

Student radical statistician to professional radical statistician?

I think I just about squeeze into the category of being both a student and a Radical Statistician in 1976. I came back to Britain, after 2½ years working in the USA and 6 glorious months travelling in South America, to begin a PhD in October 1976. I joined Radstats at about the same time. From then on it's been a rough ride.

I had been brainwashed into doing a PhD in the USA where I had already got "as far as I could" in strict career terms on an MSc. Visa restrictions and US society brought me back to Britain to embark upon the venture. From the start I had grave doubts about continuing, but decided to do so...at that time I had intended to return to the international field where US standards apply. It soon became apparent that my decision was probably a mistake... there was the isolation, the gloom, the lack of a place to work, the difficulty of getting to see the prof (i.e. supervisor), the extremely low status of being a student....

Things did not improve with time. I fought long and hard for a place to work and eventually won (for all of us), though in doing so I alienated myself considerably from the department so that physical proximity didn't help matters (as I had hoped it would).

Disillusioned by my thesis and environment, I was glad to turn to other activities. An opportunity arose at a Radstats AGM where the idea of doing something on race came up. The Race Group was soon formed and I got to work on our proposed booklet.

Eighteen months later both my thesis and the book(let) are nearing completion. My student days, though not my Radstats days, are nearly over. I find myself faced with a difficult decision concerning the future. At the moment I have two options (apart from waiting). The first is to (try to) extend my present three month contract with an international demographic research organisation. The programme is sponsored by USAID and the UNFPA; the work follows directly from my thesis and experience gained in the USA; the pay is very good; there are good prospects of 'worldwide' (Russia?) travel; based in London; provides an opportunity to meet the 'world's experts' on the subject;.....

The second option is to accept a post as demographer with a British research organisation on ethnic relations. The programme is sponsored by the SSRC; the work follows from my involvement in the Radstats Race Group and is obviously of interest to me; the work concerns Britain and is socially useful; based in Birmingham; the pay is moderate; my PhD is irrelevant;.....

Tomorrow I must make my decision. I have a feeling that it will be number two.

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