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The **Radical Statistics Group** is a group of individuals based on the distribution of this newsletter. The small amount of central administration work is done by a committee known as the "Troika", and elected at the Annual General Meeting. The editorship of this newsletter rotates; the next editor will be Bob Peacock who can be contacted via the address and telephone number given below. Apart from producing this newsletter, the work of the RSG is done by its sub-groups 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 group

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MUSINGS

It will be obvious that this is a thin number. Whilst we acknowledge that we did not expend great effort in soliciting contributions, very few actually volunteered anything. Given recent policy changes and proposals involving devaluation (a subject close to this loose association's hearts), higher education, the mines, rail privatisation, the slump, etc, there is surely no shortage of subjects to write about. If we want the newsletter to flourish then we have to ensure the contributions keep rolling in.

We were all very sad to learn of the death of Cathie Marsh on 1st January 1993. To record our sorrow and as a tribute to her work, the next editors of RSN 54 have decided to make the issue a Cathie Marsh Memorial Issue (see later for details).

Roy Carr Hill and Bob Lavers

THANKS

Thank you to all who took the trouble to complete the mini-survey in the last issue of Radical Statistics, and even more so to those who offered an article, to work in a subgroup, or to contribute in some other way. Your contributions will have effect already at the February conference and hopefully in a stronger Radical Statistics Group over the next year.

The Troika

Cathie Marsh

Some of you will have known or known of Cathie Marsh, who died on January 1 1993. Cathie was a founder member of Radical Statistics and edited several early issues of the newsletter. I remember especially her succinct and accurate witticisms, including one on the following lines:

'Radical Statistics has been in existence for several years now, but I can't yet decide whether it is an organisation which is going to change the world, or whether it will remain a stimulating mailing list of interesting congenial persons.'

In recent years, Cathie was instrumental in arranging the 'Sample of anonymised records' from the 1991 census.

There was an amazing and very moving celebration of Cathie's life held in Manchester on January 13. Over 300 people gathered and dozens spoke of Cathie's influence on their life and thoughts.

The proposed special issue of Radical Statistics will expand on Cathie's work in a forward looking manner. Together with Bob Peacock, I urge you to prepare an article for this special issue.

John Bibby

Radical Statistics 54

Cathie Marsh Memorial Issue

A special issue of Radical Statistics has been proposed to commemorate the work of Cathie Marsh, who died on 1st January 1993. The special issue may also be published as a book.

This issue will be jointly edited by John Bibby and John Peacock. The editors would welcome articles in any of the following areas with special relevance to Cathie's own work:

- * surveys
- * public opinion polls
- * the census
- * exploratory data analysis
- * teaching statistics and research methods
- * poverty
- * inequalities in education
- * hours of work
- * confidentiality
- * the demand for higher education

The editors will also be pleased to consider articles in any other appropriate area.

It is hoped that a book might be published, at a later date, to include these articles from Radical Statistics 54 and others.

Submissions should be sent to Bob Peacock by Friday 30th April 1993 at the address given elsewhere in this issue and following the general guidelines for the format of electronic and hard copy.

The editors can be contacted by telephone on the following numbers:

John Bibby:	0742 533 145	(Sheffield Hallam University)
	0904 424 381	(QED Books, York and home)
Bob Peacock:	031 557 4929	(Astra Clinical Research Unit)
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Radstats AGM report

The latest AGM was held in Birmingham, efficiently and generously hosted by Philip Bertrand and Tony Fielding. 40 people turned up, and contributed to a successful and enjoyable meeting.

Anthony Staines and Ludi Simpson gave a brief talk on the developing use of Performance Indicators in the public service. This is a phenomenon which will undoubtedly increase, and there was a feeling that RadStats should try to analyze it further. Roy Carr-Hill didn't turn up to give his promised talk on Poverty and International Aid.

Susan Starkings from South Bank University talked about the use and abuse of standardised assessment test scores (SAT's) in ranking schools. The entire system of tests, with its key stages, and four levels of tests at 7, 11, 14 and 16 is not yet in place, but it soon will be. We were given a chance to look at raw data from several schools, and invited to interpret it. This gave a dramatic example of just how misleading these figures are! The precise objective of this vast system of tests, rules, and pieces of paper remains a little obscure, but its potential for abuse, and for doing damage to children is becoming clearer.

Monica Walker, from Sheffield, spoke about women and crime statistics, attacking several much promulgated myths with hard facts. For example it is the case that a higher proportion of women in prison are first time offenders than men. However a closer examination of the figures for convictions shows that women are much less likely than men to be sent to prison after conviction, regardless of their prior criminal record. Thus the apparent excess of women first time offenders in prison, actually represents the fact that a far larger proportion of women convicted of crime are first time offenders, rather than any bias by the judicial system against women.

Allyson Pollock, from London, spoke about the debate on rationing and health care. This debate has been running since the mid 1980's in Britain. Several important questions are commonly omitted from the political discourse. For example the relative roles of excessive demand, and under provision in determining health care supply are seldom considered. Notions of efficiency, commonly derived from accountancy practice, dominate much of the discussion. Surely other criteria, such as equity, effectiveness, and accessibility should enter into consideration. Many people fail to consider the implications of the methods chosen to analyze health care supply. QALY's provide a very clear example of this. The impact of the internal market on the rationing debate has been significant, and largely pernicious. In practice markets have reduced choice, staff, and beds, and have increased the proportion of health care costs borne by patients.

After lunch the meeting divided into three groups, one looking at performance indicators, one looking at health care rationing, and one looking at gender in statistics. The three groups united for the AGM after two hours of (occasionally heated) debate.

The Health group are proposing three avenues for future activity. The first is a further debunking of the 'myth of infinite demand' which seems to be central to much of the current analysis of health care provision. They will take part in the forthcoming BMA debate on rationing. Last, but by no means least, they will reissue a new edition of the "Unofficial guide to health statistics". If you have promised to write for this, your promise is about to be called in! If you would like to, get in touch with Alison Macfarlane.

The Performance Indicators group is going to start by developing some sensible questions to ask of any performance indicator. This will be a collaborative effort, and the address with which to collaborate will be in the next Newsletter. The new Radstats broadsheet on "Choosing schools by numbers?" based on earlier work by this group is now available. Ideas for more of the same will be welcomed!

The Gender and Statistics group will start by looking at the ways in which women can be made invisible by official statistics. Unemployment figures and social class measurement are only two of the most prominent. People interested in this topic, and other related topics, for example women as victims and perpetrators of crime are welcomed.

A number of people are interested in using media methods, including video work, both for teaching statistics, and for popularising them. Radio Scotland are doing a program on this topic later this month, and there may be a radio series later on in the year. Anyone with ideas please get in touch. Also if you have any interesting and challenging teaching material for any level of statistics, please let us know.

The material on deaths related to the political violence in Northern Ireland published in the Newsletter about a year ago is going to be issued in a greatly expanded form, possibly as a small book, or a large pamphlet depending on size. This should be an invaluable resource for anyone trying to get some understanding of affairs in the North. More details will follow.

A special issue of the Newsletter commemorating Cathie Marsh will be produced. Material to Bob Peacock by 30/4/93.

The AGM finished with a brief report on our finances, which are satisfactory, our membership, which continues to grow, and the election of a new

Troika, who are John Bibby, from Sheffield, Philip Bertrand from Birmingham, Anthony Staines, from Leeds, and Andrew Pepper, from St Albans. Other volunteers are welcome to join!

Ludi Simpson, who has done Trojan work for the last three years, particularly on computerisation, has resigned. Although he will continue to be available for consultation, help, envelope stuffing etc.. he will be greatly missed, and the AGM gave him a richly deserved vote of thanks.

Radical Statistics is available by subscription. Current rates are £5 per year for low waged (self defined) and £10 for waged, institutions, and overseas. The cost to the unwaged is £3. This news letter is available from the Radical Statistics Group, c/o London Hazards Centre, 3rd Floor, Headland House, 308 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8DS.

Radical Statistics 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 using the address below.

Data Protection Act

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

- a) For a printout of his/her personal details and name and address as kept on the Radical Statistics Group computer.
- b) 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.

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Deadline for copy: 30th April 1993

For those with access to computers the next editor will take contributions on 5.25" or 3.5" DOS discs, using Wordperfect or ASCII text (both if possible) mentioning the hardware the discs were prepared on. Please also include a hard copy of the contribution. The editor does not have extensive publishing facilities so if you are able to send clean finished copy, please do so using the following specifications:

A4 paper. 1" = 25mm margins on all four sides.

Articles: the preferred font is Bookman 13 point for text; subheadings are 18 point bold, title is 24 point bold. If Bookman is unavailable use your favoured alternative keeping close to the stated point sizes.

Figures: prepare separately as for inclusion on A4 page, indicating on the hard copy text where they should be included.

Any other details: prepare as this newsletter, or contact the editor.