

# GLOBAL INEQUALITY AND POVERTY SINCE 1800

---

## EVIDENCE, ANALYSIS AND DATA SOURCES

Conference Centre, Bramber House, University of Sussex 27/8 September 2013.

### FRIDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER

---

12 noon *Arrival and lunch*

#### SESSION 1

---

1.15 pm **Bernard Harris** (Strathclyde)  
*Food for Thought: Comparing Estimates of Food Availability in the UK, 1700-1914.*

2.00 pm **Alexander Moradi** (Sussex)  
*Heights and Development in a Cash-Crop Colony: Living Standards in Ghana, 1870-1980.*

2.45 pm **Christopher Minns** (LSE)  
*Poverty and Progress among Canadian Immigrants, 1911-1931.*

3.30 pm *Tea*

#### SESSION 2

---

4.00 pm **Sonja Fagernas** (Sussex)  
*Papers, Please! The Effect of Birth Registration on Child Labour and Education in Early 20th Century USA.*

4.45 pm **Peter Scott, James Walker** and **Peter Miskell** (Reading)  
*British Working Class Household Composition, Labour Supply and Commercial Leisure Participation in the 1930s.*

5.30 pm *Close*

---

8.00 pm *Dinner at Jury's Inn, near Brighton Station.*

---

# GLOBAL INEQUALITY AND POVERTY SINCE 1800

---

## EVIDENCE, ANALYSIS AND DATA SOURCES

Conference Centre, Bramber House, University of Sussex 27/8 September 2013.

### SATURDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER

---

9.00 am      *Coffee*

#### SESSION 3

---

9.15 am      **Andrew Newell** (Sussex)  
*International Living Standards Comparisons in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.*

10.00 am     **Eric Schneider** (Sussex)  
*Real Wages and the Household: Quantifying the Economy of Makeshifts of the Poor in Eighteenth-Century England.*

10.45 am     *Coffee*

#### SESSION 4    **The 1953/4 Household Expenditure Survey**

---

11.15 am     **Andrew Payne** (The National Archives)  
*The Teacher-Scholar Scheme.*

11.45 am     **Mark Dunton** (The National Archives)  
*Public Cooperation with the Household Expenditure Survey, 1953-54.*

12.15 pm     **Ian Gazeley** (Sussex)  
*The Poor and the Poorest, Fifty Year On.*

---

1.00 pm      *Close and buffet lunch*

---

## Abstracts

---

**Bernard Harris** (Strathclyde)

*Food for Thought: Comparing Estimates of Food Availability in the UK, 1700-1914.*

The production of different estimates of food availability in the UK during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is currently booming. In *The changing body*, Floud *et al.* argued that food availability increased slowly during the period 1700-1850, but that the total amount of food available was still insufficient to ensure that all members of the population were adequately fed before this date. However, this interpretation has been challenged on a number of fronts. In *Food, energy and the creation of industriousness*, Muldrew claimed that England really was 'awash with calories' before 1770, but that the amount of food which was available for human consumption fell after that date. Meanwhile, Broadberry *et al.* have attempted to estimate food availability from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and both Meredith and Oxley, and Kelly and O'Grada, have attempted to reconcile Floud *et al.*'s figures with Muldrew's. Meredith and Oxley also take the debate further by seeking to reconcile their revised food estimates with an alternative series of height data.

This presentation will attempt to survey the current state of this debate and explore the extent to which Floud *et al.*'s original estimates can be sustained. Although the debate may appear rather arcane, the issues which it covers are central to our understanding of the history of population living standards in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and to our understanding of the links between food and health from the early-eighteenth century onwards.

**Eric Schneider** (Sussex)

*Real Wages and the Household: Quantifying the Economy of Makeshifts of the Poor in Eighteenth-Century England.*

Poor households in eighteenth-century England used a number of strategies to combat poverty and increase their income formally in the labour market and informally outside it. These strategies included sending women and children into the labour market, allocating resources unequally within the household, self-provisioning on garden plots of land, appealing to the poor law for aid, and expanding the number of days worked by household members. These strategies constituted an economy of makeshifts, which allowed the poor to at least scrape by and even reach respectable levels of consumption for the period. While social and economic historians have studied these individual strategies for eighteenth-century England, few historians have been able to integrate them all to determine how these strategies influenced the income of the average family and how large a gap had to be filled by the economy of makeshifts for the poor to reach target consumption levels. This paper seeks to integrate these strategies in such a way.

In a previous paper, I created a model that predicts welfare ratios (real wages) for families of agricultural labourers and building labourers over the family life cycle. In this paper, the

model is expanded to incorporate women and children's labour force participation and the unequal distribution of resources within the household. I then use Monte Carlo simulation to predict a distribution of 30,000 realistic families and their corresponding welfare ratios for the period 1750-1800. Using the predicted distributions, I measure the influence of women and children's labour force participation and unequal household distribution on the family's welfare ratios and their implied information about the availability of energy for work. Finally, for each level of women and children's labour force participation and each household resource distribution assumption, I calculate the level of self-provisioning, poor law support, or additional days of work necessary for the family to reach a certain target consumption level.

The results suggest that at the median welfare ratio in the life cycle, agricultural labourers' families could get by at a low consumption level through either self-provisioning or working a few more days. However, at the minimum welfare ratio in the life cycle, this was much more difficult, and the poor law likely had to play a strong role in keeping these families afloat. Women and children's labour force participation increased the average family welfare ratios by 31 to 48 per cent depending on the specification used, and could even put agricultural labourer families within stabbing distance of Allen's respectability level of consumption. However, even with women and children's labour force participation, families still struggled to make ends meet at the low point in the welfare ratio curve. Thus, the results highlight the precarious position of agricultural labourers in the late eighteenth century, the importance of women and children's labour participation in keeping poor families afloat, and the importance of life-cycle poverty, which is ignored when real wages are only measured for the average family at the average point in the life cycle.

**Peter Scott, James Walker and Peter Miskell** (Henley Business School, University of Reading)  
*British Working Class Household Composition, Labour Supply, and Commercial Leisure Participation in the 1930s.*

The late 1930s can be seen as the heyday of the 'breadwinner-homemaker' household model, with a high degree of functional specialisation between paid and domestic work according to age, gender, and marital status. This paper examines resource allocation processes within British working-class households during the late 1930s, via an analysis of leisure expenditures. Using a database compiled from over 600 returns to the Ministry of Labour's 1937/38 working-class expenditure survey, we examine participation rates for a detailed set of commercial leisure activities.

Leisure spending is particularly salient to debates regarding inter-household resource allocation and power imbalances, as it constitutes one of the most highly prioritised areas of individualised, discretionary, consumer expenditure – especially for young, single, people. Yet, while there is a substantial literature on working-class leisure, there has been very little research from the household perspective. We examine the impacts on household leisure participation of factors such as household composition (in terms of age, gender, and employment status); family life-cycle effects; and urbanisation (as rural households would have restricted access to urban leisure venues).

We find that the employment status of family members other than the male ‘breadwinner’ was a key factor influencing their access to commercial leisure. Our analysis thus shows that participation in commercialised leisure was strongly interrelated with income generation; a typical characteristic of economically successful working class households being an ability to retain juvenile and young adult wage-earners and thus expand labour market participation beyond the “breadwinner”. Wives’ participation in paid work is also shown to have an important impact on their access to commercial leisure.

**Sonja Fagernas** (Sussex)

*Papers, Please! The Effect of Birth Registration on Child Labour and Education in Early 20th Century USA.*

A birth certificate establishes a child's legal identity and age, but few quantitative estimates of the significance of birth registration exist. Birth registration laws were enacted by U.S. states in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Using 1910-1930 census data, this study finds that minimum working age legislation was twice as effective in reducing under-aged employment if children were born with a birth registration law, with positive implications for school attendance. Registration laws also improved the enforcement of schooling laws somewhat, but the connection is weaker. The long-term effect of registration laws was to increase educational attainment by 0.06-0.1 years.

**Andrew Newell** (Sussex)

*International Living Standards Comparisons in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.*

Between 1905 and 1909 the Labour Department of the Board of Trade conducted a sequence of studies of living standards in the industrial centres of five advanced manufacturing countries: Belgium, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Their purpose was to inform the on-going Tariff Reform debate. Our purpose is to extend the work started by these pioneers. In particular we estimate the parameters of distributions of income, household size and income per capita from the tabled data in the reports and we thereby estimate measures of poverty and inequality among the underlying populations. We shall also report our estimates of the cost of living and the standard of living in the cities surveyed, a group that stretches from Königsberg, now Kaliningrad, in the East to Memphis, Tennessee in the West, spanning an important section of the industrialised world.

**Mark Dunton** (Principal Contemporary Specialist, The National Archives)

*Public Cooperation with the Household Expenditure Survey, 1953-54.*

The Household Expenditure Enquiry of 1953-54 was the first large-scale enquiry into household expenditure and income in the United Kingdom since the Family Budget Enquiry made in 1937-1938 for the purpose of revising the cost of living index. It was intended to cover 20,000 household addresses across the UK, selected by scientific sampling, and every household found to be living at these addresses was visited by local officials and asked to provide records of its spending during a period of three consecutive weeks, using special

forms. Households were asked (with cash incentives) to provide details of their expenditure in all areas: housing, fuel and light, food, clothing, household goods, vehicles and transport, services and other categories.

Most twenty-first century Britons would regard this as an unacceptable intrusion into personal life. But in July 1954 the Ministry of Labour and National Service (MLNS) proudly proclaimed that public cooperation with the survey had 'exceeded our most optimistic hopes'.

This paper will draw on detailed analysis, produced by the MLNS, of the public response to the survey (located in LAB files held by The National Archives), to explore questions such as: how compliant were members of the public? Were there complaints about government intrusion, and what do the survey results tell us about attitudes to the 'man from the ministry', in the post-war era when resentment about government regulations and controls was beginning to build? Were there differences in the level of cooperation between different social classes, and the different regions of the UK? Did attitudes vary significantly depending on age and gender? Did certain sensitive areas of questioning meet with refusals?

The paper aims to provide context to help us understand the Household Expenditure returns which, in terms of access to data, have been fully opened up to researchers for the first time thanks to the British Living Standards Project.