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PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS--TECHNIQUE

20 May 1947

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THE INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS--TECHNIQUE

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GENERAL MCKINLEY:

Gentlemen, continuing with our public opinion course, this morning we have with us Dr. Hadley Cantril. Dr. Cantril is one of the leading social psychologists in the United States. After graduating from Dartmouth in 1928, he studied in Munich and Berlin. He received his Ph. D. from Harvard in 1931. He taught at Dartmouth, Harvard and Columbia before joining the faculty at Princeton University where he now serves as professor of psychology.

Dr. Cantril is Director of the Office of Public Opinion Research and author of various books and articles. This morning his subject is "Public Opinion Surveys--Technique."

I take extreme pleasure in introducing to you Dr. Cantril.

DR. CANTRIL:

Thank you, General McKinley. I feel a little embarrassed to try to cover this whole subject for you gentlemen in 45 or 50 minutes, because tomorrow I wind up a course at Princeton where we spent the whole course on one of the problems we will discuss today. However, I will discuss scientific polling.

This is an instrument we should know more about. For anyone concerned with problems of administration or with anything that has to do with the public, to work without surveys these days is to me almost like working without a typewriter in your office. It is one of those modern mechanisms that one should have available.

However, we still know comparatively little about surveys. We have a great deal more to learn. We do know from various activities that the surveys can be extremely useful, so even though we are a bit ignorant, I think we know enough to pass a few words along.

What I am going to try to do this morning is to cover briefly a few of the general problems Colonel Babcock suggested as being most useful for you men here. I shall try to be practical and not theoretical, because I gather you are interested in getting something done. I will cover here several topics suggested that I cover, in a very cursory fashion.

The first general problem is the problem of sampling. Now, all polls or surveys depend for their accuracy on the goodness of the sample used,

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and the whole theory of any public opinion survey on the sampling side is to create a miniature of the total population with which you are going to be concerned in your particular problem.

As the statisticians say, the thing we try to do in creating any sample is to get randomness. As you know from the old illustration of picking out black and white beans from a jar, the way to get random samples is to take every Nth case, that is, every tenth or every seventeenth, etc. However when dealing with people, you cannot take every tenth or seventeenth person. In dealing with people in the United States, we do not have any list of all the people in the United States. Even if we did and decided to take every eightieth person, you can imagine what an extensive job it would be to track down that particular person.

So what we try to do is to stratify the population in order to get some degree of randomness. There are three methods of sampling which I will discuss briefly here, especially concentrating on the one most commonly used. These three methods are, first of all, the quota system; second, the areal system; and third, the pin-point system.

The quota system is used by the Gallup poll, Fortune poll, and the National Opinion Research Center. For most people not concerned with very precise problems, it is perfectly adequate for all practical purposes. In the last election, as you remember, there was no poll using the quota system that was more than two percent off in the final election scores, which indicates that the method is reliable for all practical purposes.

In the quota system, what you do is try to work out a miniature sample on the basis of quota controls. In actual practice today, this is how that is done. If you want a sample of public opinion in the United States, the first thing is to divide the population according to the different sections of the country. So you get back in this small sample--say, 3,000 is the number you are going to use; that is the number the Gallup people use now--so you get back from your 3,000 cases exactly the same proportion that exists in the different sections of the United States. We use now seven sections, divide the states into seven different regions. That is the first control we have.

The second one is that within each section, say New England, you allocate interviewers so that you have the proper number of people from different sized communities, and the proper number of people living in cities of over 5,000, from 50,000 to 100,000, and so on. Then you have to get down to your rural areas.

Now, both of those controls can be worked out in your central office on the basis of available statistics from the Census Bureau. It is interesting to see that even if you have only those two controls, you have already controlled a number of other things that you have not even had in mind before. If you get those two controls, the chances are good that you have already controlled the nationality background, or race, or even religion, even though those have not come up. But the racial distribution

in this country, nationality background is, of course, mainly a matter of getting the right section and the right rural-urban distribution. Once you have those two things, you have come a long way in control.

The third quota control used in practice is to divide the population accurately according to income distribution. Each interviewer is given an assignment sheet which indicates how many people in the upper, middle or lower income group he should interview.

This obtains for all interviewers except those interviewing for rural areas. In these areas there is no economic control because of the various ways in which farms and so forth are owned, because you get a fairly good distribution of farms by size by assigning interviewers to the different counties which you know a good deal about.

Your income control index is generally something like this. You assign about 15 percent to the above-average income group, which is one whose total family income is \$3,500; about 35 percent to the so-called average group, ranging from \$2,000 to \$3,500; and 50 percent in the below-average group.

That seems a little strange perhaps to have 50 percent not in the average group. That is done for two reasons. First, the skewed income distribution that you are aware of in this country; the second is a technical reason, namely, that no matter how well you train your interviewers, no matter how much you scold them, you find that they tend to select people from higher income groups than they should. Even if they get the right number in the so-called low income group, they still have a tendency to get people in the low income group who live in the better houses in the slums. Lots of these interviewers are women. They do not like to go around in the back alleys or in the back doors; they do not like to go on the other side of the tracks, and so on. So in this way we are forcing them down statistically, in a way, to try to get enough people in this low income group. That is the third control.

The fourth control is that each interviewer is asked to get about half men and half women in his sample. That does not mean that they have to get men and women distributed within a given income group, but simply half men and half women in the sample. That all irons out. In the end, statistically, you will find that you have about half men and half women in each income group.

The fifth control is to get half of the people below 40 and half above 40 years of age.

Now, with those five controls, you get a very accurate sample of public opinion in the United States today. Those are controls that have been worked out after a certain amount of experience, and what it means, then, is that the poll administrator is assuming that these five controls are more or less determinants of opinion.

The most basic of those, of course, is income distribution, and it is extremely important to remember that no one should assume here in this room, just because I have indicated these controls are used in the United

States, that these are the controls you should necessarily use even in the United States, or especially in any other country in which you want to make a survey.

In other words, it might be just as well if you rather forgot what I said specifically but get the general idea that you want to stratify the population, for the simple reason that in some other countries, or perhaps for some problems, certain other determinants might be infinitely more important than those I have mentioned here; that is, union affiliations might be extremely important, or sometimes you might want to get a lot more on nationality background.

However, you must always remember that the practical problem in selecting a determinant is to get some certain degree of visibility, or get-at-ability. For instance, if you decided it might be interesting to have a control based on education—and it would; it would be dandy—you would have a terrific time with your interviewers going around the streets selecting people on the basis of education. You cannot tell a high school graduate by looking at him. The same is true of religion and some of those other intangible things.

In each public opinion survey we ask so-called background information. We ask a person's education, his religion, nationality background, union affiliation, etc. Then, we can compare those different determinants and characteristics with opinion and we can also in that way check our sample.

It is very interesting to see that even in a sample like this where you do not determine your sample on the basis of religion, almost invariably when you percentage out the number of protestants and the number of catholics in your sample, it never is much more than two percent off the actual census figure we have on religion.

Now quota control is, as I say, most widely used for public opinion surveys today, partly because it has proved its reliability, but also and mainly because, I think, it is the cheapest method so far devised. There is only one organization that can afford the much more expensive methods than this, and that is the United States Government. Sometimes the Government does use this next method I am going to mention, not only because it can afford to, but secondly, because the problems it faces sometimes are quite different and need a greater degree of fineness.

This business of sampling public opinion and getting a quota sample always presents interesting anecdotal material. I remember a survey made up in Maine, where one of the group of interviewers went to a house, rang the door bell, and said he would like to ask the lady's opinion. She said, "Fine." She had heard a lot about the Gallup poll, but she had never been interviewed by a pollster. She said, "You can come in." So he started asking her a lot of questions. She stopped him in the middle and said, "What are you asking all these questions for?" He said, "That is the way we get our information." She said, "Oh, I thought you got them from statistics." Well, you do have to have a few statistics.

The second method is the areal method. I will not go into that in too much detail because the time is running along, but the major point of that method is that you obtain as much information as you can about the so-called universal or general population you want to interview in a town. You try to select from the information you have on that area specific points or sub-areas, which, when put together, will give you a total sample that is reliable.

For example, this method is used mainly by the Census Bureau. They have a great deal of information accumulated on every single county in the United States--how many people are native-born, what the productive capacity of that county is, how much land is being cultivated. They have a lot of information about each county.

Now, if they want to take one of the areal surveys of the United States, they try to put together a certain little pattern of counties, a dozen counties, we will say, which when added up give the same pattern that the 2,000 counties in the United States would give. Then, they do not use any quota sample within those counties, but either interview everyone in the county--if it is a small county--most counties are much too large to interview everyone--or use a completely random method in those counties for interviewing every Nth person, every thousandth person. There are a number of variations there, rather complicated, that I need not go into. This method has the advantage of being a little more precise if you have a specific problem.

The Department of Labor of the United States through the Bureau of Labor Statistics runs a monthly report on the migration of the labor force in the United States, where they want to find out where workers are going, from what areas into what areas, and so on. They can pick out different specific areas as their barometer counties and keep a fairly accurate check on that.

The third method, which is occasionally used, is the pin-point method. It is an adaptation of the areal method. What it does is to pick out a very few areas and interview a number of people or all the people in those areas. In this method you put a lot of eggs in a few baskets.

For example in 1944, the American Institute used this as a supplemental method for predicting the national election. What they did was to find five states which had, from about 1926, come up with about the same national figure as the Nation in election. They picked out the states of New York, Maryland, Ohio, Missouri and California. Those five states when put together have come up with less than one percent error of the national election. In other words, if you could predict those five states right, you would get the Nation right, according to chance, so they took a gamble on that one.

In order to predict those states right they picked out eight voting districts, political districts, which again had forecast in the past the proper state results. Then they tried to interview every single household in those eight political districts in each of the five states. The error of the American Institute, using the so-called pin-point method, was less than the quota sampling, less than the figure reported in 1944, so this method has certain advantages.

The size of the sample, as you know, is much less important, is almost unimportant, compared to the way the sample is selected. If your sample is selected on the so-called basis of 95 percent (that means that there are 95 chances out of a hundred that your sample is a true reflection of the population), using 10,000 cases, you would get a so-called probable error of 2.5 percent--that is 10,000 cases out of 90 million adults in the United States. Using 3,000 cases, the probable error is 3.5 percent; using 1,500 cases, you get only 5 percent; using 500 cases, 8 percent, and so on.

Now, any of you who read that chapter in "Gauging Public Opinion" on "Small Samples" know that in some of our experimental work, especially during the war in making quick surveys, using samples sometimes as small as 200, we predicted the Canadian plebiscite with an accuracy of within 3.5 percent. With six million people participating, on the basis of our 200 sample, we predicted that as well as Gallup did with his quota survey. We predicted the New York gubernatorial election, again with only 200, much more accurately than the Daily News with 50,000, and just as well as the Gallup poll did with the quota method. That may be luck, but over and over again in making use of small samples we have never got as many errors as we should have statistically.

These samples should be selected always with the problem in mind. That is, if you are interested, we will say, in the effect of opinion in a given country, then it may be that you do not want a sample of the total adult population, simply because maybe 90 percent of the people will never be concerned in determining so-called resistance, or whatever it is, in that particular country.

The second general topic I would like to consider is this problem of asking questions, because that is just as important, if not more so, than sampling. There is no earthly use to work up a good sample if you do not know what questions to ask or if you ask them the wrong way.

I am going to assume that you know something about question asking and report here a recent ballot used by the American Institute of Public Opinion on a very important topic, what the American people thought of the so-called Truman doctrine after Truman's speech. This ballot, I think, represents some of the most advanced thought we have in the field on this problem of framing questions. I will go over five problem areas the American Institute has got up in this particular ballot, but it shows the kinds of things you have to look for if you are not going to make a simp of yourself in asking stereotyped questions.

In the first place, they asked a question here which has nothing to do with the Truman speech or doctrine. They ask, "If the question of national prohibition should come up again, will you vote wet or dry?" That has nothing to do with the Truman doctrine. But the point of it is important. You have got to get the respondent warmed up a little bit. You cannot start off with the \$64 question. This we know from experience is a question everybody loves to talk about. Everybody is either wet or dry. It has nothing to do with politics. So you ask them a lead-on question, which you do not even tabulate. You do not care about the results; if you do, you have got them. So first of all you start off with a question that is more or less interesting.

The second thing, after you are into the interview, is whether the people have ever heard about this thing you are going to ask them about. That is something commercial people are just getting onto. I think they can all be criticized there for asking a lot of questions which were quite meaningless. But they are all now thoroughly aware of this problem.

They ask the so-called filter questions, that is, if the people have ever heard about these things we are going to ask a lot of questions about. "Have you heard or read about Truman's speech to Congress asking for 400 million dollars for help for Greece and Turkey?" If they say, "Yes," you proceed with the interview. If they say, "No," you say, "Thank you, good morning," and go on to someone else. That is the filter question.

The third is to use the so-called free answer question or open question. That is, before you pose a couple of alternatives for people to choose from, it is smart to find out what people have on their minds themselves before you start checking them with questions and possibly strengthen their opinion somehow.

So we ask the free answer question: "What do you think is the chief reason for helping Greece and Turkey? Can you tell me the chief reason against helping Greece and Turkey? What is your own feeling as to what we should do about this?" These comments of the respondent are then all written down. That gives us a pretty good slant on his opinion before we start asking him to make a choice between this or that.

Then, the fourth problem is to find out why people have these opinions, so you ask them, "What is your own feeling as to what we should do about this?" You say, "Why do you feel this way?" Then you get some of the reasons why.

The fifth is, we present these dichotomous questions or so-called cafeteria questions. You have three or four alternatives. You present these questions, the kind that are generally reported in the papers, because they are easier for readers to understand. They ask, "Would you like to see your congressman vote for or against the bill asking for 250 million dollars for aid to Greece?" Similarly with Turkey. A few dichotomous questions.

The Gallup poll has often been criticized for asking these dichotomous questions, these either-or questions. The people are academicians or people who do not really have their feet on the ground. They ask the questions the way the citizen has to vote. He cannot sit around and spend hours saying why he feels this way or that. Sometime he has to face the problem, "Do I vote this way or don't I?" So it is realistic in a way to pose that question of either or.

Finally, the sixth question was to probe the intensity of opinion, to find out not only what the direction of opinion is, but how strongly people feel the way they do. So after the question, "Would you like to see your congressman vote for or against the bill?" you ask them, "How strongly do you feel about this? Very strongly? Fairly strongly? Or not at all strongly?"

There you have the problem of question wording. You can see there that there are varied areas that have been covered in the framing of the ballot.

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It is best that I do not say much more about question wording because this is certainly the most important area of all, and the areas wherein ingenuity is needed.

Just a word about the problem of interviewing and the selection of interviewers, and so forth. In this country it is a fairly easy problem because we can travel around and we can meet people; we can get names of all kinds of people from individuals we know are reliable. Interviewers in this country are generally selected after they have been recommended by someone who has been asked to do so, say, a school principal, a minister, or lawyer, who may have an acquaintanceship fairly wide. You select your people on the basis of honesty, conscientiousness, interest in the work, and so on.

Then you send someone out to train these people, a trained interviewer, who tells them what the whole thing is about, watches them, interviews them, and then goes along with them on the job, and they usually do pretty well.

However, we do find, in the best of families even, a few dishonest people, and generally no matter what your staff consists of, if you give a so-called "trap" question, which can easily be thought up, you will find cheaters. You always leave out the cheaters when you come to your tabulation. Sometimes it is as high as ten percent. The interesting thing is it does not make much difference whether or not people cheat in the final total, but you do not like to have ballots that have too many cheaters. You always leave out the cheaters when you come to your tabulation.

These cheaters are fairly smart. They have a pretty good idea what the opinion is in their own district, and they will fill out 20 ballots at home, but you can always catch them.

I was going to cover a lot of other things, but I see I will not have time. I might say a word about analysis of the data. In searching for determinants of opinion, by and large, there are two methods of finding out what your data have in them once you get the data back.

The first method, so-called, is by using breakdowns, that is breaking the population down by the various sociological characteristics mentioned earlier, by income, by education, by sex, age, religion, and so on. Now, that is rather difficult in itself because you have to have some hunches before you know what you are breaking down. Also you have to get some experience as to which of these determinants are in turn determined by other things, so that you make two or three breakdowns.

For example, if you want to break opinion down according to religion, we will say, in the United States, and you break down protestants and catholics, you may get a difference there between protestants and catholics but until you have made a further breakdown in terms of income groups, you really are not at all sure of your ground, for the simple reason, by and large, that catholics in the United States fall into the lower income group. So what you may be dealing with, instead of a catholic-protestant split, may be purely an income split.

So to be sure of yourself you always break your protestant group down by income and your catholic group down by income, and then you see if these differences obtain in all income groups by religion.

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Another method is so-called "cross tabulation" where you compare people having one opinion on one question with people having a certain opinion on another question, and you see what relation there is between A and B, "Do these things hang together or do they have no relationship at all?"

After playing around with these two methods, you begin to have a few hunches as to what the determinants are. You still do not have the answers. I do not think from the public opinion survey itself, you can ever find out the final determinants because, by and large, I think these statistical procedures are going to tell you what things are not true, but it is almost impossible to get the final answer as to what things are true by means of statistics, because it all boils down in the long run to the individual case.

A word on trends. Some of you perhaps have seen the article that was reproduced in one of your pamphlets, an article called "Public Opinion in Flux," which gave some of the trends in opinion up to Pearl Harbor, from the outbreak of the war to Pearl Harbor.

I have a few more trend charts on the board that may be of some interest to you. These have never been published. I will leave them with you in case you want to follow them through in greater detail. These trends are those from Pearl Harbor to VJ-day, and there are a few interesting things here that may be of concern to the military people.

For example, here is one question we asked, "Do you believe the Allies are winning or losing the war?" which is a question I wish I had thought of earlier. You always wish you had thought of these questions earlier, but at least I thought of it in time to find out that only 25 percent of the American public thought we were winning the war right here. That is, they still thought we would win in the long run but at that point they did not think we were. And of course right after the invasion of North Africa it zoomed up until the great majority thought we were winning, and it never went down. When it got up to 95 percent I quit asking because it cost a hundred dollars to ask every question, so that was good enough for me.

Another question covered was this one, a trend question, "Do you think the American people have been asked to make too many, not enough, or enough sacrifices during the war?" At the very beginning 70 percent of the people thought the Government had not asked them to make enough sacrifices. The Government, in other words, at the beginning could have gone a lot further in demanding things from the public, and the people would have appreciated that kind of authority at that time.

The trend went down, though, until finally at the end of the war we had less than 30 percent saying the Government still was not asking us to make enough sacrifices. A small percentage of the people were willing to make peace with Hitler. At one time it was pretty obvious that the Red Army was making awfully fast progress and it seemed as though, to some people in the United States, it would be a good idea to make a deal with Hitler.

One thing that always worried me when I was analyzing the German propaganda was the way in which they were trying to distinguish between

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the Army and Hitler. This question was, "Would you be willing to make peace with the German Army?" That was a very good percentage. In fact, at that time almost half of the American population was willing to make peace with the German Army. They made a distinction all the way through between Hitler, the Nazis and the German Army. When this spread became too wide, then some statements were issued by people in authority trying to lessen that spread.

There are a number of things we could discuss. For example, we have the answer to the question, "How much longer the war would last with Japan." Another, how much longer with Germany. This is interesting, for no matter when you ask that question, in a sense, it is always going to be two years longer—which is probably a healthysign of morale—not ten years or 20 years, always two years. It finally got down to one year just before the war ended. They got pretty accurate on Germany, just a few months. They had slightly more warning possibly there.

I am sorry I will have to skip a number of things that I had hoped to deal with. Just a final word here. I said I thought surveys were indispensable tools for any operation. There is one word of warning, though, and that is that one should never try, I think, to be at all synthetic. That is to measure public opinion in order to somehow change your point of view or play into public opinion. I mention that because there are too many people today doing that, being extremely synthetic. You can be intelligent without being synthetic. I would like to make that distinction and have you carry it along.

It is particularly important, I think, for the Armed Forces to know what some of the areas of ignorance are on the part of the American people, or some of the resistances, maybe, that they have to encounter so they can phrase their problem in such a way as to overcome resistance. You do not have to change your points of view, but you can present your point of view so as to get a minimum of resistance.

I might just give one example of what I regard as intelligent use of public opinion data in wartime in connection with the Armed Forces. I happened to be around Military Intelligence at the time they got off the ticker the news that General MacArthur had left the Philippines. I asked the Colonel if this had been released to the press, and he said, "No." "Well," I said, "how are you going to release it to the press?" He scratched his head and said, "What do you mean?" I pulled out of my pocket, just by luck, a public opinion poll which I had, in which we had asked the people if they thought General MacArthur should leave the Philippines or should stay with his men. It was an absolutely fifty-fifty split. Half thought he should stay and half thought he should go.

Remembering that, and remembering the capital that Goebbels was making out of MacArthur's leaving the Philippines—running out on his men, being a yellow dog—it seemed to me it was quite a problem. So the problem was presented to the Colonel who saw it at once. A statement was written up to constitute an announcement. That statement was used by the President without changing a comma in its content. The statement read something like this—it was only three sentences—"I am sure that every man and woman in the United States appreciates, as I do, General MacArthur's desire to stay with his men to the bitter end. I am also sure that every man and woman in

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the United States believes, as I do, that General MacArthur's talents should be used for the duration of the war. Therefore, if the decision were put up to any citizen in this country, I am sure there could be only one answer."

Now that silenced the German critics. It also told the American people who thought MacArthur should stay with his men that he wanted to and that he had not been able to simply because the President had ordered him out.

So these surveys, then, are useful tools, but in a way they are like many other tools, say a violin. It is interesting to know how to make a violin, but there is a certain art in using the thing and getting music out of it. That is all.

GENERAL MCKINLEY:

We are open for questions now. I have, I think, three, but I want to reserve them to see whether you get them.

A STUDENT:

What was this second criterion in selecting a quota sample?

DR. CANTRIL:

It was to divide each region by rural-urban areas. I am glad you asked that question. It is important to re-emphasize the fact that this is done within each region, so that you get, say, the West Central States which have a different composition from the Middle Atlantic States, so you always want to get the right proportion, from cities of 500,000 and from towns of less than 2,500. That data can all be gotten from the Census Bureau.

A STUDENT:

Regarding the willingness of people to undergo more hardships in 1941 and 1942, would you go into that a little bit more? It bears considerably on our study here. What questions were asked of those people, if you can remember them, and something in general terms of what the people's reactions were.

DR. CANTRIL:

Well, actually, this being a trend question itself, it was pretty general. We did not want to make it specific because a specific question would only be good for a couple of months, we will say. So this question was about, I think, as I remember it, "Do you think the Government has asked people to make too many sacrifices, not enough, or has it been about right?" Something general like that, a little better phrased. That was the result. Then we followed that with free answer questions. If they would say, "too much," we would say, "What?" If they said, "Not enough," we would say, "What more do you think the Government should do?"

By and large, I think right after Pearl Harbor and for some time, perhaps a year, if the Government had come out with a much stronger program in terms of citizen participation, they certainly would have had public opinion back of them. I should think it would have been helpful in the general prosecution of the war.

Any specific data that you would like to know about sacrifices would be on file in our office and I would be happy to let you look at it at any time.

A STUDENT:

You say that has not been published yet?

DR. CANTRIL:

No, but you are welcome to make any use of it you want to. You may reproduce this in any way.

Incidentally, as I think you know, my own opinion is that the best possible way to affect opinion is by means of events. That does not come naturally. If an event does not come along, try to create something that may be called an event. They have a great deal more wallop on public opinion than speeches or any kind of slow education.

A STUDENT:

You said when you were closing that you wanted to touch on the point of ignorance, I think was the term you used. I would be interested in knowing what you mean by that. Just how it would apply?

DR. CANTRIL:

I was thinking of ignorance on the part of the public. There are tremendous areas of ignorance of which you may not be aware. They surprise me although I know what has gone on. But I am always surprised by what people do not know.

For example, as I was telling some of the men before we came in here, we just sent down some data to be used in connection with the report of the President's Advisory Committee on Selective Service, and among other things we asked the people, at their suggestion, what plan was being contemplated for Selective Service. There was something like 80 percent who had no knowledge at all of any plan.

In a recent survey that we did we asked people, "Who is the Secretary of State?" I have forgotten the exact figure. I think it was 17 percent. That sort of information people do not know. They do not know this and they do not know that. They do not know a lot of things.

It is extremely important in all kinds of planning, and we are always assuming, I think, that people know somewhat as much about things as we do, and also that they have as much interest as we do in a lot of these problems.

Now, this area of ignorance is particularly true when it comes to international problems. Because there we know that information and interest are fairly highly correlated. If you are interested in something, the chances are you will find out something about it. People are a great deal less interested in international problems than in domestic problems, and so know a great deal less about them.

So Gallup uses so-called breakdowns that we make all the time on this basis of information. By and large that separates people on the bases of for or against more widely than any other single breakdown we may make.

Another tabulation I was going to put on the board was the tabulation concerning the attitude toward Russia and the atomic bomb in terms of information. We just did a big study on public opinion of the atomic bomb, public knowledge of it. What you find here is a tremendous difference between the attitudes as to what our foreign policy should be toward Russia on the basis of information.

It might interest you if I just read off a couple of questions we asked them generally. "Which one of these four statements do you come closest to agreeing with? First, it is very important to keep on friendly terms with Russia, and we should make every effort to do so." The fourth one—I am skipping the middle ones—"We should be better off if we had just as little as possible to do with Russia." The others were in between.

We found here, as we find all along, the better informed people are, the greater they feel our efforts should be to get along with Russia. That sometimes surprises people because they think it is the lower income groups, the working groups that are the ones that may be more pro Russia. Every single survey we have ever made shows it is the higher educational income group that is more in favor of doing all we can to get along with Russia.

In this particular instance, we find 82 percent of the best informed people say, "Make every effort, but do not make too many concessions," and 17 percent say, "Make no special effort to get along with the Russians at all." In the poorest informed group, the ratio is 40 to 47 percent, as contrasted with 82 and 17. That is a whale of a difference as far as this kind of figure goes.

DR. RYAN:

In regard to the willingness of the American people to accept sacrifice, would not that indicate that we could have raised 30 billion dollars more in taxes to pay for the war? Taxes were very low during 1942 and 1943.

DR. CANTRIL:

Yes, I think that is just one of the many things that could have been done. I think they could have slapped on all kinds of controls after Pearl Harbor and got away with it, and I think people would have enjoyed it in a way because they would have become ego-involved in this effort.

A STUDENT:

Would you tell us something about other methods—mail, radio, personal contacts?

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DR. CANTRIL:

Yes. The method the Army uses is reliable enough, I think, that is, filling out questionnaires in a room. The surveys done by radio or by clippings from newspapers are highly unreliable, and I would not pay any attention to those at all, because you really do not have the vaguest idea who is returning the answers, especially in these things clipped out. Very often, of course, there is some pressure group that will buy up thousands of newspapers and have the things filled out.

Mailed ballots can be extremely useful if you know the bias of the people reading them. We had an article in the "Public Opinion Quarterly," by Mr. Lawrence Benson a while back which surveyed the experience with mailed ballots. We know definitely that people who return mailed ballots are the better educated, upper income group. So if anyone starts sending out mailed ballots to the people in Who's Who, the chances are that 44 percent of those people would return that ballot. If you send a ballot to the low income group, the chances are about 7 percent would return it. If you know what your biases are originally, you can use mailed ballots by weighting and taking that into account.

Or what you can do is to use a mailing survey for the upper half of the population, say people who have a telephone, and use the interview for the other half that would not return it anyway. It is still a bit risky. The only advantage of using the mailed ballot is that it is so much cheaper. You remember the "Literary Digest" fiasco in 1936.

A STUDENT:

How is the ultimate person selected by the interviewer? I am thinking of randomness.

DR. CANTRIL:

In the quota system, it is simply anybody who justifies the assignment. In other words, if they have to get an interviewer who knows nothing about those controls, they select someone who lives in the town and represents a section of the country, represents one of these areas. Say he has to get 30 people, 3 from the upper income group, 7 from the middle group, and 20 from the lower group. Now, what he does, since he knows his town, he will probably go the area of town where he is sure the so-called lower income people live. He judges low income on the basis of the training he has had. An expert interviewer will consult the real estate men in the town and find out rental values. The interviewer then goes to this section of town, knocks on the door of the house which is definitely of lower income value. Somebody comes to the door, maybe the housewife, and he picks up his interview there in that area.

The chances are if he starts interviewing in the daytime, he will get mainly women. Say he gets five women. He thinks, "They might not like it if I get all the lower income from women. I will come back and pick up the men at night." It is just about that range.

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GENERAL MCKINLEY:

About what kind of income does the interviewer get, if it is not a trade secret? I am wondering what the quality of the interviewer is and what do you demand from him?

DR. CANTRIL:

That is a good question. It is no trade secret at all. The general payment now is a dollar an hour. They are all part time. Mr. Roper has a good number of full-time interviewers. Anybody would go crazy interviewing day after day, I should think, but they get about a dollar an hour, part time work.

We have found from experience that about the best bet for interviewers are public school teachers, as a group. They have spare time, they need extra pin money, and they are extremely conscientious. So public school teachers are a pretty good lot. Social service workers are good, and college students who want to work along and get a little more money.

GENERAL MCKINLEY:

The teachers are apt to be more intelligent than their income level.

DR. CANTRIL:

Yes, I suppose so. I do not know. I sometimes have my doubts. You do get very interesting people as interviewers. For example, on one of the Gallup polls they got a couple of famous movie actors. They just wanted to get out and see different people. They were studying visual expression. You get some local ministers and prominent lawyers who just want to go out and see what people are thinking for the fun of it. It is pretty easy to recruit an interviewing staff. We have very few turndowns. Most everybody likes to have his opinion asked.

One of the tricks of the trade when you are interviewing anybody, do not give a long song and dance in the beginning, why you are stopping them or why you are ringing door bells. Do not explain the purpose of the survey too much. Make it short and snappy, and be sure to wind up the first sentence with a question. Say something like this: "I am making a survey of public opinion. What do you think of prohibition? Do you think we should have it again or not?" They say yes or no before they know what they are in for.

A STUDENT:

We have noticed a good bit of opposition lately by certain members of the legislature to public opinion polls within the Government, even to public relations activities within the Government. I wonder whether your polling has brought out any difference in opinions of Senators who represent an area and representatives who feel they are the elected representatives of the people?

DR. CANTRIL:

The question is, have we any data concerning Congressmen themselves?

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A STUDENT:

Yes, sir, and whether Senators feel differently as compared to Representatives about the use of polls by the Government?

DR. CANTRIL:

No, that is a very ticklish thing to get. There have been a few studies of it. It is quite revealing of the Congressional mind to try to make a study of this kind. If you ask these gentlemen if they pay any attention to public opinion polls, they usually say no loudly, polls destroy representative government. But if you ask them if their colleagues in the Senate or House use them, they generally say yes.

I would guess that most of the Congressmen pay a lot of attention to them whether they admit it or not. I think some of them and some aspirants for higher posts use these things to be extremely synthetic; to find out what people want and then say it, no matter whether they have to contradict it two weeks later or not.

But where I think these surveys are extremely important in the Government is that they affect, probably, some of the committee reports of the Congress at large. I am confident, without knowing anything about it, that this Gallup survey of the Truman doctrine was awaited with the utmost interest before Congressmen worked out their legislation, because these people are interested, obviously, in being reelected. Incidentally, a number of these men, come election time, have special surveys done in their districts to see how they are getting along. So they are interested enough that some are beginning to use them from the point of self-interest.

Incidentally, if you ever want to get a Congressman interested in a poll, the best way is to have someone go to his district and make a poll, and ask the people what they think of Congressman so and so. Then make a little report—I have done this a couple of times—on what the people of this district think of Congressman so and so, and put it on his desk. The poor fellow can hardly talk to you he is so eager to see that report. You get him ego-involved right off the bat.

A STUDENT:

Does your system use the same method for obtaining information such as legislation before Congress?

DR. CANTRIL:

Yes, the same thing works out in all of the surveys in this country, the same method, same sample is used by each organization, the same sample, not the same people, but the same method.

There are, of course, many surveys done by commercial people who use special samples for the purpose for which they are paid. That is, one commercial outfit may work for the National Association of Manufacturers and the NAM may want a survey of skilled workers on this legislation, or they may want a survey of top-flight executives on legislation. They pick a different sample, but otherwise they use exactly the same sample, except in election time. Then the sample is expanded, blown up.

A STUDENT:

As an extension of your last answer, Doctor, take the analogy of newspapers. Newspapers supposedly publish straight news. They are designed for that, but we know that they will print their own views. We will say, theoretically, they influence public opinion. It seems to me, then, here is another field of growing importance which might get slightly enough off base on just using samples to tend to get results, try to develop whatever side they were working for, and in that way influence people. As you say, Congress might be influenced. What is the chance of un-American activity influencing polls in such a way that they might become dangerous in the future as to such important things?

DR. CANTRIL:

That is an excellent question. It is one that has bothered the people themselves who are doing this work. We believe absolutely there is no one in the field who is not 100 percent honest, even though you may not like some of his clients. They all do an extremely honest job. A few charlatans have started out but they have fallen by the wayside very rapidly, because they have no standing in the profession and it is so easy to show them up.

In order to take into account the sort of problem you foresee, the poll people themselves are just beginning to get the various people conducting polls to work out a code of standards for ethics which will have to be met before anybody can become a member of the association that will be set up as highest status organization in the field. So if you are not a member of this association, you have no standing at all.

The thought is to have the surveys that are reported on file somewhere and to have a couple of experts, we will say, especially statisticians, audit the surveys periodically so that you will know that the man has taken an accurate sample; you will know he has gotten the number of cases he claims he has, and so on. I think with the present personnel in the field, men of the caliber of Gallup and Roper, and so on, these standards will be so high there will not be much chance of many charlatans coming along, and unless there is a basic change in the whole social order so we may have charlatans all over the place.

GENERAL MCKINLEY:

There is one question I have worried about for a long time which has to do with age groups, that is, whether you have information as to whether age groups think differently about a certain problem as they mature. Does their thinking change with their age to correspond to what would be expected from that age group?

DR. CANTRIL:

I wish I could answer that question, General McKinley. I thought of that problem a few years ago and put a Ph.D. student on it. His thesis is still on file in the Princeton Library. He is a lazy fellow and has not written it up. It has most of the information available on that problem. But ask that question about ten years from now.

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GENERAL MCKINLEY:

I probably will be still asking it.

DR. CANTRIL:

We have only been getting this kind of information since 1936. By 1956 we will have gone through 20 years. If we can have a 20-year span, then we will be able to figure out whether or not older people are more conservative because they are older or because they were born one generation ahead of the other group. That seems to me a fundamental problem, do you get more conservative with age or are you born that way and stay that way? We do not have the dope yet to answer that but I think we will ultimately. If you would be interested in that thesis, it could be obtained for you.

GENERAL MCKINLEY:

That is my own personal question. I am very much interested in that.

DR. CANTRIL:

It is a serious question. As a matter of fact if you get the average age of a Congressman, it will appall you. I have often wondered if that is one of the reasons why Congressmen seem to be a little slow in picking up modern legislation, because the average age is, I believe, over 60, both in the House and in the Senate.

A STUDENT:

Do you have any example of these commercial poll-takings backfiring? I often wondered how they go about figuring out that 50 percent of the doctors of the country smoke Camels. In checking that survey, suppose they found out that most of them smoked Lucky Strike? They must have some advance notice of what the answer will be.

DR. CANTRIL:

So far as I know, no poll of that type has ever been turned over to an expert for analysis. I think they may backfire in the sense that if they use this method too much, the public will begin to discredit Gallup and Roper, too. That is one reason for the creation of this association. Then if anybody makes claim that doctors prefer to smoke Camels and that person who did that wants to apply to this organization for membership, they will have a chance to take a look at his material. If it is rejected, as it probably will be, we can put that little notice in the newspaper and that may have a cleansing effect.

A STUDENT:

Did not that Old Gold slogan contain a lot of bias?

DR. CANTRIL:

They all have a terrific bias. It is a question of how subtle a bias you can get away with. Some of these advertisers are pretty clever in figuring out a \$100,000 bias.

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GENERAL MCKINLEY:

I was told that Old Gold was the third cigarette and most people would choose the third position.

Doctor, we have imposed on you very much. We are tremendously interested in this question. Thank you so much for a very enlightening morning.

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