editorial

The prime purpose of this slim edition is to announce this year's AGM. The democratically self-selected group who have organised have left space for the usual discussions on the future of the group: its publications, whether it should hold general meetings, etc. etc. However, most space has been left for discussion on topics of current issue, from which it is hoped some action may arise. The subjects so far (see back page) all have indicators as a theme. The note in a previous issue aroused considerable interest in this area. We hope the final session will include any other interests that people have.

I feel that such meetings are very important just because they are a chance to meet each other. But this has a danger: that we all form nice cliques, arrange trips to Haiti for each other and so on. For this reason the meeting will only be really successful if new people come along and take an active part in the group. The circulation of this newsletter is 300 now. Surely we're not all passive readers of anything we can get hold of.

Please send off the form on the back page as soon as possible, so the caterers have some idea of numbers, and so you get a chance to read the advance papers.

Nic Wright

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF MATHEMATICS

16th January, 1978

Nic Wright,
31 Brassey Road,
WINCHESTER,
Hants.

Dear Nic,

I am going to India for a few months in February, so I haven't been able to collect my thoughts into a coherent contribution (did I ever?), but perhaps you would not mind printing the following letter for me.

1. In November J.C. Tanner presented a paper to the RSS on traffic forecasting. This created a certain amount of comment and criticism, some of it from RS members. I wonder if there is scope here for a pamphlet on the issue? It might include sections such as the following:

> Introduction
> The history of traffic growth and relationship with development of
>   consumerism and capitalist industrialisation.
> Effect of the "energy crisis" and environmental awareness
> The need for prediction
> Comparison with socialist countries and policies
> Methods of prediction used in the UK - presentation and criticism
> Comparison with other countries
> The effect of predictions upon policies
> Case studies   (a)   The Archway Road "improvement"
>   (b)   The A5(D) in Milton Keynes
>   (c)   others? M42 *
> How can policy be brought in explicitly to the prediction equation?
> Socio-political role of the Road Research Laboratory - individuals,
>   funding, relationship with big business, trade associations and
>   pressure groups
> Conclusion.

I have already contacted several people who have expressed an interest in such a pamphlet. Would anyone else like to help. If so, please let me know. (I gather that the Government may be becoming more critical of Tanner's projections, so because of that and my absence in India I probably won't move on this front until August or so.)

2. At the OU we are preparing a course on "Maths across the curriculum" for teachers. One of the skills which may be discussed is the ability to estimate e.g. the height of a tree, area of a field, distances, number of people in a crowd/leaves on a tree/birds in a flock, etc. etc. Questions for the reader: (a) What is this skill called? (b) Has anything been written on it? Answers on a postcard please to the above address. (No prizes.)

* Wot about Winchester M3 ? (ed)

3. A nice quote for you from Robert Goodman in "After the Planners" (Penguin) who advocates a "guerrilla professionalism" which "sees its main purpose as the creation of a cultural revolution in which the first step towards change is the breaking down of class barriers and in which intellectuals and professionals desert their present roles and help create a joint educational experience for layman and professional alike."

4. Can anyone identify the following?

   Examples of passages generated using word frequencies in different languages (a) using frequencies only (b) using first-order Markov probabilities (c) using second-order ditto, etc., etc.

   I have seen it somewhere, but cannot remember where!

   A happy new year to all RS readers!

   I hope to see you before the year is out.

   Cheers,

   Lesley Butler

   pp <u>John Bibby</u>

P.S. (health group members please note) It seems I may be going to Cuba in the autumn to give a course of lectures on applications of multivariate analysis in health and medicine. I'd like to include comments on mis-applications, and I'd really appreciate it if anyone could suggest to me relevant articles or books to which I might refer.

Editors note. John has suggested to me that we discuss the traffic forecasting at the AGM.

JB/lab