

SIZEWELL SAFETY FIGURES EXPOSED

radical statistics

newsletter

Education —

Debate or Diatribe?

FEB 1984

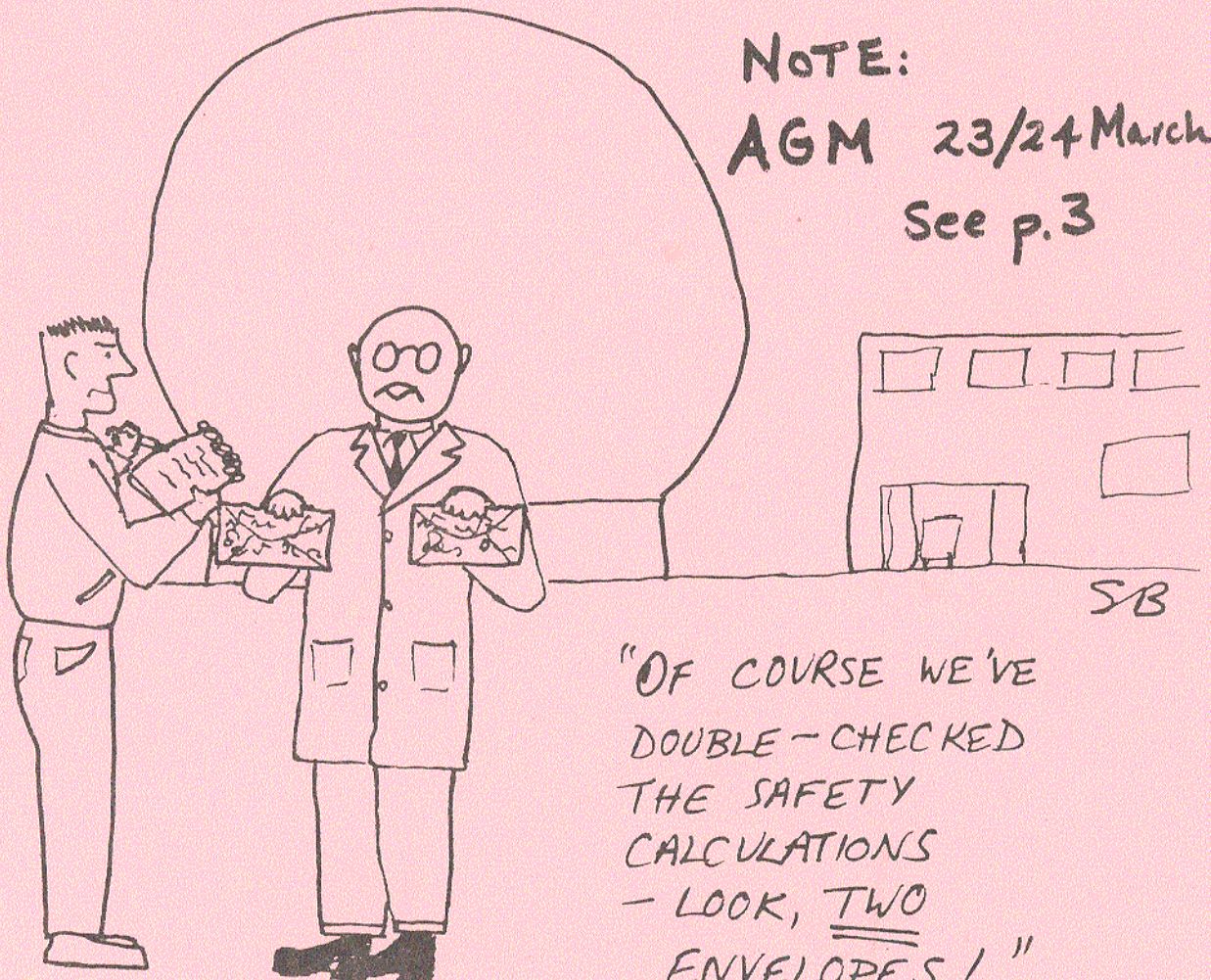
No. 29



NOTE:

AGM 23/24 March

See p.3



"OF COURSE WE'VE
DOUBLE-CHECKED
THE SAFETY
CALCULATIONS
— LOOK, TWO
ENVELOPES!"

The Radical Statistics Newsletter is available by subscription. Current rates are £3 per year for individuals and £5 for institutions and £1.50 for the unwaged. The newsletter is available from the Radical Statistics Group, c/o BSSRS, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG

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Guidelines for Editors and Contributors

The Radical Statistics Newsletter is produced three times a year in February, May and October.

Editors: send the typed newsletter to Bob Peacock, one month before they want the newsletter to reach readers. Copy to be typed on A4 paper.

Contributors: send articles to the Editor by the copydate on A4 paper, typed single-spaced with 1½ inch margins all round. All members of RSG are invited to contribute to the newsletter - articles may vary from very short to quite long. Letters and reviews are also welcome.

Addresses: The Editor's address usually appears in the last newsletter, but articles can also be sent to The Editor, RSG, c/o BSSRS, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG.
Bob Peacock's address (for newsletter reproduction) is The Open University, 60 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7HF (031 226 3851).

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Acknowledgements to Steve Bell & The Guardian for the cartoons.

RADICAL STATISTICS GROUP ANNUAL MEETING

Friday 23 March: University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1

7.30 Speaker from NCCL (planned): Crime Statistics (or subject of
speaker's choice)
Dave Drew & Roy Carr Hill: The Myth of Race and Crime
Statistics

Saturday 24 March: National Children's Bureau, 8 Wakley Street,
London EC1 (Angel tube)

10.00 Registration and coffee

10.30 Radical Statistics Education Group: Cox and Marx

11.30 Radical Statistics Health Group: Health, Cuts, and the NHS

12.30 Lunch

14 00 Business meeting

15.00 Group reports: Health, Race, Education, Nuclear Disarmament,
Women, Antisocial Trends

If you need a place to stay in London, or can offer accommodation,
please let the Troika know. Thanks. (RSG, c/o BSSRS, 9 Poland St.,
London W1V 3DG)

HELPERS WANTED * * * R.S.S. Conference

The Royal Statistical Society is holding a conference to
celebrate its 150th Anniversary and it seems a good idea for
Radstats to have a stall with the aim of selling a few pamphlets
and perhaps recruiting a few members. The conference will be at
Imperial College, London on 4th - 6th April. Would anybody
willing to (wo)man the stall for a few hours on any of these days
please contact Ian Plewis (01-278-2424 ext. 264).

RADICAL COMMUNITY MEDICINE

An independent journal of
the politics of health

Original articles published in 1983 included

Medical care: the nuclear aftermath

Berry Beaumont

Avoiding mental ill health by improving housing

Peter Elton

Fares fair: the health case for cheap fares

Colin Thunhurst

Epidemiology, medical sociology and coronary heart disease

Linnie Price

The racial politics of health in Britain

Amrit Wilson

Race and the social origins of disease

Richard Cooper

The politics of ethnic minority health studies

Maggie Pearson

Racialism in the National Health Service

Steve Watkins

Book reviews by

Christopher Robbins, David Greaves, Tom Rathwell,

S P Sashidharan, Hilary Burrage, John Boswell

Radical Community Medicine is published quarterly:
annual subscription £6 (UK), £8 (Europe and surface mail),

£11 (world airmail) from

5 Lyndon Drive, Liverpool L18 6HP

From Jane Dew Dept of Statistics + OR. Sheffield Polytechnic 0142-20911

Surveys for Pressure Groups

A Radical Statistics Pamphlet

Surveys are being increasingly used by community groups and pressure groups like CND, Friends of the Earth etc., and increasingly misused by newspapers to help mould public opinion. (see Cathie Marsh, Radstats 28). A survey carried out by a market research company is prohibitively expensive (who has heard of a poor Market Researcher) and the resources of most pressure groups are small. This pamphlet is a practical guide to running a small survey for those with a rudimentary if rusty knowledge of statistics and access if possible to a microcomputer. It takes you through the planning of the survey, the way to design and test a questionnaire, the problems to avoid when collecting the data and interviewing, and the way to analyse the results whether or not you have access to a computer. It describes some of the available packages on micros. Planning and executing a small well designed survey can be very rewarding or it can be a nightmare. This pamphlet will point you in the right direction.

The outline above was inspired by Alison McFarlane's note in Radstats 28 'A Guide to Survey Methods for the Non Academic'. Perhaps we should discuss this at a workshop at the AGM in March.

Alison's suggestion echoed a feeling that Guy Fielding and I have had on this as a result of running a project within the BSc Applied Statistics programme here at Sheffield Poly. In this course students, within one term of twelve weeks, design, execute and analyse a survey for a client outside the Polytechnic (for free!), Many of these have been for pressure groups of one kind or another. Topics in the past have included

- * The Cheap Fares Policy in Sheffield
- * Nuclear Disarmament
- * Alcohol Consumption amongst University students
- * Children and Television
- * Cable TV (for Sheffield City Council)

Students work in groups of five or six and interview between three and five hundred respondents. Quota sampling is normally used and analysis is carried out using SPSS. The final report is presented to the client at a verbal presentation which is videotaped for posterity in the Polytechnic's TV studio. Although the project is hard work for the students it has been a considerable success. We are *SURE* such projects exist in other institutions and would welcome contact with other lecturers doing similar things.

As far as Radical Statistics is concerned it would be good to pool our experience of these surveys with others to produce a manual. Anyone out there interested?

A REQUEST FROM BSSRS

Rad Stats has received word from BSSRS that its 9 Poland Street office will be closing in July 1985. They have asked if Rad Stats would consider helping to pay for a rented office: Poland St was free.

For readers who may not know, BSSRS - the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science - is a non-aligned, left umbrella organisation, which started in 1969. Radical Statistics, and independently the Radical Statistics Health Group, are affiliated to it, as is the Politics of Health Group, Radical Midwives, and Radical Science Journal.

BSSRS has its own local groups (about 6), and topic-based working groups, for example on Energy, Sociobiology, and Agricapital. The most successful group is Work Hazards, which puts out Hazards Bulletin - the only health and safety at work magazine not owned by manufacturers of protective equipment. The Hazards Group has put into practice the central BSSRS philosophy that science and technology are never "neutral", and it has done this by putting technical information into the hands of people with the muscle to use it. It is no exaggeration to say that the Hazards Group put health and safety at work at shop floor level on the map.

Another important area of BSSRS activity since its inception has been the Technology of Political Control. This group has continued to monitor and publicise the development of riot control methods, and their toll in deaths, blindings and brain injury. They have recently launched a campaign with the NCCL aimed at having plastic bullets withdrawn from those British police forces who have acquired stocks and are training to use them.

Through the inevitable comings and goings of its groups and individuals, BSSRS is held together and remains able to launch new initiatives by its steering committee, and particularly by its office - staffed by a ½-time worker sadly underpaid through lack of funds. For the last 12 years the office has been provided free by the Joseph Rowntree Social Services Trust, but it is their policy to give groups only 10 years (BSSRS was lucky to get a 3 year extension).

BSSRS is trying now to find alternative sources of funds for an office, but in the meantime affiliated groups like Rad Stats are being asked if they would be willing to chip in, if this becomes necessary.

The next AGM will be discussing this - so please send in your thoughts in writing, to Rad Stats AGM....c/o BSSRS.

Tony Ades

Business Meeting, 7 November 1983

1. BSSRS are to move out of 9 Poland Street in the near future. RSG asked to consider funding some of rent on new premises. Ideas to be put forward in article in this newsletter; discussion at AGM.
2. News that PDC Southern, who distribute our pamphlets, about to collapse. PDC owe RSG subgroups £252.61, unevenly distributed among subgroups. Meeting on 18 November: RSG to try to send someone with view to salvaging as much cash and stock as possible. Tony Ades to pick up stock. Groups to bear cost as per publication.
3. Plans for next RSG annual meeting discussed. See elsewhere in this newsletter.
4. Contacts for short term employment occasionally made. Unemployed statisticians list to be compiled: see elsewhere in this newsletter.
5. RSG publicity at RSS 150th Anniversary Conference in April: possibly a stall. See elsewhere in this newsletter.
6. People who still have not changed their standing orders from £2 to £3, after a great deal of effort on our part, will no longer receive the newsletter. There are about a dozen of you: you have been warned!
7. All RSG bank accounts, including subgroups, have now been moved due to the closure of the Leman Street branch. This should avoid some of the confusion, since not all subgroups now use the same branch.
8. Small amounts arising from the royalties of Demystifying Social Statistics are now being paid into the RSG account, rather than being split between authors. Thanks to those concerned.
9. Following the decision taken at last year's AGM, a leaflet about RSG is under production. Ian Miles is working on it.
10. Women In Statistics group was unformed, with little prospect of a coordinator. Heather Booth to contact Jean Ullman. (Jean agreed to coordinate this group.)
11. Heather Booth to investigate cheaper postal rates to overseas subscribers. (RSN not eligible to be on Post Office Register, but if properly packaged can go at Printed Papers Reduced Rate).
12. Ian Miles to be Reviews Editor, with a view to increasing the number of books we get for review.

Present: Kath Moser, Alison Macfarlane, Tony Ades, Ian Miles, Heather Booth. Business meetings are announced to Troika members and to each subgroup. All RSG members may attend.

RADICAL STATISTICS REVIEWS.

The Newsletter has been slowly and erratically turning itself into a remarkably rich and informative medium over the past few years. The Steering Group have proposed that we appoint a reviews editor and solicit review copies of books to further this process (and get some free books in the meantime). We already do receive some books for review, and have in the past carried some written out of interest alone, but I suspect we could carry a lot more. (Incidentally, its a good way of getting points across directly to the author, to whom publishers forward reviews.) Until such time as the AGM replaces me, I've been recruited as the volunteer Reviews Editor, and I'm proceeding to write to likely publishers soliciting review copies of their statistically-inclined offerings.

A Reviews editor needs reviewers, and I'd like Group members who are interested in contributing in this way to contact me (at the AGM or at 57 Upper Lewes Road, Brighton, BN1 3FG, Sussex.) Please give me some idea of the specific issues you'd like to focus on. Any suggestions or contacts with publishers or other useful people would be welcome. Reviews should be substantive, unless the book or journal in question clearly doesn't merit serious treatment. Substantive does not necessarily mean long, and distinctly does not mean pontificating!

Ian Miles

Journal Received

A copy of Revista Homines, a journal of the social sciences from Puerto Rico, has been sent to Radstats by the editorial board, who wish to establish an exchange agreement. Most articles are in Spanish, but some are in English. To quote the covering letter:

"If you are interested in what is happening in the Social Services in Puerto Rico, Homines is the must".

Anyone interested in seeing the journal contact Steve Bennett (01-560-1945).

C.R.S. study group on "Probability theory and the nuclear peril".

Newsletter No.3

I.E.T.
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Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA

Dear member,

Our day conference will take place on Saturday 12th May, from 10.00 am till 4.00 pm in the Friends' International Centre, 1 Byng Place. London WC1E 7JJ. Already the following contributions have been offered:

Owen Greene (Open University)= Counterforce calculations and the risk of nuclear war.

Bill North (London)= The meaning of probability in this context and how talking about it might change it. *

Gavin Ross (Harpenden)= Arguing for disarmament= the relevance of decision theory. *

Stephen Shenfield (Birmingham)= The probabilities of decapitation.

P.H. Vossen (Rotterdam)= Formalising the concept of probable conflict. *

Roger Harrison (Open University)= The interaction between the perception of risk of nuclear war and the actual risk.*

The asterisked contributions indicate a brief paper. So there will be plenty of room for other contributions. Indeed an important aim of the conference will be to get an overall impression of the particular areas to which members have devoted some thought. Each area can then be followed up in greater depth following the conference. So, if you have not already done so, please complete the form below, indicating whether you would like to make a contribution.

Those members who have replied so far have expressed a desire to see contributions in the following areas:

- probability modelling of ... international crisis, nuclear false alarms, accidental starting by technical/computer failure or by human error, survival for different levels of attack, environmental effects;
- effects on probabilities of ... nuclear proliferation, unilateral disarmament;
- analysis of the concept of deterrence;
- methodological aspects ... simulations and gaming, which is more important subjective or objective assessment?

cont./

Any offers gratefully received!

Since my last newsletter, I have received a number of unpublished papers from members (or via members):

Press, S.J. (1983) Multivariate group assessment of probabilities of nuclear war. Technical Report No.121. Dept of Statistics, University of California.

Shenfield, S. (1984) Various thoughts and calculations on the probability of nuclear war.

Let me know if you would like a copy of these or any of the papers referred to in previous newsletters. Also if you know of any work in this area or have done some work yourself, please send it to me and I can publicise it in further newsletters. I am also aware that the newsletters have not referred to published work in this area: if anyone would be willing to write a brief (one or two pages) guide to published material in this area please let me know; we could then include it in our next newsletter.

Finally, please complete the attached form if you have not already done so.

Best wishes for 1984,

Gordon Burt

Gordon Burt

NAME:

ADDRESS:

TEL.NO.:

I would/would not* like to attend the day conference in Spring 1984.

I would/would not* like to make a contribution:

full-length paper/brief paper/full-length talk/brief talk.

My contribution would address:

I would like the other contributions to address the following topics:

Please return as soon as possible.

The Open University, IET, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA