

HEALTH GROUP

Since the last newsletter appeared the Health Group's draft critique of the DHSS' consultative document 'Priorities for Health and Personal Social Services in England' has been transformed into a printed pamphlet entitled 'Whose Priorities' (and described as Radical Statistics Pamphlet No. 1 to encourage other subgroups to follow it with nos. 2, ..., n, n>>2). This process has not been exactly effortless, but having found out what was involved we would encourage others to repeat the performance.

We started by trying to find someone to publish the pamphlet for us. Although our approaches were received sympathetically we realized early in October that the only way to get it published by the end of the month when DHSS' "consultation" period closed was to do it ourselves.

We were very lucky that one of our group lives in a house which is a nerve-centre of alternative printing operations. Her friends were able to typeset and print it for us cheaply and at short notice. They are also in the demystification business and patiently initiated us into the arts of pasting up the typeset copy and assembling the printed pages into pamphlets, as well as plying us with welcome cups of tea. Maryanne Gordon of BSSRS very kindly drew up cartoons to enliven some of our points and others in BSSRS gave advice and helped with publicity. Finally who paid the bill? Not the CIA, KGB, drug companies or other organizations injurious to health but 20 members of the group. We hope that we will all be recompensed from sales perhaps leave some money in the kitty for the next production.

'Whose Priorities' was received favourably in the 'New Scientist' (Nov. 4, pp. 228-9) (with more than a little help from our friends!) and with qualified approval in the 'Lancet' on Nov. 6 (p.1035). It has since been reviewed favourably elsewhere in a variety of publications to whom we sent review copies. Martin Bland and I were interviewed by London Broadcasting but have yet to meet anyone who heard this broadcast! As a result of the publicity we have either sold or distributed all our original 735 copies and have had to have some more printed.

This concentration on stapling and folding paper and licking envelopes has not put an end to all other activities especially for those lucky enough to live away from London and thus avoid these activities. We have started reading DHSS' latest 'consultative document', 'Sharing Resources', which is a euphemism for sharing cuts. For this document the 'consultation' period is indefinite but the policies will be implemented in January. Other projects under discussion by us are the subject of clinical trials and the production of a set of notes to help people find out for themselves about resources and policies for health in their area.

'Whose Priorities' can be obtained from Alison Macfarlane (address below) at a price of 45p + 15p postage. Its production has attracted new members who doubtless have further ideas and suggestions. To discuss these and to work out how to organize ourselves to carry them out, we are holding a one day meeting on Saturday January 15 from 11 a.m. - 5.30 p.m. in London at the Notting Dale Urban Studies Centre. For further information please write to:

Alison Macfarlane,
40 Warwick Road,
St. Albans,
Herts.

Note from the Editor:

It might be useful for RSN to have a discussion of "Whose Priorities" in the next issue. Would anybody who has comments to make please send them to Lee Harvey, the next editor (address on cover).