and by that time Vitamins had been discovered and I had to take cognizance of this when fixing my poverty line.
>
> In my third social survey of York in 1950, made in collaboration with my chief assistant Commander Lavers, we dealt with economic questions only. In the two previous surveys I had dealt with the way in which people spend their leisure - public houses, education, and so on. The 1950 survey is, I suppose, the most accurate and complete social survey that has ever been made in any country, because we got the average earnings for a period of months from the wage books of employers for more than 95 per cent of the wage earners called on.
>
> In the two previous surveys I visited every house, and when I had almost finished writing the report of my second survey, it occurred to me that I had the facts to enable me to measure the degree of inaccuracy there would be if, instead of calling upon every house, I adopted the sampling method which has been adopted in every other social survey I know of. I therefore placed all the schedules collected in my 1936 investigation into street order. I took the facts in house No.1, then house No.11, then No.21, and so on, and I showed just what was the degree of inaccuracy involved in taking a ten per cent sample

> instead of going to every house. I did the same for sample of one in 20 of the houses, one in 30, one in 40 and one in 50. This information had never been supplied before, and statisticians have found it of great value. I came to the conclusion that the inaccuracy involved in taking a ten per cent sample instead of calling upon every house was so small that it did not affect any conclusions come to, and therefore in 1950 we arranged to visit one in ten of the houses. As, however, we thought that some of the returns that we got might be incomplete or show evidence of being inaccurate, we decided to call on one in nine of the houses. Commander Lavers visited 42 of the houses that had been called upon and found that in every case the information that had been supplied was accurate.

Having gathered steam, Seebohm ended his letter to Caradog Jones less tersely than he had begun it 'if there is further information which you require, please let me know.'

Lavers, when interviewed by me, reported that Seebohm had told him that he had two main motives for writing *Poverty*. First, 'the strength of his religious background and environment, and the sincerity and depth of his religious convictions in his early years, moved him to feel that he should do something in the way of social work. Second, he had read Booth's study and had been so disgusted by its unscientific method that he felt impelled to do the same type of study of York, replacing sentiment by facts.'

This flatly contradicts not only what Seebohm said in his letter to Caradog Jones but to what is said in *Poverty* itself. Lavers did add a postscript, however. Rowntree had also told him that after he had written the first draft of the book - and he had written it entirely himself - he showed it to his father, Joseph Rowntree, who must figure prominently in any account or interpretation of his son. 'Joseph took a blue pencil and cut Seebohm's text to pieces, removing every expression of opinion and comment, and leaving only facts, saying in doing so, "Nobody is going to be interested in the opinions of a young and unknown man; give them the facts and nothing else."' Lavers added what is beyond all doubt - that Seebohm always showed a great respect for the memory of his father, but he never mentioned him as having been one of the influences that prompted him to begin his social surveys.

Why Seebohm continued the series raises questions of timing that are even more difficult to answer than any relating to the timing, particularly in relation to the second volume, of *Poverty*. Indeed, any argument about the timing of the first *Poverty* study seems to me to be unnecessary. I attach importance to the fact that in 1897 Seebohm ceased to be in charge of the chemistry operations at the Cocoa Works, when S.H. Davies took them over from him and when he

moved over to the production side in the Gums Department. This gave him more time. Business routines influenced research. They can never be left out of the Seebohm story, even after William Wallace had taken over as Secretary of Rowntree and Company, becoming a Director in 1931 and Chairman in 1952. There is an interesting story in that relationship which I could and would now tell in far more detail than I did in 1961. It bore on the issue of cooperation with Lloyd George, but it was 'unemployment', not poverty which was the key issue. There was a further issue too which is now topical - the 'subsistence wage'. To follow that through would require a lecture in itself.

The new appointment of 1897 coincided with the conversion of Rowntree's into a limited liability company, and Seebohm now became one of a new Board of Directors, all of whom except his father Joseph were under the age of thirty. In the same year he married Lydia Potter, to whom he was faithful for the rest of her life but who went her own ways.

I wish that I had been able to interview some of the people whom Dennis Chapman, an academic sociologist, met in the 1930s. I was able, however, to interview him. He worked with Seebohm from September 1935 to 1936, and he could fall back on his own memory in talking of the timing of the second *Poverty* book in 1936 and not on Seebohm's recollections. He noted that by the mid-1930s that Seebohm sometimes described himself as a sociologist - there were not many people in Britain who then did, certainly not in universities - and that in 1935 he had approached London School of Economics to find a field worker to assist him. When Chapman heard this he decided to apply, not knowing Seebohm had already appointed an assistant, Arthur Miller. Seebohm was impressed by Chapman, however, and offered him a post also.

When he reached York he found to his surprise that the bulk of the schedules for individual households had already been completed by field investigators, not clearly identified, under the direction not of a sociologist, but of Frank Stuart, a link with the past. Chapman was asked to do a study of leisure, therefore - not then a favourite subject of research - and Miller a church census. The work was carried out in the Homestead. Seebohm sat in the smaller of two library rooms, Stuart, Chapman and Miller in the larger. According to Chapman, Seebohm seldom worked together with them. They had only three 'conferences', although these were long and uninterrupted. They started work at 8.30 am, and Seebohm would join them if he were in York, but he would stay for only 20 minutes or for half an hour.

He read all the field reports in the evenings, however, as soon as they were written, and he subjected them all to detailed and highly effective criticism. Chapman also found him 'most useful when he made suggestions for field

work'. 'He drew freely on the experience he had gained in connection with his first survey, and was particularly good at suggesting the best way of handling a particular problem.'

When asked to recall what Seebohm had said specifically about the first survey, Chapman replied that Seebohm had told him that he had been influenced by the work done by his father and Arthur Sherwell on the drink problem (this being revealed in the chapters relating to drink in *Poverty*) and also by a Sherwell survey of living conditions in Soho. Indeed Sherwell figured more significantly in the background of *Poverty* than Booth. This reading and Seebohm's work in the Adult Schools of York (he had kept notes) had given him an interest in social conditions, and his own natural bent, coupled with his training in chemistry at Owen's College, Manchester, had made him want to apply principles of scientific analysis to the study of working-class lives. Moreover, he was interested also as an industrialist. He realised fully the importance of 'the labour factor' in determining 'the prosperity and well-being of industry', and that the physical efficiency of the workers was something to be sought on economic grounds. He was fully familiar with the idea of treating labour as a factor of production.

Chapman may well have been moving the Rowntree of the pre-1914 years back into the late 1890s. There are also problems about his version of the timing. Sherwell's *The Temperance Problem and Social Reform* did not appear until 1899, although Rowntree knew about it through talks with his father and Sherwell while it was being written. It was a highly successful book which sold 90,000 copies and went through ten editions. There was certainly a Sherwell connection, and Seebohm worked with him during the First World War while serving on a Committee of Fourteen dealing with reconstruction. They drafted a report for a housing panel dealing with 'the adequate provision of recreation for workers in both town and rural districts'.

At this point I would like to make what may seem to be a digression. When I wrote my book on Rowntree I was already interested in towns and cities and I was planning my book on *Victorian Cities* to follow up *Victorian People*. While I was Professor at Leeds University at a time I am glad that I lived in Leeds for six years, although when I moved north from Oxford to Leeds in 1955 my wife and I contemplated living not in Leeds but in York, but we quickly realised that, as far as we were concerned that would have been a mistake. Leeds was still very much a Victorian industrial city and I came to look at York from a Leeds - and not from an Oxford - vantage point. It was of special importance to me that part of the title of the book we are considering today is *A Study of Town Life*, and I recall that I was almost as much interested