

HEALTH GROUP

Our report in the last newsletter that we were having difficulty in clarifying the aims of our next 'magnum opus' turned out to be a considerable understatement. At one stage it reached an unmanageably large size. We then decided to leave out the causes of ill health this time round and make them the subject of a future effort. After much discussion, we are now writing to the following outline:

1. Criteria currently used to justify decision making in the health and social services.
2. Critique of Cost Benefit Analysis and other techniques for decision making in health.
3. Data for decision making. Is it available, accessible or relevant? This will include a summary of data currently collected and who to ask for it.
4. Opening up the decision making process - democracy, workers and users.

There was some discussion as to whether we should undertake an explicitly political critique; it was decided that this is not our function, but that we should aim to provide people with extra tools to make their own political critique. At the same time, we were glad to learn that the 'Politics of Health' are doing a project where they have chosen a current health service issue, hospital closures, and are analysing the political processes involved. We feel that this is complementary to what we are doing and are going to keep in close touch.

After we had a meeting with the Chilean Committee for Human Rights, they received an offer of help from sources with far more resources than ourselves. We were glad to hear this and understand that their work is going ahead well. As they were out of this country at the time of our AGM, this is the reason why their data was not discussed then.

We almost simultaneously ran out of stocks of 'Whose Priorities?' and 'In defence of the NHS'. This means that we have sold 2000 of each. As we had reason to believe that there is still a demand for both of them we have had them both reprinted which was a strain on our resources. However there will be time, at the present rate of progress, to recoup before we want to print another pamphlet. The 250 copies of 'RAWP deals' which NUPE kindly photocopied for us were snapped up very quickly, and we are now having to produce some more by duplicating.

From time to time we get requests from BSSRS to help with occupational health statistics. Added to this, David Jones and Peter Smith have done some work for Pat Kinnersley's rewrite of his 'Hazards of Work' and over in Hamilton Ontario, Harry Shannon is writing a guide to the Decennial Supplement on Occupational Mortality in England and Wales.

The next general meeting of the Health Group will take place during the meeting of the Society for Social Medicine in Leeds from September 13 - 15. It is likely that our meeting will take place somewhere in Leeds University in the evening of September 13 or 14. If anyone would like to help organize it or receive details of the precise time and place of the meeting that others have organised please contact me. The subject of the meeting is as yet undecided, but its format will not be a 20 minute talk followed by 10 minutes discussion!

* STOP PRESS

Meeting is at 6pm on Thursday 14th September in Leeds University, follow signs to Society for Social Medicine Meeting in Rupert Beckett Lecture Theatre, where further details will be available.

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REMIS (RACE, ETHNIC MINORITY & IMMIGRATION STATISTICS) GROUP

The rising tide of racism and fascism in Britain is one of the most serious issues in political life today, and calls for us to be active at all levels in opposition. One of these levels is the "numbers game." Racists use statistics and we must do the same to refute their arguments. We have thus formed a group to work on this.

The Remis group was born on May 24th, 1978, at a meeting at 9, Poland Street, London. Our first baby is to be a Pamphlet on "Statistics of Immigration and Ethnic Minorities - a closer look at the numbers game." This will be based on a reinterpretation of the available statistical data sources plus research findings where relevant. The aim is to interpret the statistics for the interested layman by using graphs, tables, photographs and a written report in a pamphlet of about 30 pages. The stress will be on producing an interesting pamphlet, with hopefully a large circulation, which communicates the essential statistics and their implications.

At our first meeting we discussed the idea in principle and agreed to divide the work between ourselves in the following categories. Population, Fertility, Employment and Unemployment, Housing, Crime Racism and the Media. We intend to hold a meeting in late June (provided everyone does their homework) to discuss rough drafts.

We are keen to involve other people in this work which ranges from writing drafts to folding, cutting and packing. The birth pangs of REMIS have not gone unnoticed by other groups - particularly the Runnymede Trust and the S.S.R.C. Unit for Ethnic Relations at Bristol University with whom we hope to co-operate.

If you are interested please contact us at the addresses below:

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