

18



p. 99

We ask :

WERE THE

SNAKE GODDESSES OF ANCIENT
MINOA REALLY STATISTICIANS ?*

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RS18 is a joint effort by Stephen Shenfield and Heather Booth in Birmingham. The cover design and editorial of RS18 are by Stephen, and much of the typing and putting together are by Heather. The delay in production has been due to the late arrival of articles, despite considerable effort to avoid this. If anyone has any ideas on how to get articles to arrive by the copy date given in the newsletter, PLEASE WRITE IN.

RADICAL STATISTICS GROUP NEWS

ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

Radical Statistics newsletters are available by subscription. Current Rates are £2.00 per year for individuals and £4.00 for institutions. The newsletter is available from Radical Statistics Group, c/o BSSRS, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3 DG.

Guidelines for Editors and Contributors

The Radical Statistics Newsletter is normally produced three times a year: February, May, October. Editors - normally send the typed newsletter to John Bibby (Faculty of Mathematics, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA) one month before they want the newsletter to reach readers.

- at the same time should notify the Troika (RSG, c/o BSSRS, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG) so that they can update the mailing list with John Bibby.
- will be provided with A3 sheets (for typing articles to be reduced) from John Bibby on request. (Note that these sheets require a wide typewriter, eg IBM)

Contributors should send typed contributions, single-spaced on A4 paper (or on A3 as above), where possible.

SOCIAL INDICATORS PAMPHLET

The pamphlet, "Social Indicators: for individual well-being or social control?", is now out of print. Photocopies can, however, still be obtained by those who really want them from John Lintott, c/o RSG, c/o BSSRS, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG. Price (as before): 40p plus 20p p&p.

HELP! HELP NEEDED

Help is required on Monday afternoons (not necessarily every Monday) in the BSSRS Office, answering the telephone etc. If you can spare the time, please get in touch either by calling the office on 01-437 2728 on a Monday afternoon or by writing to RSG(office help), c/o BSSRS, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG. There is lots of interesting material to browse through in the office, including our very own Radical Statistics Group Archive.

THE NEW REMINDER SYSTEM

Various methods have been tried to get people to pay up regularly - or even occasionally! - for this newsletter. None of them have been very effective, partly because they have been reminders to the general readership - and that never applies to you, does it now? With ever-increasing costs, not least because of some fatter newsletters of late, it becomes more and more important to keep income in line with expenditure. We are doing this by sending the newsletters to only those who demonstrate (by payment) that they really want the newsletter, rather than by increasing subscription rates. Reminders to individuals now accompany the newsletters, where necessary, and it is regretted that those from whom we do not receive payment before the next newsletter is mailed will not be in receipt of it.

NEXT ISSUE

RADICAL STATISTICS 19 will be edited by Bob Gilchrist. Please send him your contributions by MID-SEPTEMBER. His address is: 19 Mercia Grove, London SE13.

RADICAL STATISTICS GROUP AND YOU

Are you tired of seeing the same old names in print in RSN? You can change it quite simply by writing something yourself, or by getting together with friends to produce something. It doesn't have to be very long, or particularly statistical, or terribly serious, or awfully funny....but whoever is editor would love to receive it. Please don't wait to be asked personally - it may never happen! Send in your contribution - be it an article, criticism of an article or of RSN/RSG, an item of information, a request for information, a cartoon, or whatever - but do it NOW! And keep on doing it....

....WHO? ME!

One reader who was asked personally to contribute to this newsletter declined the offer, feeling (not untypically) not 'suitably qualified to contribute anything to such an august group'. In the same letter, however, this unqualified person did expound something of the problems of industrial statistics - 'the major problem of administrative inconvenience (under-reporting by employers) which in turn affects the accuracy of published statistics; and the not unrelated problem of sensitivity (what degree of injury counts as a 'reportable injury?'), which in its turn affects the statistical method (and the validity of such a method) used to express the accident rate.'

And later: 'If anyone is at all interested, I have already produced an unpublished paper (still in manuscript form) which tries to draw together the work, carried out for the Robens Committee, on the adequacy of accident statistics, and the attempt by Health and Safety Executive to remedy the situation (by introducing new Regulations - due in 1981) on the reporting of accidents.'

If you are interested, please write to RSG(Industrial Accidents), c/o BSSRS, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG. Mail will be forwarded.

The Conference began with a very enjoyable party deep in the heart of Central London. Thanks are due to Ludi Simpson for organizing this.

Saturday morning began with two substantial reports, from the Race and the Health Sub-Groups. Each Group described their recent publications, the aims of each, and the process of producing them. (See fuller reports elsewhere in this issue.)

We again had a delicious lunch at the "Island Queen"; members were somewhat more adventurous in their choices this year, with only 23.4% ordering hamburgers, as against 47.136% last year.

Among the issues discussed at the business meeting were: recycling the Fire Brigade, raising the dead (Sub-Groups), and the problem which has baffled mathematicians for centuries--squaring the troika. For how we did it, see the Minutes (starting soon).

The Education Sub-Group, referring to the recent controversial research by Rutter et al. on the influence of schools on educational attainment, described how this had generated critiques of conventional statistical criticism, and consequent attempts to develop alternative approaches. (See the report from the Education Sub-Group elsewhere in this issue).

Finally, Dave Haran introduced what had been planned as a longer discussion on the cuts, by discussing a recent press attack on an N.H.S. hospital administrator. A meeting to discuss these issues further was planned in Birmingham (see announcement).

Minutes of Business Meeting -- 8 March

Action

1. Minutes of last meeting (published in RS 15): accepted.
2. Matters arising: (a) Fire Brigade--Ian Miles reported only 6 responses to the last appeal for volunteers. The Troika was asked to discuss and clarify proposals. Troika
- 3-5. Reports on Health, Race, Education Sub-Groups--see below.
6. Reports on Other Groups: (a) Teaching--A Seminar on the implications of Demystifying Social Statistics for teaching is to be considered; meanwhile, those interested are asked to contact Jeff Evans (c/o Poland St., London W 1). J.E:
B.G:
(b) Economics--Interested members should get in touch with one of the many groups of the Conference of Socialist Economists (55 Mount Pleasant, London WC 1); e.g. the Inflation Accounting group. Also mentioned was the U.S. Union of Radical Political Economists publication, Dollars and Sense. ?You?
(c) Ad-Hoc Group on Politics of Perinatal Mortality--contact Aidan MacFarlane, Oxford Area Health Authority.
(d) Equal Opportunities Commission/ SSRC Seminar on Women in Official Statistics, 6th June. Alison MacFarlane would like feedback on a draft of her paper "Official Statistics on Women and Aspects of Health and Illness", to be discussed at a RS Seminar on 29 April, or available from her, c/o 9 Poland St.
7. Membership: see below.
8. Treasurer's Report: see below.

9. Seminars: During the last year, we had a successful programme with the following:

John Adams on "The Problems of Forecasting"

Stephen Shenfield on "The Role of Quantification "

Alison MacFarlane on "Perinatal Mortality"

Seminars are advertised in the RSS News and Notes, New Society, CSE Newsletter and the Morning Star.

Bob Gilchrist was thanked for his work in organizing these. Further ?You?
volunteers are requested. (Write Bob, c/o Rad Stats, 9 Poland St.)

10. Steering Committee Elections: Results were as follows:

Action

Troika: Heather Booth tel. work (021) 327-0194
Jeff Evans (01) 804-8131; home (01) 348-5514
John Lintott " (01) 226-3208
plus Ian Miles " (0273) 686-758 " (0273) 601-369

Proposals:

(a) Ian to be brought into the Troika to have special responsibility for revitalizing the Fire Brigade.

(b) Troika's phone numbers to be made known so that any reader can contact one member when there is an issue requiring an immediate Rad Stats response. This response could come either directly from the Troika, or from a person or group approached by them, within Rad. Stats.

Other responsibilities: Seminars--Bob Gilchrist

Member of BSSRS Steering Committee--not yet Troika
filled. (squared)

BSSRS Office Help--Volunteers were

Ben Armstrong, Jeff Evans; others welcome.

Radical Publications Group (recently disbanded)

11. BSSRS Sub: £10 + £20 donations were agreed.

12. Other Business: (a) Radical Statistics Conference: This was suggested by John Irvine for late 1980 or 1981, with the aim of opening up the debate on the use of statistics, and recruiting to Rad. Stats. It might be entitled: "Critiques of Official Statistics" or "Alternative Statistics" or "How Statistics are Used in Policy-Making". Two possible audiences were suggested: the radical science movement, and the producers of official statistics (overlapping groups?). The Troika, plus interested individuals are to follow up. Suggestions to 9 Poland St.

Troika
J.I.
?You?

Jeff Evans

The West Midlanders

Radical Statistics members in the West Midlands area were invited to meet each other locally on May Day of this year. Attendance wasn't too good, partly because several members were either standing for local elections or were campaigning for the same. Those of us that did meet found each other interesting and definitely worth keeping in touch with.

ARCHIVE REPORT

The new RSG Archive can be consulted at the BSSRS office, 9 Poland Street, London W1. Material will be added to it from time to time, and John Lintott has agreed to look after it for the time being. Anyone wishing to donate material should feel free to do so, either by sending it to, or leaving it for, RSG Archive, c/o BSSRS (rather than just putting it on the shelf).

We have two regular exchanges set up: Radical Science Journal and Naturkampen (Danish with an English summary). These will be in the archive.

A list of the material held at present appears below:

1. Radical Statistics Newsletters.
2. Radical Statistics Pamphlets. To date:
 - No 1. Whose Priorities? A critique of the DHSS consultative document 'Priorities for Health and Personal Social Services in England'. Radical Statistics Health Group.
 - No 2. In defence of the NHS. Radical Statistics Health Group.
 - No 3. RAWP Deals. Radical Statistics Health Group.
 - No 4. Social Indicators - individual well-being or social control? Radical Statistics Social Indicators Subgroup.
3. Education and Society. Chanie Rosenberg.
4. The Struggle in Education. A.E. Jennings.
5. The New Technology of Repression: Lessons from Ireland. BSSRS.
6. NOISE: Fighting the most widespread industrial disease. BSSRS.
7. OIL: a workers' guide to the health hazards and how to fight them. BSSRS.
8. News from Neasden. Feb 1976.
9. Reprint of 'Statistics and People - The Statistician's Responsibilities'. Lester R. Frankel, Presidential Address. JASA 71 no 353, 1976.
10. Society Today 21. Are Statistics Really Necessary?
11. The enslavement of the working class in China. Dirk Wouters.
12. Statistical needs for development. Dudley Seers.
13. Workers Power No 1. May/June 1975.
14. BSSRS Internal Bulletins Nos 7,8,11.
15. BSSRS Hazards Bulletin No 3.
16. Engineers and Scientists. 2 issues in 1977.
17. Dollars and Sense. Bulletins nos 15-19. 1976.
18. Fare Fight Bulletin.
19. Does privacy threaten research? Joseph Hanlon. New Scientist 4.7.74.
20. Changed priorities or hidden cuts? Mike Muller. New Scientist 4.11.76.
21. Prison 'catastrophe'. Jonathan Rosenhead. New Scientist 15.7.76.
22. Are researchers trustworthy? Ian St James-Roberts. New Scientist 2.9.76.
23. Paper 7's two omissions. John Adams. Surveyor 13.8.76.
24. Contribution to the paper by J.C. Tanner on 'Long-term forecasting of vehicle ownership and road traffic', read before the RSS on 9.11.77 by Prof A.F.M. Smith.
25. We must preach what is practiced; a radical review of statistical teaching. A.S.C. Ehrenberg. The Statistician 25,2. 1976.
26. Community health councils and operational research.
27. Experience as an expert witness in gambling cases. F. Downton.
28. Statute law and statistical procedures. W.R. Buckland and W.A. Pridmore. RSS & ICS joint conference paper on the Statistician and the Law.
29. Naturkampen magazine. (No 9 = 29.1; no 15 = 29.2 etc)
30. CFTD Aujourd'hui. (No 42(mar-apr 1980) = 30.1)

RSG MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The mailing list for RS17 contained 175 names and addresses, of which:

- 26 are foreign addresses
- 5 are libraries
- 2 are exchanges.

Since the list had not been vetted for nonpayers for about 2 years, a reminder system was established. 58 people received a reminder with RS17. Of these, 24 paid up and the remaining 34 have been removed from the mailing list, including some 'big' names.

In the interval between RS17 and RS18 publication dates, 14 names have been added to the list.

1979 - 1980 Treasurer's Report

<u>INCOME</u>		<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	
24.3.79 Balance	276.56	1979 AGM booking balance	30.34
Health group	75.55	1979 AGM party	7.00
Subscriptions	152.85	1978 & 1979 subs to BSSRS	20.00
		1979 donation to BSSRS	10.00
		Routine postage & photocopying	3.13
		Refund on standing orders	16.00
		RS15	58.34
		RS16	49.73
		Bank charges	0.40
		Balance 8.3.80	310.02
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	504.96		504.96
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ANTICIPATED INCOME

1980 AGM
registrations 24.00

ANTICIPATED EXPENDITURE

1980 AGM party	18.24
1980 sub to BSSRS	10.00
1980 donation to BSSRS	20.00
1980 AGM booking	34.06
RS17	59.59
	<hr/>
	141.89
	<hr/>

NOTE: There are also some petty cash transactions. Cash received at the 1979 AGM in registrations was used to offset party expenses. Subscriptions paid in cash are used to offset postage and photocopying - this amounts to about £15.

'Junk food' disease hits adolescents

From Victor Cohn
in Washington

A new "junk food disease," a kind of "marginal malnutrition" almost akin to beriberi, is appearing in adolescents, according to a Cleveland doctor.

Beriberi is a severe min (vitamin B1) seen among poor and other

ing bodies required. Junk food eaters with thiamin deficiency often undergo severe personality changes, generally becoming highly aggressive and irritable, Dr Lonsdale says. Some suffer severe abdominal or chest pains, as well as restlessness, lack of sleep, night terrors and frightening dreams.

Guardian 24.4.80

Nuclear shelter on the DHSS

A BUS DRIVER who wants to build a nuclear shelter in his back yard yesterday appealed to a Department of Social Security tribunal against their refusal to grant him £3,000 in supplementary benefit to cover the cost—including protective clothing. Mr Bill Mooney, aged 54, of Dead Man's Lane, Derby, said: "Only a fool would claim that there won't be a nuclear war in our lifetime."

The hearing was adjourned.

Guardian 24.4.80

FOOD AND POLITICS

The Agricapital Group of BSSRS has just produced a pilot issue of FOOD AND POLITICS. Its 30 pages are full of information about the food industry and about food policy including the future of school meals. There is also an article about food in China.

Much of the information is truly amazing....did you know, for instance, that the salad tomato of today withstands an impact of more than 2½ times that required by US auto-bumper safety standards? And when junk food and additives have taken their toll in early death, the would-be immortals amongst us can rest assured that the preservatives they've eaten will preserve their corpses - for a while at least.

If you would like to receive the next issue of FOOD AND POLITICS, send 35p and a sae (about 5"x8") to Agricapital Group, c/o BSSRS, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG. There may be a few pilot issues left too.

Mortgages available for fall-out shelters

BY Nikki Knewstubb

BUILDING Societies are trying to ensure that some of their customers will be left come the nuclear day of reckoning.

The majority of major societies, it seems, are quite happy to lend money for the building of fall-out shelters. Such buildings have had a spectacular revival this year.

Guardian 28.4.80

AVAILABLE FROM HMSO:

National Radiological Protection Board.(NRPB). The Application of Cost-Benefit Analysis to the Radiological Protection of the Public: A Consultative Document. March 1980. 82pp. Price: £2.31 inc. p&p.

WHOSE COST?

WHOSE BENEFIT?

SITUATIONS VACANT

- (1) RSG is looking for a person to represent the group on the BSSRS Steering Committee. Meetings take place in London, Birmingham and elsewhere about once every two months.
- (2) A Reviews Editor is required for the Radical Statistics newsletter. Must like reading.

If you can possibly help out with either of the above, please contact RSG, c/o BSSRS, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG.

REPORT OF TROIKA² MEETING -- 8 MAY 1980

Present: John Lintott, Jeff Evans, Heather Booth and Ian Miles.

- | | <u>ACTION</u> |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. The Fire Brigade has been abandoned due to lack of firepeople. Instead, we are to concentrate on intervention in three ways:
a) spot interventions in response to issues that arise - how to go about this.
b) continuing commitments to other groups - contacts are to be made
c) through our subgroups | Ian
Jeff |
| 2. Radical Statistics Conference. Need and feasibility were discussed. The audience would be the radical science movement and social scientists with an emphasis on interesting graduate students. An article by Ian Miles will appear in RS19 giving details of the ideas about the intellectual and political content of the conference. | Ian |
| 3. BSSRS - We need someone to attend BSSRS Steering Committee meetings. If no-one volunteers for this job, we will have to rely on informal representation through overlapping RSG/BSSRS membership.
We have been invited by BSSRS to make use of their Internal Bulletin for publicising and meetings. | YOU?

Troika |
| 4. In order to inform members of new material and to provide critical comment, we are accepting books for review in the newsletter. Reviews of clear relevance to the readership will be published. We need a Review Editor to co-ordinate this. | YOU? |
| 5. The reminder system will continue to operate. Nonpayers will receive <u>one</u> reminder before being removed from the mailing list. It is too great a hassle to send further reminders. | |



RADICAL STATISTICS GROUP

ACTION ON STATISTICS

There are many times when statistical issues crop up in the media, or where a radical intervention could help to bring such issues into the political arena. Recent examples include the Tax and Price Index; the use of criminal statistics in election advertisements; industrialists' use of opinion polls of workers; monetarist policies and inflation accounting; race in the census. Probably there are many more such issues up-and-coming. Carefully worded and placed letters and press releases could both address the particular matter of substance and raise more general questions about the production and use of statistics - thus an intervention around the Tax and Price Index could have gone into the lack of representation of the conditions of the poor in conventional cost of living measures, into the various budgetary measures taken around these, etc.

Most of the recent cases have received little radical input - the BSSRS/Radstats initiative on the census race question is the exception, though individual members have also come in on IQ testing recently. These are welcome, and we would like to see more of the same! It is clearly a problem for any individual to write as Radstats, and it's often easier to assume that someone else will write a letter, so why bother? And press releases require organisation....

Radstats wants to encourage radical intervention on statistical issues, and the Troika² meeting of 8 May has decided on a structure that may help this. The idea is that if you are aware of an issue where Radstats could make a quick, useful statement, or where someone should do so, then contact one of the people listed below.

What we'll do is to attempt to get the basic materials involved and work out who would be in the best position to put out a statement, or write a letter. A minimum of two of this group of four will have to approve the statement if it is to have Radstats' name on it. All four of the group, if available, will discuss the matter.

The aim is to raise awareness of political questions concealed in current statistical usage, particularly in the mass media, and to provide an input of critical analysis. If we can get this established, it's likely that we'll end up being approached for comments as issues arise. We may even be contacted by community groups etc., for statistical commentary and assistance....the fire-brigade may yet emerge!

So get those nagging statistical concerns moving, and you may yet find Radical Statistics Group on the front page. Which could increase membership too!

When you feel that it would be worth commenting, that someone should say something, or that you'd like to say it better, contact one of:

Heather Booth	021-327-0194 ext 11 work
Jeff Evans	01-348-5514 home
John Lintott	01-226-3208 home
Ian Miles	0273-601369 home

(breathless prose by Ian Miles)

GOOD IDEAS, PART TWO

A suggestion arising in the Radstats Troika² meeting on 8 May was warmly welcomed. However, there was a sudden wave of eye-rolling when the question of who might do some work on it was raised. It seems that most of us have lists of commitments so long that all of our surplus energy will be spent in pruning these, rather than taking on any more.

Still it was a good idea, and here it is:

What about doing a handbook on using statistics for activists?

This could take two forms. The first would require more work and experience, and would be a comprehensive discussion of all the issues! The second would be much easier, but still requires some editing and writing. This would mean setting up a collection of maybe half-a-dozen papers, presented accessibly as a large pamphlet or small book.

The issues to be addressed:

- where to get statistics (along the lines of Bill Ridgers' article in Demystifying Social Statistics)
- how to criticise various typical mystifying uses of statistics in politics and policy-making....forecasts, cost-benefit, etc.
- how these criticisms can be used to advantage by the Left in various situations - public enquiries, in the media, in legal processes, etc.

Chapters could be founded on experience of, say, motorway or aircraft enquiries, community activism, consumer groups, etc. They should draw out the lessons for practice!

Who is interested in this worthwhile project?

Whoever you are, contact the Troika!