

Health Group

When we met on December 12, the group showed considerably more signs of health than it had over the summer months. Our 'unofficial guide to official statistics' is now showing signs of getting nearer to completion, and the need for a more inspiring title is thus becoming more urgent. Dave Haran has done a lot of work tidying up the manuscript and persuading others to retype it for us. After David Jones has done some further editing, we hope it will be ready for printing.

We also discussed various ideas about what to do next. The main alternatives proposed were to review the adverse health effects of all forms of energy production, or to dissect the clinical trials done to test the drugs introduced onto the market during the last year. In the end we decided on the second project, and are meeting at the end of January to discuss it further. However we made a positive decision not to commit ourselves at this stage to producing the results of our deliberations as a pamphlet or any other art form! If anyone would like further details about the project, contact Andy Haines, 57B Leghorn Road, London NW10. Tel. 01 961 2312 (home) 01 864 5311 ext 2823(work).

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REPORT FROM THE RACE GROUP

It probably won't come as a surprise to anyone to hear that our publication date of December 1979 has not been met. The project has been given an injection of enthusiasm, however. It has now been decided to try to get the book published by one of the big publishers. This will inevitably mean that it will not appear until 1981 when the statistics will be out of date. However, since the book is primarily a reference guide, we feel that it will still be of some use, if not that for which it was first intended.

Though there is still some polishing to be done on the book, the group is now looking forward to its second, as yet undefined, project. Hopefully this will remain within its terms of reference. We are aiming for something far less ambitious and problematic than a book.

With the new project in mind, we are looking for extra people. The formation of the group in May 1978 was thwarted by the late appearance of the RS newsletter announcing the inaugural meetings, so that people who were interested didn't really get a chance to join in. We hope it will be different this time. If you are interested, please get in touch with one of us. There will be an

opportunity at the AGM in March to chat. A meeting will be arranged, probably on a date after the AGM.

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REPORT ON THE RADSTATS RACE WORKSHOP AT THE BSSRS AGM IN NOVEMBER 1979

Members of the Radstats Race group have, over the past months, been working with members of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science on a series of issues. These BSSRS/Radstats initiatives formed the basis for discussions at a workshop at the recently held (24th November) BSSRS AGM.

The first intervention arose last June when BSSRS was 'leaked' an article that was about to appear in the Summer 1979 edition of Population Trends (No. 16) detailing new projections of the size of the G.B. population of New Commonwealth and Pakistani ethnic origin. BSSRS prepared a press release which was issued to coincide with the publication of Population Trends 16 and which attacked the projections both on technical grounds and for the form of their presentation which invited highly contentious and potentially inflammatory assumptions, described by OPCS themselves as "speculative" or "arbitrary" to be presented by those so politically inclined as 'objective fact'.

The second intervention arose from the knowledge that OPCS are shortly due to present to parliament their plans for the 1981 Census. It is also known that they would like to include, for the first time, questions directly asking respondents' race or ethnic origin. BSSRS produced a leaflet 'The Question of Race: The case against including any question on race or ethnic origin in the 1981 census' (available from 9 Poland Street, price 10p + S&E), the main conclusions of which were:

1. We are strongly in favour of the collection of information where it can be shown that it will be of use either to those about whom it is collected or to those formulating policy on their behalf. It has yet to be shown that the race question in the census will be of any use in either respect.
2. The census is not the appropriate tool for collecting the information that is needed. Information on institutional racism and discrimination cannot be collected at national census level.
3. It is politically dangerous to consider the race question as merely a technical issue. The question in the census makes the assumption that it is black people rather than institutional racism which is the problem. The question must therefore be opposed.
4. It should be recognised that it is not any lack of information that is holding back policy developments for the benefit of black people. Rather it is a lack of political will. If the Government were committed to fighting racism, more information might be needed; but let's get the government committed to fighting racism first."

This second initiative in particular formed the basis for a lively discussion at the BSSRS AGM, where it was decided to launch a broadly based campaign in opposition to the Census question on race.

By the way, for anyone who can remember the Race Group's original project - the publication of a booklet on race statistics in the U.K., in conjunction with the Runnymede Trust - had best forget it; like we wish we could!