

Sent to letters@newstatesman.co.uk

Letters  
New Statesman  
7th Floor  
John Carpenter House  
7 Carmelite Street  
Blackfriars  
EC4Y 0BS  
United Kingdom

30 January 2010

## **Flat Earth**

Peter Wilby's missing sources [Mad stares, Thatcher and dodgy stats] are given on page 202 of George Irvin's brilliant book: *Super Rich: The rise of inequality in Britain and the United States*. The numbers work when you realise that the encouragements being talked about are word counts.

Preschool children in the United states, when interacting, hear an average of 36 words from their parents or carers per minute in the families of professionals, almost half as many words, 21, in working class families, and half again, 10 words, if their family (often a single parent) relies on welfare to survive. Those words are the difference between "You! Get the fuck down from that table. Yes you!" (10 words); and "Baby, please could you come down carefully from the table darling, you know it's not safe, we've talked about it before" (21 words). I won't attempt the 36 words version. However, interaction is not everything, otherwise professional parents in the USA would have secured a National Health Service by now and would not be so prone to vote Republican.

By the way, talking of the States, can somebody tell Danny Blanchflower [House prices will soon fall again] that the number and price of flats in Manchester fell from 2008 to 2009 because in the earlier period those luxury ones in Beetham tower had only just come on the market, skewing all the housing statistics for that city. You can almost see them from Sheffield, but the view should be clearer from Boston – no hills in the way. Why is our most sane economist so far away when we need him most?

Danny Dorling  
Department of Geography  
University of Sheffield  
Sheffield  
S10 2TN