

# RADICAL STATISTICS

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**AGM Special**

plus

**Charter 88**

**Educational testing  
and the future?**

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**SPRING 1990**

The Radical Statistics Group is a group of individuals based on the distribution of this newsletter. The small amount of central administrative work is done by a three person committee elected at the Annual General Meeting known as "The Troika" – Steve (Ludi) Simpson, Cecilio Mar Molinero and A. N. Other. The editorship of this newsletter rotates – the next editor will be Mel Bartley, whose address appears below and who requests help from other interested members in London. Apart from producing this newsletter, the work of RSG is done by its subgroup, whose membership is open to all interested parties. Please consult the contact people below if you wish to get involved. Use the newsletter to advertise if you wish to start a new subgroup.

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### The Troika

Cecilio Mar Molinero, Department of Accounting and Management Science, the University of Southampton, Southampton, SO9 5NH, 0703-592461 (work).

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Newsletter produced by Roy Carr-Hill and Bob Lavers.

Review Editor – Anybody willing? Please contact the Troika.

Editor of RSN46 – Russel Ecob, MRC Medical Sociology Unit, 6 Lillybank Gardens, Glasgow, G12 8QQ.

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### Subgroups

Health – Alison MacFarlane, 44 Warwick Road, St. Albans, Herts, 0727-52111.

Education – Cecilio Mar Molinero, Department of Accounting and Management Science, the University of Southampton, Southampton, SO9 5NH, 0703-592461.

Race and Law – Roy Carr-Hill, Centre for Health Economics, York University, Heslington, York, YO1 5DD, 0904-430000, extension 5949.

Surveys for Pressure Groups – Dave Brew, Sheffield City Poly, Sheffield, 0742-20911.

Trade Unionists – Peter Ramage, 71 Benhurst Court, Leigham Court Road, Streatham, London SW16.

Nicaragua Statistics Support – Steve Simpson, 41 Park Crescent, Bradford, BD3 0JZ.

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# Workshops

## STATISTICS AND CHANGES IN THE NHS

*Led by Luise Parsons and Geoff Rayner*

The plea was to try to be positive about the changes outlined in the 3 White Papers on Primary Care, Acute Services and Community Services. It was pointed out by Geoff that the NHS had much better financial and management information than local authorities. It was no use having right on strategies without the means to monitor their implementation. There was a lack of information on who was providing services, for whom, at what cost and with what effectiveness. It was very sad that Health Authorities now had a requirement to produce annual reports on the health of its residents but the local authorities were not involved. On the positive side, local authorities no longer embattled with central government, they were now faced with task to develop community services but there appeared to be too little money to implement these.

There was a challenge in discussion of what would constitute the data required to assess service delivery and how we might suggest a common framework for analysis. It was said that there are opportunities in the NHS for better information which could be used for progressive purposes. The new requirement, for contract purposes, of logging activity to individual patients and for proper post coding of addresses were potentially extremely valuable and would be needed for purposes of invoicing and paying contracts. It was pointed out that the NHS has historically been extremely cost effective but it might not remain so under the new internal markets. There was a need to give information back to those who had provided it so that they could own it and see its usefulness. It was suggested that Heseltine in 1982 had provided a framework for the grant assessment of every local authority and that data was available for further analysis. In SW Thames there had been an audit of care after discharge from hospital which suggested many areas for concern. At present we do not have even basic data such as the number of disabled people and their degree of disability.

# Accounts

## 1989 Membership Analysis

Amount (£)	1.50	2	3	4	5	7	Total
By S.O.	1	5	44	1	18	2	71
By cheque	7	5	-	-	76	17	105
Total	8	10	44	1	94	19	176

## Financial Statement for the year ended 22.2.90

### Expenditure

	£
Conference, February 1989	40.00
RSN 42, printing	173.00
RSN 42, postage	17.50
RSN 43, printing	207.00
RSN 43, postage	82.35
Compiling data base	70.00
Bank charges	1.38
Total	591.23

### Income

	£
Conference, February 1989	79.00
Publications	4.45
Membership: Standing orders	253.50
Cash & cheques	479.10
Total	816.05

Excess Income over Expenditure = £224.82

This happy position is entirely, unfortunately (or unfortunately entirely) due to our tardiness with RSN44, the expenditure for which will wipe out à la BEF) our surplus. A vos chequiers, as they say.

# Radical Statistics Group – Annual General Meeting 24th February 1990.

Like the AGM, this report is divided into three parts: a brief report of the last year, a discussion of Radical Statistics priorities, and some organisational decisions that were taken. Thanks to David Shepherd for notes of the AGM from which this report is taken.

## 1. THE LAST YEAR – 1989.

### **Finance:**

The unfinished accounts suggested a surplus of £224, mostly due to only two newsletters in 1989 rather than the scheduled three.

### **Membership:**

Cecilio Mar Molinero has created a database of members as far as could be constructed from the records. It shows about 200 paid members plus 170 members in arrears or other contacts, who are being chased. The database will make it easier to send newsletters and reminders, and locate all the members in a local area or with similar expressed interests.

### **Newsletter:**

Only two were produced 1989, partly due to the lack of editors. Thanks to those who did come forward.

### **Subgroups:**

- The Race group published the second, much-revised edition of Britain's Black Population, with Gower. 3,000 copies have been printed and are selling "well". (Roy Carr Hill)
- The Health group published 3,000 copies of Facing the Figures. Newsletter 43 contained the group's 12-page response to the NHS White Paper. Their next project is to update the Unofficial Guide to Official Health Statistics. (Alison MacFarlane)

- The Nicaragua group reported Paul Marchant's support for the Centre for Research and Documentation on the Atlantic Coast in Bluefields.

#### 1990 conference:

65 registered. Overall, the conference finances show £43 surplus after £539 expenditure. The evening entertainment by the Political Song Network raised £30 for them and £35 for the Nicaragua Statistics Fund. The wine was not sent to the absent raffle winner.

Thanks to the Troika of Roy Carr-Hill, Bob Lavers, and Cecilio Mar Molinero for their work in 1989.

### RADICAL STATISTICS GROUP – ROLE AND PRIORITIES

The discussion highlighted RadStats' current weaknesses and its unlimited potential (yet again?). Very valuable suggestions were made, for the new Troika to grapple with.

#### Promotion and image:

A conference-goer with one day's experience of RadStats hit the nail on the head, describing the group "as if it was a relic of the late sixties" ... (someone said "Yes, LSE")... "without identifiable organisers or priorities." The general sentiments are that we have survived but things need tightening up:

- Our range of contacts is unique, we should work together to respond to issues, with contact lists of those who will talk to community campaigns and those who will talk to the media.
- Contacts abroad should be made more of. Japan is the only country with a known similar group. Members exist in Japan, USA, Australia, Canada, Spain, Italy. Harvey Goldstein and others have other contacts.
- Are radical people sought as members, or is it the statistical work that is radical?
- The affiliation leaflet had very old rates and an incomplete publications list.
- Our membership is well below its potential among students, staff and libraries in Higher Education. There would be interest in Local Government; also among biologists and engineers as well as social researchers.

- Our influence is nonetheless well recognised, not only through publications where for example health campaigns have made enormous use of our materials. The Royal Statistical Society recently passed on to us a University enquirer for a speaker on how funding affects research results.
- Common ground with other groups could be made more of – Community Operational Research, Freedom of Information group, Labour Research Department, Local Government Information Unit, ...
- In discussion over concern that we should not favour one political party, it was pointed out that the outlet for 'good research' through official routes was being curtailed. There was never a better time for RadStats to counter-attack with alternative perspectives, offering a home for research that could not get published or was ignored elsewhere (echoing Mel Bartley's editorial in Newsletter 44). Honest Statistics was proposed as a new name.
- Book marketing – John Bibby might help. Bookshops might take an improved-look newsletter.

#### The Newsletter:

- Criticism of the typeface and size. Does the sub. include a magnifying glass?
- Suggestions for a 'quality journal' less frequently; this might be too ambitious and certainly is beyond current resources. The RSS series A 'Statistics in Society' could still partially fulfil that role.
- Should aim at the non-academic user of statistics which means that slick journals were not necessary but readable ones are. Roy Carr Hill offered desk top publishing at £2 per page.
- Referring to the official climate being not good for research, the newsletter should ferret out hidden data and authors who have had work suppressed or more usually ignored.
- Readership (now only at about 250) – and reviews of the newsletter in the media – could be extended a lot (as above on promotion).
- Advertising would be welcome, although it had been sought unsuccessfully in the past.

#### Priority issues:

- The most practical way of achieving work on priority issues is through RadStats subgroups; new ones are always welcome and usually start on the initiative of one or two people.

- New technology developments and their consequences for (a) access and freedom of information (eg. Census 1991), and (b) the tendency to commoditise information. Who owns the information anyway? A role here for RadStats in collaboration with others could not be exaggerated.
- Issues for statisticians as workers (terms and conditions, ethics, commercial pressures) as well as for users of statistics.
- We need to know which members would act as 'expert spokespersons' (or perhaps more accurately 'advisers') to (a) the media, or (b) campaign groups requesting support. Better this than a self-appointed Publicity Officer.
- Local Government finance (Poll Tax and other issues) and Transport (Transport 2000, Capital plans, ...) need subgroups.

## ORGANISATIONAL DECISIONS

**Subscriptions:** A discussion about whether raising membership would mean no need to raise subscriptions. Narrowly voted 19-14 with abstentions to raise subs, leave the precise amounts up to £10 to the Troika once the financial situation of Radstats is clearer. Start a low-waged category, kept to a minimum. [Rates have now been set at £3 unwaged; £5 low waged; £10 waged, institutions and overseas.

### Troika for 1990/91:

Steve Simpsom, Bradford, to do membership and finance. Cecilio Mar Molinero, Southampton. One vacancy.

### AGM 1991:

Liverpool contacts would be approached early, to give maximum time for publicity.

### Newsletter editors:

May, No. 45: Roy Carr-Hill and Bob Lavers, York. September, No. 46: Scottish members if successfully rallied by Fintan Hurley [Later Russell Ecob, Glasgow agreed to take it on.] Dec/Jan, No. 47: Cecilio Mar Molinero if no other offers by then.

## British Society for Social Responsibility in Science:

Charlie Owen described BSSRS' 20 year history, its provision of an umbrella and PO Box for Radstats and others, but how its pioneering work on IQ, hazards, and more has been largely been taken up by new organisations, while BSSRS has become weaker and in the red. Rent alone is £2,400 and the office worker has been lost.

Charlie felt that BSSRS has 4 options: (i) relaunch (unlikely) (ii) Link with another organisation; (iii) Hibernation; (iv) Close completely.

Radstats agreed willingness to pay for a PO Box facility and to circulate any appeal. [BSSRS has not closed completely. Our PO Box continues with them at least until July. Various alternatives exist after then, and post will be forwarded.]

## Other business:

NHS Federation campaign and their request for affiliation would be discussed by the Health group.

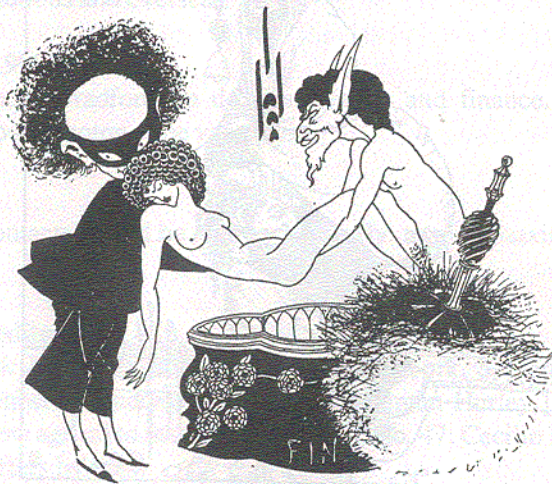


# Troika News

Andrew Philpott Morgan in London has joined Steve Simpson and Cecilio Mar Molinero on RadStats' organising Troika, initially working on a new promotional leaflet. Watch this space.

An idea for a campaigning and forward looking book on official statistics and their history in the last decade has been suggested. Cecilio is looking at the possibilities – much material has already been written but not collated as far as we know.

The survey of members interests sent with the last Newsletter yielded 39 replies, most with offers of articles, help with organising meetings and with editing newsletters, as well as those members' interests and willingness to speak to the media or to campaign groups seeking advice. A fire in the mail train from London to West Yorkshire scorched some replies from the South on the 8th of March, so if you haven't heard anything from us your reply might have been burnt completely – please contact Steve Simspon! Thanks to all those who have responded – you will soon be hearing from us (or may have already done so). A list of members interests will be circulated to those who responded.



The Radical Statistics Newsletter is available by subscription. Current rates are £5 per year for low waged and £10 for waged, institutions and overseas. The cost to the unwaged is £3. The newsletter is available from the Radical Statistics Group, care of BSSRS, 25 Horsell Road, London N5 1XL. Phone 01-607-9615.

The Radical Statistics Newsletter is usually produced three times per year.

All members of the Radical Statistics Group are invited to contribute to the newsletter – articles may vary from brief notices to detailed articles. Letters and reviews are also welcome.

Articles should be sent to the next editor, but may also be submitted to 'The Editor, Radical Statistics Group, BSSRS, 25 Horsell Road, London N5 1XL'.

## DATA PROTECTION ACT

In accordance with the Data Protection Act, any member of the Radical Statistics Group is entitled to ask:

- For a printout of his/her personal details and the record's name and address (as kept on the Radical Statistics computer).
- That his/her personal details do not be so stored. Anyone wishing to avail themselves of this right, please contact the Troika (address on inside front cover) with requests in triplicate.

## Editor of Newsletter No. 46

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