

Prof Martin Bulmer to Rebecca Abrams (26 Sep 1994)

September 26, 1994

Ms Rebecca Abrams
Research Student
Nuffield College
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Dear Rebecca (if I may),

I was greatly saddened to hear today of your grandfather's death. He made a signally important contribution to post-war social research in Britain, being associated with many notable studies and with important developments like the SSRC Survey Unit in the 1970s. My personal favourite of the studies he was instrumental in having carried out is Bill Daniel's PEP study of **Racial Discrimination in England** (1966). This study revealed for the first time systematically the extent of racial prejudice and discrimination in an incontrovertible way, had an important influence on the passing of the first Race Relations Act in this country, and was a model of applied social research.

The last occasion on which I met him face to face, though we talked occasionally on the phone after that, was in 1989 when Dr Kevin Bales, Professor Kitty Sklar and I organised a conference on the history of the social survey, at the final session of which Mark came and talked about survey research in the 1930s and 1940s, giving living testimony about matters which in other papers we were treating as past history. His vigour and interest in his mid-80s was quite remarkable. We had a very stimulating discussion, and Kevin Bales subsequently visited Mark in Brighton to talk about the papers which he had retained from his working life.

It is this in part which prompts me to write now. It is not the best time to raise the matter, and I apologise for doing so, but as a historian of the social sciences and social research it is very important that Mark's papers as a social researcher should be appropriately preserved. If he has not already made appropriate prior or testamentary arrangements for this to be done, might I be so bold to suggest that at an appropriate point in time members of the family could consider how best to do this? Kevin Bales recalls seeing almost a garage-full of papers from Mark's working life, and there must be a great deal of material there of real historical interest.

My suggestion would be that the family might consider depositing this material as a whole, subject to the usual safeguards, with one of two major libraries who would be in a position to hold it and care for it in perpetuity. The Special Collections Department of the British Library of Political and Economic Science at the London School of Economics, of which Mark was of course an alumnus, holds important collections in the history of the social sciences and social research, including many of the Charles Booth research materials, and they would be worth approaching. Dr Angela Raspin is the Archivist there (BLPES, 10 Portugal Street, London WC2A 2AE, tel 071 955 7947.). Alternatively and nearer home, the University of Sussex has an archival department, which holds the papers of Mass-Observation, an early social research enterprise which later became a market research firm. My contact there is Professor Jennifer Platt, Professor of Sociology and Dean of Graduate Studies, who is keenly interested in the history of the social sciences, was a participant in the 1989 conference, and has been asking me ever since what steps had been taken to make sure that Mark's papers are preserved for the future. (Her address is School of Social Sciences, University of Sussex, Arts E, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9QN Tel 0273 606755 ext 2446). I hope you will not mind my raising the

matter, since I think it is of such importance that these papers are preserved.

I had a phone message from the **Independent** but they were also in touch with Michael Warren at the Market Research Society and have asked him to write to something. I told them that I thought this very appropriate, since Michael can both speak for and reflect the views of the profession, and since he knew and worked with Mark strike the right personal note. In the course of coming up with the names I spoke with several people, Roger Jowell, Jennifer Platt and John Hall among them, who both spoke with appreciation of Mark's life and work and expressed sadness at the passing of a notable British social scientist and social researcher, a sentiment which I share.

Yours sincerely

Martin Bulmer
Professor of Sociology.

(University of Southampton)