

## POINTS FROM YOUR LETTERS

As explained in the Editorial, I wrote to several Radstat members last July, suggesting they might contribute to a "stock-taking" forum or provide a review of "Demystifying Social Statistics". Among the points made are the following:

"I have literally no time at all to write anything for the Newsletter. I am in fact more than sorry, since, having re-read the last chapter of Demystifying, I think they do a very good job at undoing any useful task they may have accomplished by bringing that collection of articles together in the first place. It, the last chapter, is so intellectually pretentious on the part of people who really do not know anything about practical politics it makes me sick: you cannot be a radical without having an authorisation from a political party; there is a true way and some of us elite have it and you will have to do a lot of trendy name-dropping to get to bask in the glory.

Anyway, that is a glimpse only of the vituperation I would have poured out in the article..."  
DISGRUNTLED, MAPUTO

"I think that perhaps 'Stocktaking' forum on the theme 'Who are we' etc. is quite a good idea. Though we discussed several times at conferences, it is perhaps an idea to get people to write things down. However, you seem to have asked quite a lot of people, just about all of them will be much better at writing things like this than simple bureaucrats like myself, and I think really I would rather leave it to them. If everybody contributed three pages length or so, all saying pretty much the same thing, I think the Newsletter would be pretty crammed up." (Agreed! Ed.)  
CONSTIPATED, SAUCHIEHALL STREET

"I am sorry not to have replied to your letter by return. Indeed I regret that I am unable to say anything much at all about where we have been (since I am relatively new to Radstats) or where we are going. I have also been totally submerged by a new full-time job, an old and tedious thesis, a lingering Race Group publication, court cases concerning my eviction, fruitless flat-hunting ... so that "stocktaking" has been completely by-passed.

Having said that, and at risk of stating the obvious, I do think that under the present Government we should be helping in the fight to oust them. This can be done directly, by writing pamphlets on the effects of the budget, policies, etc., in various fields, and indirectly by helping other groups. Both of these activities already take place (how many times has the firebrigade been called out?). I know, but I wonder just how much effect they are having on the person in the street - the voter.

The other area where we might usefully apply ourselves is energy, not only nuclear power but the whole problem. There are lots of groups already working on this, including I believe an RSS one (on the nuclear scene only?) with representation from the industry itself. Is there need for another?"  
ACTIVIST, WC1

"On reflection I have been thinking that we really have had rather a lot of discussions about the glorious future/past feelings, etc., of Radstat, and I am not at all sure that 15 further three page contributions on the subject will be a good idea." CONSTIPATED, WC

"When people have asked me what this group "Radical Statistics" was about, I have tended in the past to explain that it was basically an extremely interesting address list, to which a sporadic newsletter is sent. But it seems to me that this has changed. First, I do not think it is just my experience to have made some very good friends from RS activities; this is tremendously important in a rather rarified area of interest. I think there are lots of small overlapping networks rather than one central one, and I think they are very productive. But since the publication of Demystifying Social Statistics, RS is on the map as a force to be reckoned with. I think this is the single biggest achievement, and it is a large one because the book is very good indeed. There is absolutely nothing else like it; it is freshly written and not jargonistic; and it makes a persuasive case well, instead of hiding behind apologetic defences about trying to get away from the structure of an academic article.

I think the book is much better than any of the pamphlets that we have produced. This must be because of the very much greater amount of time, and the very much greater number of people who read articles for a book. Some of the pamphlets that have been produced have, in my view, been shoddy in their argument and naive in their politics. I know that the Health Group has been very successful in terms of the numbers of their pamphlets that they have sold, but I have not been impressed with, for example, the line of argument over the RAWP deals. Of course, an organisation such as this cannot have any centralism over its line - it would be death for us. I am merely commenting that in my own opinion, it is no coincidence that the book was so much better.

It is a pity that the economics group did not get off the ground in a more active way. I should like to place it on record that I should be happy to come along to any meetings if anyone felt enthusiastic enough to start it up again, but I have not got the organising energy to put into it. There is a very interesting job to be done on Mrs. Saatchi's new standard of living index which takes into account tax cuts. What will pension be indexed to? How is it being constructed etc.

Finally, I think it would be a good thing if we could get involved in the growing number of local attempts to do social accounting. There have been a number of very worthwhile attempts to question governmental financial rationality recently - over the closure of Corby steel, over the cost of unemployment in various London boroughs. If the fire brigade is to get off the ground, I suggest it offers help to such endeavours as this."

CATHY MARSH, CAMBRIDGE

Only the last contribution has not been quoted out of context. Hence the fictitious names. (Writes, please, to the next Editor).

Prizes (of an O.U Assignment Booklet) to the first three readers who correctly identify the writers of the letters quoted above.

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