

Communication from the Troika

Message 1 from Russell Ecob

This is the second issue to come out this year. We have plans for four issues in all this year, this being agreed at the 2003 AGM. This will fulfil our legal obligation to members for three issues per year and make good the backlog of last year. Look out for the special issues on Sexuality (Guest edited by Paul Reynolds and Colin Clark) and on the Iraq War (Guest Edited by Roy Carr-Hill and David Gordon). Each will have an eye-catching designer cover from the same stable as this one (thanks, Melanie).

We have to announce that Pete Latarche, our Administrator, has given his (6 month) notice of his retirement. It is sad to see him go – he has been with us for around 8 years and brought much sanity, experience and constructive help to the organisation behind the scenes and he will be hard to replace. Please, if anyone wishes to take on this (remunerated) post do enquire further (or if you can suggest anyone) – to Robin (R.Rice@ed.ac.uk). Pete was the first person in this post and we would like to think that we have learnt a lot from having him with us. He has offered to help with the hand-over process.

The planning for the 2004 conference, on the Statistics of Privatisation, and to be held in London is in full sway. This will take place on Saturday 28th February with a Friday evening introductory session with a high profile speaker. We have drawn up a draft programme for the Saturday and most speakers for this are now confirmed. However, we are still in the process of searching for a suitable speaker for Friday evening– any suggestions gratefully received (to Helen Meszaros, conference organiser, please, at hmeszaros@btclick.com).

Finally, we plan another Critical Essay for 2003/4. The last (and the first!), one was in 2001/2. This time we will have two categories of submission. The first (student category) is those who have not yet graduated with a first degree. This is to encourage those younger entrants (maybe still at school) and those who have not necessarily studied a particular subject in great depth. The other is an open category. We will be encouraging contributions from those who are not studying or working in academia.

We need help with marking! Maybe you have one or two days to spare towards the end of the summer term? The marking process involves an initial screen of scripts, last time by troika members, following which a selected group is further assessed by separate assessors. Prizes and

commendations will be given as before with essays in both categories appearing on the website and with encouragement to submit to the journal. Please contact me (to Russell Ecob, Russell@ecob-consulting.com) if you are prepared to be involved at either stage – and/or contact Ludi Simpson, Ray Thomas or Roy Carr-Hill if you wish to know what it was like for them. The deadline for essay submission will be 1st May 2004 and we expect to notify of results by 1st July. Offers to publicise this essay will also be appreciated.

Russell Ecob
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Message 2 from Robin Rice

The Troika decided at its June meeting in Edinburgh to fund an hourly worker to scan back issues of the newsletter to put on the website at <http://www.radstats.org.uk/>. Alistair Cairns has begun the job, working with myself as the current web editor, in Edinburgh. Both the forthcoming new issues and the older issues will be presented in Adobe PDF (portable document format), preserving the look and feel of the printed version, including illustrations and graphs, while cutting down on the labour involved in marking up HTML pages.

Decisions in the beginning had to do with resolution, quality, and file sizes, aiming for efficiency to get through the sixty-odd back issues. Tables of contents will be conveyed in HTML, to ensure that the authors and titles can be found on the site search and by Google and other search engines.

Joan Fairgrieve, also in Edinburgh, is now volunteering to produce the new issues in PDF format from the original documents. In addition, Saghir Bashir in Cambridge has volunteered to write some Python scripts to automate the assignment of articles to our subject classification list (set up initially by Ray Thomas). This work may spur Saghir to further efforts towards re-designing the website. Fortunately Paul Hewson, the previous web editor, continues to advise us on website matters from Devon.

It's exciting to view the older issues online, complete with graphs, cartoons, and illustrations. This work will show off our legacy over many years, and help new members like myself to follow the history of activity within the organisation. If anyone thinks they could write a grant to make use of the digitised collection, please let myself or Ray Thomas know - it would be great to subsidize some or all of the work, since scanning is rather time-consuming and our budget is limited.

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