

ROYAL STATISTICAL SOCIETY COUNCIL ELECTION- AND AFTER?

The appearance of the name Campbell Adamson, better known as president of the C.B.I. than as a statistician, on the list of nominees for RSS council prompted a rather hasty decision to put up an alternative Rad Stats candidate. The present system of nominations is that the outgoing council selects its list of Recommended candidates from among names 'suggested' to it by the fellowship - in other words the only people normally involved in the choice of Council are the Council members themselves. It is said that this ensures a certain continuity! If only because the composition of Council would be put to a vote for the first time in years it seemed worthwhile to put up an extra nomination.

There was little time and no formal mechanism for canvassing, so we had to hope that enough members of RSS would realise from the names what the candidates represented. It seems that not only Rad Stats members, but sufficient other fellows of the RSS were against the idea of a C.B.I. president on Council. As a result there are now three Rad Stats members of council, a large enough minority to have an influence given the "feel of the meeting" way in which decisions are usually taken.

Having largely left aside any discussion of the RSS and whether we should seek to influence/challenge it in our previous meetings, this may be the time to raise the question again- the agenda of our general meeting on the 23rd September presents an opportunity. Since the three members of Rad Stats on Council were nominated in their personal capacity, the individuals concerned will presumably remain independent, but open to suggestions from the rest of the group. The possibility of Rad Stats putting up "official" candidates in future elections is something we might consider soon.

At our general meeting we might want to discuss our attitude to some of the proposals Council has before it at the moment.

(a) It has set up a working party to review the byelaws relating to elections to council! This came as a result of a motion passed at the AGM which criticized the existing procedure for being undemocratic. This seems a possible opportunity for Council to try to tighten up the rules so that their own nominees are not ousted by a small politically motivated group. As I am a member of this working party, I hope any such moves can be prevented and a more democratic procedure set up.

(b) It seems that the views of the Society are regularly sought on research reports using statistical analysis and on what are termed "matters of public interest". It was suggested that Council, or in urgent situations some of its Honorary Officers, should nominate a Fellow or group of Fellows to give their opinion and that this should be presented as the opinion of the society - in some cases after ratification by council, but in other circumstances without it! After a number of people had protested at this, and pointed out that the Society was unlikely to have a common view on these sorts of questions, it was agreed that News and Notes should be used to solicit the views of the Fellows. That on occasions a report would be compiled by a group, but that it would be presented either as the views of its individual

members, or the group as a whole, or as the views of the society. This may present opportunities for Radical Statisticians to put alternatives to the official view and to widen the debate on these issues.

(c) It has been suggested, and agreed in principle, that open Meetings should be held occasionally, again on "matters of public interest"; areas suggested included immigration and unemployment. They would be held fairly spontaneously, as and when public debates on these issues were in progress. If we want to be in a position to take advantage of these meetings, it may require a much more active and concerted organization than we now have!

Liz Atkins.