

# Scrounging in Northern Ireland: The Beginnings of an Investigation

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*Précis:* This is a report of a cross-sectional survey carried out in Antrim on the registered unemployed to test some aspects of the "scrounger" hypothesis. A brief literature review reveals a lack of empirical evidence on this subject for Northern Ireland and examines some of the assumptions that underpin the major British studies. Two indicators of work shyness are examined for Antrim: the proportion of the unemployed that left their last jobs voluntarily and the minimum income that respondents would accept to work. The results indicate that the extent of malingering amongst the target population does not justify the current attitude of suspicion that pervades the administration of social security services.

## I INTRODUCTION

Little empirical evidence is available on the subject of social security scrounging in Northern Ireland (NI). The major British studies use official statistics or draw their samples from populations that are relevant only to Great Britain. Apart from the 1976 cohort survey carried out by the Department of Manpower Services (DMS) (NI), the final report of which has not yet been published, little local research has been carried out in this area. In Feb-

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ruary 1981, therefore, a four part cross-sectional survey of the unemployed registered at Antrim was undertaken, the aim of one part being to investigate some aspects of the scrounger hypothesis. All of the registered unemployed in Antrim were sampled but the main target of the study was the adult male population.

Antrim was the smallest town recommended by the Matthew Report (1963) as an area that might be expanded to relieve the pressure of urban development on Belfast and was designated a new town area in the context of the New Towns Act (NI) of 1965. Increased industrial development and house building, and advertisement and resettlement grants provided by the Department of the Environment between 1971 and 1977 have contributed to a rise in population from 3,000 in 1961 to a present (1981) estimate of 25,000. Antrim, in terms of unemployment in NI is an "average" town, its unemployment rate until recently having been within a few per cent of the provincial average (at the time the survey was taken its rate was 17.5 per cent as opposed to an overall figure of 16.3 per cent) and is seldom quoted as particularly deprived or particularly affluent.

The social environment within which the survey was taken was one of a government macroeconomic policy which saw high rates of unemployment as necessary or inevitable, full employment as a principal aim of social policy having been long abandoned, and, on the other hand, an official attitude towards the social security services characterised by financial cuts and suspicion of widespread fraud and malingering on the part of claimants of social benefit.

Antrim has had experience of the effects of the former policy culminating, after the survey was taken, in the shedding of about 1000, mostly male, jobs by British Enkalon (by far the major manufacturing employer in the area). Northern Ireland generally has experienced the effects of the latter policy, provoking a submission from the Northern Ireland Poverty Lobby (July, 1981) to the Minister of State for Health and Social Services alleging that new regulations governing the supplementary benefit system were harsher than previous provisions, that they had "promoted a new harsher attitude generally in the administration of the supplementary benefit scheme" and that there were "endless muckups, mistakes and delays."

Peter Moore (1981, p. 138) having gained access to "Fraud Investigator's Guide" and other internal papers of the DHSS in Britain had expressed concern that the new regulations announced early in 1980 would not involve, as was initially implied, a simple change in emphasis rather than a fundamental policy change. He claimed that a new attitude towards fraud had emerged which was to seek out rather than react to suspicion of fraud and, rather than prosecute in cases where it was suspected, to discourage it from taking place. Such an attitude must be reflected in those dealing with claimants and

expose many genuine cases to the difficulties outlined by the Northern Ireland Poverty Lobby.

### *The Scrounger Campaign*

The political acceptability of these measures undoubtedly owes much to the scrounger campaign that was carried on in the popular press during the latter half of the 1970s. Alan Deacon (1978, p. 120) identified two inter-related strains in this campaign. First, the more strident aspects characterised by sensational reports in the popular press of incidents of a life of luxury on the dole which in essence allege that abuse is rife and social benefits are over-generous and suggest tighter administration and reduction in the level of benefits. This he distinguishes from the second strain carried on in a lower key, a more general concern for the disincentive effects of a narrow gap between the levels of social benefit and of income while in work. The Antrim study was mostly directed towards the latter.

Scrounger campaigns are not new. Metcalf (1980 (b)) traces their history from the "sturdy beggars" of the Poor Law Legislation of the 1830s through the depression of 100 years later to the present time. Deacon (1978) seeking an explanation for their periodic occurrence observes that they seem to coincide with periods of high unemployment, a view confirmed by Showler and Sinfield (1980, p. 216) "The responsibility of the unemployed for their own misfortune . . . seems to be a view that has gained most credence, ironically, as unemployment has risen and more families have had the experience of at least one of their members being out of work." It is significant that during the two earlier periods that produced scrounger campaigns, the 1830s and 1930s, the makers of social policy were faced with the palpable social evil of mass unemployment without an adequate economic theory to explain or eradicate it. A similar situation prevails at present. Sinfield (1981 pp. 4, 5) contrasted current attitudes towards unemployment with those of the 1960s: ". . . it was confidently believed by many people that full employment was established, apart from the occasional hiccup as in the winter of 1962-63, or the occasional pocket of local unemployment. Any value that there was in my research would be in its contribution to social history rather than to the analysis and making of contemporary social policy."

Since then the policy prescription derived from Keynesian economic theory of trading off small increases in inflation for the maintenance of full employment has become ineffective as both inflation and unemployment began to rise together. Current government policy sees inflation as the major evil and attempts at its control have further contributed to the rise of unemployment to levels that must look to the 1930s for precedents. As in the past attempts have been made to lay the blame for this increasingly widespread social deprivation at the door of the victim. The scrounger campaign

was one manifestation of this blame-the-victim tendency and although it has abated somewhat in recent years it has been replaced by another facet of this tendency which is to blame those in work for excessive wage demands. This argument is firmly based in the theories of orthodox economics which sees wage rates and marginal productivity tending to equate in the labour market. Since, the argument continues, most firms operate under conditions of decreasing marginal productivity, an increase in real wages will cause employment to be cut back to re-equate these two variables.

Those who sell their labour may, therefore, be seen as charged with sloth when unemployed and greed when in work. Such charges warrant investigation.

## II TESTING THE SCROUNGER HYPOTHESIS

“Work-shyness”, “scrounging” and “disincentives” are complex concepts which defy rigorous definition. Investigators therefore tend to choose one measurable aspect of these concepts for use as an indicator. One approach used by the popular press was to take an extreme case, usually a married man with a large family, and imply that his income was typical of all those in receipt of social benefit. This approach was heavily criticised by Atkinson and Flemming (1978). Another popular approach is the uncritical acceptance of certain official statistics which are readily available and, therefore, attractive to newspaper editors. An example of these are the figures for those of the unemployed who left their last jobs voluntarily. The Antrim study examined these figures.

More serious studies sought more searching indicators. Two approaches that gave evidence on the scrounger problem can be identified. First, there was a group of studies using survey techniques, employing questionnaires to gather primary data from the unemployed and from the employees of the social services. Secondly, there were studies using secondary data – mostly official statistics – carried out, in the main, by economists.

### *Survey Studies*

Northern Ireland has been largely ignored by both types of investigation. However, a major cohort study was set up by the DMS (NI) in 1976 to investigate the characteristics of the adult male long-term unemployed. Its sample was made up of all the adult males who joined the register between 19th January 1976 and 12th March 1976, and their work history was followed for one year, i.e., until March 1977. Two dependent variables were investigated, the duration of the first spell of unemployment and employment status at the end of the period. The final report of this study is still pending. An interim report was published in 1979. All of the methodological

difficulties had not been surmounted and it was eventually forced to the depressing conclusion that the often complex statistical technique employed resulted in no better prediction of the dependent variables than the opinions of Employment Service Offices (ESO) clerks. However, it placed the influence of total initial social benefit in third position, after age and total duration of unemployment, during the previous three years.

Major British survey studies were those of Hill *et al.*, (1973), Daniel (1974) and Daniel and Stilgoe (1977). Hill's study based on the unemployed of three towns, Hammersmith, Coventry and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, investigated two sets of hypotheses, the second of which was concerned with motivation and morale. He noted that the disincentive effect of social benefit affected workers who were normally in the lower wage brackets when employed and that they also shared a number of characteristics which would make them less attractive to employers, e.g., they were elderly, unfit and unskilled. He concluded that there "seemed to be no evidence from this survey to substantiate the view that many men remain unemployed because it is more lucrative than working" and "it cannot be conclusively proved that longer periods of unemployment are due to high unemployment income rather than the possession of characteristics such as a low level of skill" (p. 130).

Daniel's first study (1974) based on a national (Great Britain) sample used similar techniques to those of Hill and separated out some important relationships on voluntary unemployment with his questions concerning the importance the respondent attached to finding a new job. Twenty two per cent replied that they were explicitly uninterested in or attached little importance to doing so. However, Daniel did not conclude that 22 per cent were voluntary unemployed (the unemployment rate was then 4 per cent) for they included workers who had given up hope of re-employment and were effectively retired early, the chronically sick and disabled and women who had left their jobs for domestic reasons. He concluded, rather, that the respondents' rating of importance attached to re-employment reflected the real chance of its occurring, while lack of motivation to work reflected reconciliation to lack of opportunity to do so. On the effect of social benefit he observed that those on least benefit, the young and the old, were least concerned with re-employment, while workers were prepared to accept jobs at lower wages than their previous jobs, they were prepared to lose status and social benefit had little or no effect on this. But "at the same time it was clear that the level of benefit received did influence the sum which those still out of work said was the minimum for which they were prepared to work, particularly amongst the lower paid" (Daniel, 1974, p. 152).

Though it did not set out to do so the follow-up study of Daniel and Stilgoe (1977) focused attention on the effect of social benefit on the

unemployed of the middle age group. This occurred because of the emergence of evidence of the existence of a strong relationship between family circumstances and the duration of unemployment and between the working behaviour of men and the working behaviour of their wives. First, a strong direct relationship was discovered between the number of children a man had and the duration of unemployment and a similarly strong relationship between the number of children and the level of wages while in work. When occupational and personal variables were accounted for the relationship remained, the first of which suggested that the more children a man had the weaker was his bargaining power in the market while the second suggested that a reason for this weakness was that his asking price was too high. Consistent with this was the emergence of a relationship between minimum pay required and the level of social security benefit. Secondly, the relationship between the work behaviour of man and wife implied that contrary to expectations, man and wife moved in and out of work together rather than alternatively. The explanation suggested was that when a man becomes unemployed the restrictions placed on the earnings of his wife which will not affect the amount of social benefit he receives may make their joint income little different from that if the wife ceased to work, particularly if the wife is amongst the low paid. This implies a "knock-on" effect of social benefit where the benefit received by the husband is a disincentive to work for his wife. Once again Daniel and Stilgoe are at pains to stress that the disincentive effect is on the low paid and "is relevant only to these social categories and not to the level of employment or the supply of manpower generally" (Daniel and Stilgoe, 1977, p. 94).

The studies of Daniel (1974) and of Daniel and Stilgoe (1977) did not specifically set out to examine the disincentive problem. The conclusions mentioned above "emerged" from the examination of a wide range of variables associated with unemployment. Therefore, although they are at pains to stress the strength of the relationships that did emerge, they also claim a status for their evidence that is no higher than "circumstantial".

#### *Studies Using Secondary Data.*

More pointed studies of the disincentive problem tend to belong to this group. Examples are given by Atkinson and Flemming (1978), Cubbin and Foley (1977), Nickell (1979) and Kay *et al.*, (1980). Cubbin and Foley, using indifference curve analysis, concluded that the level and duration of unemployment could not be explained by the level of unemployment benefit. Nickell employed multiple regression analysis using the duration of unemployment as dependent variable, and concluded that social benefit had a negligible effect in the long term but that the effect of the introduction of earnings-related supplement (ERS) was to increase the unemployment rate by 10 per cent. Atkinson and Fleming examined the "extreme case" approach

of the popular press and concluded that “. . . popular views about disincentives are not well founded. It must, however, be recognised that beliefs about the financial advantages of unemployment colour the attitudes of the employed and have a disproportionate effect on policy makers. . .” (p. 8).

Kay *et al.*, (1980) were concerned with the interaction between tax and social benefit and its effect on work incentives but their main contribution to the argument advanced here comes from their doubts surrounding the use of the “replacement ratio” as a variable in the analysis of disincentives. The replacement ratio is the ratio of income from social benefit to income while in work and is widely used in research of the type described in this section. For example, Nickell uses it as a predictor variable of duration of unemployment and Atkinson and Flemming use it as a dependent variable. Atkinson and Flemming had observed different results from the use of average and marginal replacement ratios; Kay *et al.*, take the criticism a stage further: “The replacement ratio varies from individual to individual depending on household circumstances – which influence the level of benefit he can anticipate – and on the level of wages he can expect to obtain if he has a job. The replacement ratio also depends on the length of time for which an individual is unemployed. In general it is higher for short periods of unemployment than for long periods” (1980, p. 8).

This variation of replacement ratio over time is germane to the “scrounger” argument. Since, as Kay *et al.*, (1980, p. 9) observe, “long run replacement ratios are uniformly low” scrounging cannot be an attractive long term occupation. The reasons for the variation over time in the replacement ratio lie in the considerable variation in income support available to the unemployed. For the first six months of unemployment, earnings-related supplement may bring income up to 85 per cent of income in work. From six to twelve months income falls by the amount of ERS. After twelve months unemployment benefit ceases and the unemployed person is likely then to depend on means tested supplementary benefits for support and this he is barred, as an unemployed person, from receiving at the higher scale rate. Therefore, even the 10 per cent increase in unemployment identified by Nickell as due to ERS is not made up of a permanent group since the disincentive effect of ERS ceases after six months. In any case payment of ERS is to be discontinued from April 1982.

In their references to variations from individual to individual Kay *et al.*, (op. cit.) have, perhaps, touched on a more profound criticism of the use of the replacement ratio, reaching into the area of the politico-economic assumptions that underpin these studies, an area that is by no means unproblematic.

The replacement ratio is a composite of two variables, social benefit and income while in work. To relate this ratio to the disincentive effects of the former is implicitly to assume that the latter is somehow extraneous to the

argument. This is a normative judgement which characterises the perspective of orthodox economics which sees wage levels as fundamentally determined by marginal productivity, related to the impersonal workings of the market and, therefore, essentially outside the domain of social policy. This perspective does not go unchallenged; for example Dual Market Theory and Radical Economic Theory both see the level of wages as firmly within this domain and the Antrim study was carried out in this context.

### III THE ANTRIM STUDY

The Antrim survey was based on a 20 per cent random sample of the unemployed who actually "sign on" at Antrim ESO. These include the unemployed of Antrim town and of Randalstown. Unemployed persons from Ballyclare are also registered at Antrim ESO but are serviced by a sub-office in that town. This sub-office was used to pilot the survey.

Researchers who are independent of government institutions and who wish to use the registered unemployed as a sampling frame experience difficulties of access connected with the necessity to protect the confidentiality of the records of unemployed persons. No direct access to these records is permitted. The permission of the DMS (NI) was, therefore, sought and obtained to carry out a modification of the technique employed by Daniel for his 1974 study (see "A National Survey of the Unemployed" 1974, Appendix). This technique involved the ESO clerks, acting on the instructions of the researchers, in choosing the individuals who made up the sample. The register in Antrim is organised alphabetically and the ESO clerks, with the support of their trade unions, agreed to place a leaflet in every fifth record, to be handed to the person thus chosen when he came to "sign on". This leaflet served the purposes of informing the potential respondent about the survey and of identifying him to the researchers who then approached him and asked for his co-operation. At this point the technique deviated from Daniel's model in that space was provided in the ESO for the group administration of the instrument, a 35-item questionnaire seeking information on all four parts of the study, rather than follow-up interviews in the respondent's home. This technique and the instrument were piloted at Ballyclare sub-office and found satisfactory. A 70 per cent response rate (256 cases) was obtained for the main study which proved to be slightly biased in favour of the young unemployed (i.e., those aged under 18 years) but representative in other major characteristics. Since the main target was the adult population this bias was ignored.

Two variables were examined as indicators of incentive to work. First, the proportion of the respondents who had left their last job of their "own free will" was examined as an example of easily obtained statistics that might



prove attractive to the editors of popular newspapers. Secondly, the minimum net income for which respondents said they were prepared to work was examined. It was considered that a willingness to work for low rates of pay was indicative of positive incentive to work and that the examination of this variable might also serve to test the hypothesis that the unemployed had, in effect, priced themselves out of the market.

Other variables taken were, reasons for leaving last job, sex, age, marital status, duration of unemployment, number of dependent children, net income from last job, net expected income if in work and the level of social benefit received (see Appendix).

### *The "Voluntary" Unemployed*

Forty-three per cent of those who responded to the item on voluntary unemployment said that they had left their last jobs of their "own free will", representing 29 per cent male and 66 per cent female. If these figures were taken as an indicator of work shyness then they would clearly give cause for concern. However, this group was also asked to give reasons for leaving their last job and an examination of these responses suggested a redefinition of what was "voluntary". For example one-third of the women gave "pregnancy" as their reason.

Another reason accepted as being less than voluntary was moving house to Antrim. Some had moved back to Northern Ireland from abroad while others had moved from other parts of the province because of housing conditions or in the hope of better job prospects. In the light of Antrim's status as a new town and the efforts made by government through media advertising and resettlement grants to persuade people to move there, it seemed reasonable to accept that those who left their last job to move were not motivated by work shyness.

Ill health or disability were accepted as a third such reason as were a miscellaneous group of which one woman had left to get married, another married woman because her work entailed her living away from home, two men who had accepted voluntary redundancy and one man who had left to start a business of his own which did not work out.

On the other hand, 10.1 per cent (10.6 per cent men and 9.3 per cent women) specifically stated that they had left because of dissatisfaction with pay or conditions or as a result of a dispute with management. Whereas it would be wrong to dismiss all of these as work shy, since there is no way of knowing how justified was their dissatisfaction nor how righteous was their side of the dispute, these were considered to have left for reasons related to their own personality rather than as a result of external influences. This group, therefore, together with 7.4 per cent of the respondents whose answers were difficult to categorise (some simply stated "personal reason", others,

the expense of travel or difficulty in finding accommodation, while one stated darkly "I had my reasons") were taken as providing an upper bound to the work shy in the sample, i.e., 17.5 per cent (17 per cent male, 18.6 per cent female). The above figures, summarised in Table 1, are not consistent with the claims of the scrounger campaign.

Table 1: *Reasons for leaving employment "voluntarily"*

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>% of Response</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>% of Response</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>% of Response</i>
Pregnancy	—	—	22	29.3	22	10.1
Moving house	8	5.7	10	13.3	18	8.3
Health	6	4.2	4	5.3	10	4.6
Other "external" reasons	3	2.1	2	2.7	5	2.3
Dispute or dissatisfaction	15	10.6	7	9.3	22	10.1
Other	9	6.4	7	9.3	16	7.4
	41	29.0	52	69.2	93	42.8

#### *Minimum Acceptable Income*

An implication of the scrounger hypothesis is that the unemployed receiving social benefits are discouraged by the magnitude of these from accepting jobs at "normal" rates of pay. Furthermore, the view that unemployment is largely due to unjustified high wages implies that the unemployed have, in fact, priced themselves out of the market. In order to investigate these implications the distribution of the unemployed's own estimates of their net minimum acceptable income to work a full week without overtime was examined and compared with a criterion for low pay. The estimation of this criterion presented some difficulty.

Concepts of low pay are often considered in the context of concepts of poverty. Incomes that will precipitate poverty are, however, relative to the needs of the individual and the determinants of wage rates, whether one views them as related to marginal productivity or to the exploitative nature of capitalist entrepreneurs, take no cognisance of these needs. It is, therefore, difficult to strike a single satisfactory level for low pay. Metcalf (1980a, p. 104) summarises the efforts to do so and arrives at a level that would leave a married man with two children as well off in work as he would be on supplementary benefit. From figures given by the DMS (NI) to the Fair Employment Agency in 1980 in connection with a report on the employment practices of Cookstown District Council, a rate of £50 per week take-

home pay was calculated. Levels of 120 per cent and 140 per cent of this rate were also taken and compared with the cumulative distributions of minimum acceptable income for the whole sample, for men and women and for single men and married men. The results are given in Table 2.

Table 2: *Proportions of the unemployed prepared to accept wages on or below low pay criterion*

	<i>100% low pay or less</i>	<i>120% low pay or less</i>	<i>140% low pay or less</i>
Whole sample %	51.2	64.5	75.8
Women (adult) %	81.7	95.8	95.8
Men (adult) %	25.4	40.6	59.4
Single men (adult) %	51.8	69.1	84.6
Married men %	6.2	20.0	41.2

Significant differences were found between the willingness of men and women, and also between that of single men and of married men, to accept low rates of pay, which suggested that the disincentive problem, if it exists, is concentrated, first, amongst men and, secondly, amongst married men. Since the level of social benefit received by married men is generally higher than that received by the other two groups it could be suggested that this level acts as a disincentive to work amongst this particular group. On the other hand, the argument might be advanced that the tendency of married men to hold out for higher rates of pay is a reflection of their consciousness of their family responsibilities, rather than work shyness. At this point therefore the "predictors" of minimum acceptable income were examined.

The scrounger hypothesis implies that the major cause of work shyness is a generous level of social benefit. If this hypothesis is accepted it would be expected that social benefit would emerge as the major predictor of minimum acceptable income. Step-wise multiple regression analyses were carried out with minimum acceptable income as the dependent variable. Three regressions were taken, suggested by the examination of the distributions of minimum acceptable income, a regression first for the whole sample, then for adult males and finally for married males.

The major predictor to emerge was expected income while in work which explained more than 55 per cent of the variability in minimum acceptable income. The level of social benefit explained less than an additional 4 per cent in all cases and dependent children (introduced as a dichotomous variable, i.e., whether the respondent had dependent children or not) add 0.06 per cent in the case of married men. All results were significant at the

0.05 level and an examination of the residuals suggested the acceptance of all three models as valid. Table 3 gives details of the regression equations.

Table 3: *Regressions for whole sample, adult males and married males; minimum acceptable income to work as dependent variable*

<i>Independent variable</i>	<i>BETA</i>	<i>Simple R</i>	<i>Multiple R</i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup> change</i>	<i>F for regression</i>
<i>For whole sample (232 cases)</i>						
Expected income	0.75698	0.87998	0.87998	0.77436	0.77436	466.18
Social benefit	0.20878	0.65474	0.89600	0.80282	0.02846	
<i>For adult males (142 cases)</i>						
Expected income	0.73037	0.84057	0.84057	0.70657	0.70657	187.21
Social benefit	0.22870	0.58064	0.86413	0.74673	0.04016	
<i>For married males (72 cases)</i>						
Expected income	0.66375	0.75095	0.75095	0.56392	0.56392	34.40
Social benefit	0.20088	0.47666	0.77602	0.60026	0.03834	
Dependent children	0.02783	0.31098	0.77643	0.60285	0.00059	

Expected income while in work was introduced into the analysis as a subjective estimate of the current value of income from last job. Clearly the amount given for income from last job, particularly in times of high inflation, may have little relevance to the current situation if the duration of unemployment is long. In the absence of an index that could combine income from last job and duration of unemployment to give a satisfactory estimate of the former, expected income was taken as a subjective measure. This argument was based on a strong relationship between income from last job and expected income ( $r = 0.71$ ) for the whole sample and on the findings of previous research, for example Daniel (1974, Ch. 4) and Cormack *et al.*, (1980), that suggested that the unemployed maintain close contacts with the labour market and that their estimates of expected income are therefore realistic.

Two further points should be made on the independent variables introduced into the equations. First, the variable "dependent children" was introduced as a dichotomous variable, rather than the actual number of children, for technical reasons related to the level of significance of the regression results; selecting out the married males had reduced the sample to 72 cases. Secondly, "social benefit" is the amount that is paid to claimants on a weekly basis. The approach of the investigation was to regard these weekly across-the-counter payments as a substitute for the weekly wage

packet received when in work. Other benefits were not included either because they are also available to those in work, for example, child benefit and free school meals, (indeed one benefit, the Family Income Supplement, is available only to the employed) or because their payment to the claimant is in the nature of "windfall gains", for example, single payments to expecting mothers for baby clothes, which are unlikely to have a significant influence on whether the claimant is willing to accept employment.

Finally, the strength of the relationship that emerged between "expected income" and the dependent variable gave rise to fears that the items on the questionnaire designed to measure these two variables were somehow measuring the same construct. A t-test for matched pairs was carried out on these two variables on the null hypothesis that they belonged to the same population. The null hypothesis was not accepted at the 0.05 level of significance ( $t = 14.68$ ,  $df = 246$ ).

These results suggest that minimum acceptable income is related to the respondent's view of his worth in the labour market rather than to the level of social benefit he receives, while the distributions of minimum acceptable income suggest that these estimates of worth are far from exaggerated and that the argument concerning workers pricing themselves out of the labour market is relevant, if at all, to only minor proportions of the unemployed.

#### IV CONCLUSION

The Antrim study is clearly only a beginning. It suffers from limitations of scope and method. Antrim is a new town that has experienced an almost ten-fold increase in population over the last twenty years. The findings of the Antrim study may have little relevance to the more static concentrations of population in Belfast or Derry. There is also a lack of technical evidence on the validity of two important variables in the study, minimum acceptable income and expected income while in work. There has been some validation of responses to questionnaires on income from last job (Whelan and O Muircheartaigh (1978)) but this variable has an objective source. The two variables considered here are subjective and measurement of validity has not been possible within the context of a cross-sectional study.

However, the recent, much criticised Rayner Report (1981) which recommends further financial cuts in the social services but suggests increasing resources to combat fraud and malingering and again claims that large proportions of the unemployed are unwilling to work, has aroused fears that another outburst of "scroungermania" is imminent. No recent academic study has provided evidence to substantiate these claims and Rayner's allegations of widespread work-shyness has provoked an angry response from Daniel (1981, p. 96) as "either a cynical distortion designed to exaggerate

how many of the unemployed are not looking for work, or else the investigators were so keen to give a particular impression that they allowed themselves to be misled”.

Such evidence as is available from the Antrim study supports the view that the charge of malingering is relevant only to a small minority of the registered unemployed and that its extent does not justify the diversion of increasingly scarce resources towards its eradication.

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## APPENDIX I

*Frequency Distributions of Variables**Age* (255 valid observations)

Age (years)	>18	18>25	25>55	55>
Frequency %	15.3	30.6	46.6	7.5

*Sex* (256 valid observations)

Sex	Male	Female
Frequency %	65.2	34.8

*Marital Status* (255 valid observations)

Marital Status	Married	Single	Separated/Divorced	Widowed
Frequency %	49.00	46.3	4.7	0.0

*Dependent Children* (206 valid observations)

Dependent Children	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Frequency %	47.1	22.8	11.2	8.3	5.3	3.4	1.0	0.5	0.5	0.0

*Duration of Unemployment* (256 valid observations)

Duration	>6 wks	6 wks>3mths	3>6 mths	6>9mths	9>12mths	1>2 yrs	2yrs>
Frequency %	13.3	11.7	19.5	18.7	13.7	12.9	10.2

*Reason for leaving last job* (216 valid observations)

Reason	Redundant	Sacked	Voluntary
Frequency %	45.4	12.0	42.6

## APPENDIX II

*Income variables*

£ per week	>20	20>25	25>30	30>35	35>40	40>45	45>50	50>55	55>60	60>65	65>70	70>75	75>80	80>85	85>90	90>95	95>
Social benefit frequency % (238 valid observations)	1.3	26.1	34.9	13.0	1.7	1.3	1.7	3.8	5.0	6.7	0.8	0.8	1.7	0.4	—	—	0.4
Income from last job frequency % (222 valid observations)	2.3	4.5	8.1	7.7	9.0	6.3	9.9	10.4	5.4	8.1	5.9	5.4	3.2	4.1	2.3	0.9	6.8
Expected income frequency % (254 valid observations)	0.4	0.8	2.4	2.8	7.9	9.4	10.2	10.2	9.1	6.3	6.7	5.5	5.9	7.5	3.5	4.7	6.7
Minimum income to work frequency % (248 valid observations)	2.0	4.4	6.0	8.5	8.1	11.3	10.9	6.9	6.5	6.0	5.2	8.5	7.7	2.0	3.6	0.8	1.6