

Radical Statistics Group

TROIKA REPORT AND FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

This year has demonstrated how incredibly well-oiled the Radical Statistics machine is: very low-tech but serviceable. This is entirely the fault of the lack of effort-input from the member of the Troika. Can anyone else do better?

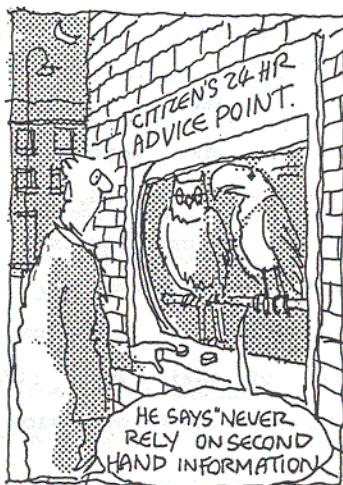
Health of the Nation

Our reconstruction of the accounts is attached. We are roughly the same point as last year, but there are three observations to be made:

- i) The income account includes the receipt of 300 from the R.S. Health Group. This was a payment to BSSRS on behalf of the R.S. Nuclear group on 2.5.85, cheque number 740269 (just showing off our record keeping). However, the expenditure account includes two new loans, totalling 500, to the R.S. Race Group. These are for indexing of the second edition of their book (180) and another payment of 320 to BSSRS as the RSG's contribution.
- ii) The Conference was relatively expensive (nearly 500), but easily covered by receipts (estimated at between 500 and 600). It augurs well for the coming Conference.
- iii) The accounts include the payment for three Newsletters,

even though only two have been produced.

Overall, therefore, the 'exceptional' circumstances worked against us this year, which means that our 'real' balance (as the Treasury would say) is relatively healthy. R.S. could perhaps sell its consultancy services to N.L. (after all, we've not created any unemployment!!).



New Statesman and Society

Accounts for year 23.2.88 to 22.2.89

Income

Conference Receipts (including the cheque for 248.50 from DS last year)	422.20
Membership (cash and cheques) (standing orders)	357.50 287.50
Miscellaneous and Publications	306.70
Unattributed (presumed to be mostly (conference receipts)	190.85

Expenditures

Conference Expenditures

R.S. Health	114.00	
AGM booking of hall	100.00	
Other expenses to D.B.	255.56	
	_____	469.56

Loans to RSRG

Indexing (AM)	180.00	
BSSRS	320.00	
	_____	500.00

Newsletters

RSN0	166.90	
RSN41	173.00	
RSN42	190.50	
	_____	530.40

Miscellaneous

Nicaragua Stats	25.00	
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Refund	5.30	
Bank charges	14.02	
		44.32
		<hr/>
	Total	£1544.28
		<hr/>
Excess of Income over Expenditure		1564.75
		- 1544.28
		<hr/>
		20.47
	(UKs only green company)	
Assets 23.2.88	Outstanding loans	300.00
	Unrecorded credit	76.90
	Current account	526.74
	Deposit account	439.91
		<hr/>
		1343.55
Assets 22.2.89	Outstanding loans	500.00
	Unrecorded credits	15.00
	Current accounts	547.21
	Deposit account	459.06
		<hr/>
		1521.27
Improvement in asset position		177.72

Recalcitrant? Membership

We have made a systematic attempt to send out reminders to those who have lapsed and to haul up those still paying.

3.00. The results of our efforts are as follows:

Amount ()	1.50	2	3	4	5	7	Total
by SO	3	7	51	2	15	1	79
by Cheque	6	10	-	2	42	12	72

Compared with last year, we have fewer paying only £3.00 most paying £5.00 and more who have augmented their £3.00 by paying an additional £2.00 or, in some cases, £4.00. There are probably still 40-50 members paying at the old rate, many of them hard to identify, except by a slow process of elimination, since a lot of standing order payments into our account area unnamed.

Titbits

Apart from handling 'business' correspondence, our involvement this year has been limited to

- advising CND on the potential of a mass recruitment drive
- passing media people on the Health Group.

We have also been approached by the House of Commons

Librarian for another set of RSNs (we had already sent them one set a couple of years ago). They said that all the copies had disappeared or been 'misaid' because "MPs weren't very good at returning material"!!

Anyway, we've agreed to photocopy them another set (at full cost of course). But it would be nice for us and them is we could send them a more complete set than that available last time. We were missing several among the first 20 issues. Can anyone help to fill the gap?

Report on the AGM: Southampton, 25th February, 1989

Newsletter: the next issue, RSN 43, will be edited by Anthony Zwi and George Davey-Smith. Mel Bartley agreed to undertake the job of editing the following issue, provided that someone else would share the job and that printing was done outside London. It was agreed that quotes for printing would be obtained in York and Glasgow. Issue no. 45 might be edited from Southampton, or at the suggestion of the editors of RSN 44.

Finances: it was agreed that the £320 loan to BSSRS be converted to a donation, payable in two instalments, and that we should aim as far as possible to maintain a current balance of at least £500.

Troika: Roy Carr-Hill and Bob Lavers agreed to continue, and Cecilio Mar Molinero's offer to be the third person was warmly accepted.

Annual Conference and AGM, 1990: it was agreed that we should explore the possibility of holding the conference in Bradford or Sheffield, and the date was fixed for the last week-end of February (24th-25th), 1990 - enter this in your diaries now!

Other organizations: BSSRS' 20th Anniversary meeting is scheduled for 26th February, 1989. It was decided not to affiliate to NCVO. Details regarding the Public Health Alliance and the Charter for the Future of the NHS, to be launched on the 8th March, will be announced in the next Newsletter.

Other business: we need a new review editor to take the place of Ian Miles, and the task of finding a successor was referred to the troika - are there any keen critical readers out there willing to take on this job? Some discussion of the possibility of following up the TV 'Despatches' programme on the manipulation by Government of official statistics took place.

NICARAGUA STATISTICS FUND - 1988/89 REPORT

The Fund has ticked over this year, although the list of activities below shows it ticked fast at some times. Responsibilities were divided between Jeff Evans (depository for collected materials), Ludi Simpson (finance, secretary) and Tony Fletcher (leaflet production).

* £100+ spanish texts bought in Barcelona, sent to Leon statistics course (£100 from fund, plus unknown donation from buyer).

* Nicaraguan Association of Statisticians and Mathematicians (ANEM) wrote talking of opportunities and problems with their newsletter production (letter reproduced in last Radstats Newsletter). Responded with 3 boxes electro-stencils and 10 calculators, through appeal by Radstats Health group (thanks to Alison, and Eddie and George for taking the goods).

* ANEM also sent open letter requesting exchange of journals and correspondence with professional associations of any sort in Britain. RSS agreed to send JRSS.

* Workshop at Conference of Socialist Economists 1988.

* £150 collected at 1989 Radstats conference. Congratulations!

EXPERIENCE is now showing that the fund (if it has money in its coffers and it is now just solvent since Radstats conference) can respond usefully to Nicaraguan requests by buying and sending materials with visitors going to Nicaragua from Britain. we have also been able to put those visitors into contact with work counterparts.

It would therefore be very useful if all working Radstats readers would dig deep deep for multiples of £10 (cheques to 'Nicaragua Statistics Fund'), excepting perhaps those who have already done so this year.

22.3.89 Ludi Simpson, 41 Park Crescent BD3 0JZ. Tel: 0274-635469. (For those who are wondering if I am related to Steve or to that other Ludi from years gone by: we are all the one person).

APPEAL ** APPEAL ** APPEAL ** APPEAL

Nicaragua Statistics Fund

Have you supported the Nicaragua
Statistics Fund this Year?

Whether feeling flush from un-asked
for tax cuts, or simply wanting to
show material solidarity with
Nicaraguan colleagues, make cheques
payable to 'Nicaragua Statistics
Fund' and send them to 41 Park
Crescent, Bradford BD3 0JZ.

I send:
£10 £20 other

I want a copy of the 1986 report
'Statistics in Nicaragua'

Add me to the mailing list for
occasional news bulletins

*Include your address if ticked here

APPEAL ** APPEAL ** APPEAL ** APPEAL

Race Group Report

Much to everyone's amazement, the second edition of Britain's Black Population was eventually published at the end of 1988 (calendar year). The book has been coordinated/edited by named authors because several of the contributors were unhappy to be too closely associated with Radical Statistics Group (seen as mostly RMC).

After repeated hassling, I (RCH) had managed to persuade them (Gowar) to produce a paperback edition at what turned out to be a very good price (6.95). The publishers have agreed to give a 20% discount to all Rad. Stats. members, so if anyone wants a paperback copy @ 5.50, please complete the order form below.

We were also very fortunate in that Ian Diamond, in his role as Convenor of BSFS, arranged one of their afternoon mind conferences as a launch of the book. Even though it was in the depths of Yuppie apres ski calendar (5th January) we had a respectable turnout of about 40. Sushal Ohri gave an overview of the book and of policies of racism in statistics; Roy Carr-Hill a brief summary of the chapter on police and crime outlined with Dave Drew; and Ashok Bhat a similar summary of the Health chapter. I'm sure Ian Diamond will tell you more, but the main flavour I got was a continuation of the old ethnic monitoring argument under another form.

Finances were exhausted because of the seemingly endless meetings prior to completion of the book. For that reason, we had to borrow 500 from the parent confederation to pay for indexing and for our contribution to BSSRS. Given that sales have been very good, even without reviews, etc., we (RSRG) should be able to repay most of those with the first royalty cheque.

Roy Carr-Hill
for Radical Statistics Race Group
20.2.89

1989 RADICAL STATISTICS CONFERENCE REPORT

EDUCATION GROUP

Our meeting began with the acknowledgement that there are many worrying things happening in education; for example, the limitations on LEAs' powers, the allowing of unqualified teachers into the schools, the nationalising of the Polytechnics. The group discussed several possible responses.

First, we might produce a pamphlet on "myths" used to justify some of the moves exemplified above, or one on international comparisons e.g. in reactions to falling educational rolls. But we were concerned whether the group's members had sufficient "concentrated energy" at the moment to do this.

We then discussed alternative forms of organisation, and a Radical Statistics Education Network was suggested. This would aim : (i) to build a base of experience and skills that people or groups can turn to; (ii) to build up a network of spokespersons for alternative views to those of the government, by initiating or improving contacts among people working in relevant areas; and (iii) to amplify concern about the sorts of problems mentioned above. The Network might also develop contacts with institutions like the Centre for Education Sociology in Edinburgh, and with the Education Network Project at Sussex University.

The idea of a "local education survey" was discussed, and related to local health surveys, "social audits", etc. This would aim to tap into, and amplify, concern about the quality and quantity of education - among parents, or among students in higher education - and to feed back information to the community. There is the possibility of enlisting the help of students, in connection with their statistics or research methods projects. The results of these local surveys could be written up as pamphlets.

As a priority, it was decided to work to set up the R.S. Education Network, and Cecilio Mar Molinero volunteered to act as coordinator (address on inside front cover).

Many thanks to Ian Flewis for coordinating the Education Subgroup for the last six or seven years.

Jeff Evans

* * PLEASE DETACH AND RETURN * *

TO : Cecilio Mar Molinero, Dept. of Management and Operational Research, The University, Southampton.

I would like to participate in the Rad Stats Educational Network.

I would like to see the R.S. Education Network carry out work in the following areas :

.....

I am working on the following areas that may be relevant :

.....

I can offer the following areas of experience / skills :

.....

Name.....	Rad	Stats	Member?
Address.....			(not essential)	
	E-mail address (if any)			

Health group report

At the beginning of the year, we set out to rewrite 'The unofficial guide to official health statistics'. Although some progress has been made, there is along way to go. Over and above the usual reasons, the NHS White Paper got in the way, both directly and indirectly.

When the original leaks emerged, they included the idea that hospital based statistics were going to play a major role in helping people to buy and sell their wares in the internal market. So a small group got together to plan a speedy response based on the fallacies of hospital statistics. This was duly done, and consisted of an article in 'Health Service Journal', which was then press released on the day the White Paper came out.

This was duly done, but did not have much impact, not only because the press did not think the fate of statistics very interesting when bombarded with the avalanche of expensive and glossy rubbish put out by the government, but also because statistics did not have the same prominence in the White Paper that they had in the leaks.

Undeterred, we then went on to prepare a more detailed response, which was sent to the House of Commons Social Services Committee, and is included in this newsletter. One of the people involved, Kev Hopayian, wrote his own response, from the perspective of a GP in the only practice in the small and isolated town of Leiston in Suffolk, where there is only one hospital within anything like reasonable reach. Kev was invited to go and give oral evidence to the Social Services Committee, and told them how irrelevant the ideas of competition are the the context of his practice. He has also been deeply involved in a local campaign against the White Paper, and has produced leaflets based on his response and 'Facing the figures'.

Because the White Paper is based on the familiar old claim that the NHS is growing at an unprecedented rate and has had vast sums of money poured into it, this has recreated demand for this myth to be exploded. Articles have been written for the 'New Socialist' and the 'Health Visitors Journal'. The 'New Socialist' article also picked up on response the Channel 4 'Dispatches' programme on official statistics - see AGM report for more about the programme. It is now plan to issue an updated version of an earlier leaflet exploding the myth of the wondrously growing health service.

Meanwhile what about the 'Unofficial guide'? An indirect effect of the White Paper is the question mark over whether opted out hospitals will still take part in national data collection systems. Shortly after our report went into the Social Services Committee, a parliamentary question from Robin Cook asked what data would be collected from these hospitals and if similar data would be required from hospitals in the private sector. The evasive and uninformative reply was that 'We shall be giving detailed consideration over the coming months to the information which will be required centrally when NHS hospital trusts are established'. In other words, they don't know and hadn't thought about it. Any ideas about how to deal with this problem or offers to do so will be very welcome.

Meanwhile, members of the Society for Social Medicine may have noticed that at this year's conference we have been asked to run a joint workshop with Radical Community Medicine. The theme chosen is 'Whose information is is anyway?'

Report on Health Group's discussion
on the NHS White Paper 'Working for Patients'

The discussion started with a brief look at the main points of the White Paper. The Health Group has already pointed out the problems inherent in the White Paper's proposals in an article in the Health Services Journal. It was felt that the document and its associated working papers lacked clarity and were misdirected. In particular, medical audit (what to measure and what about appropriateness of services?) and outcome measures (short-term, long-term or measurement of activity) were not adequately defined and the implications for information technology were not addressed. (And what about Korner?) The question of public accountability of the self-governing hospitals was raised and it was feared that the problems now being experienced in access to information from private hospitals would also apply to the 'opted-out' hospitals. The relationship between the DHAs and the hospital trusts is not clear.

A general feeling was that implementation of the proposals will lead to further deterioration of community services, areas of geriatrics and chronic illness and services for women (eg. infertility clinics). With health authorities able to buy in services and treatments from other authorities, some patients may have no choice but to travel long distances for treatment. Implementation of equal opportunity policies in employment and service provision will become even more difficult. The important area of primary care was not discussed in detail but the possible ill-effects of emphasis on increasing the list size were acknowledged. To end on a positive note, there was support for audit, if it included the appropriateness of services and increased the accountability of the health professionals to patients.

- Wagar Ahmad

This workshop was introduced by Mel Bartley who summarised recent research. In particular she drew attention to the number of local studies carried out since 1985. Amongst the many points raised were the possibilities of threshold effects of income on health and the recent apparent consensus on the limits to the contribution of health selection to health inequalities. In the discussion it was considered important to distinguish health from quality of life, and a plea was made for questions in the census on quality of life.

Possible further activities proposed were:

- 1) Radical Statistics working in liaison with local groups in documenting health inequalities.
- 2) Playing a part in the dissemination of this research (it was noted that the Research Unit in Health and Behavioural change at Edinburgh University had recently completed a comparative study of inequalities in health in areas of Edinburgh, Glasgow and London, and will write this up for a forthcoming newsletter).

Russell Eacob

TRANSPORT STATISTICS: A CONFERENCE REPORT

Stephen Atkins and Cecilio Mar Molinero.

This is a summary of the talk that Stephen Atkins gave at the Southampton conference, extended with some of the points that were raised in the discussion.

Stephen started by stating that all transport is wasteful. What we want to do is to go from a place to another one. We consume resources by moving. More transport means more use of resources with nothing to show for it. It is usual to interpret increased transport activity as increased economic activity and, therefore, as an increase in wealth. This is the wrong approach. What we need is increased access to the things that we want. If what we want can be obtained with less travel then the transport policy has been a success. It would then be appropriate to place greater emphasis on the number of journeys made, rather than on vehicle-mileage. Some information of this kind is already collected in Transport Statistics, a very good publication, but it excludes information on journeys which involve walking less than a mile. Walking is a very important mode of transport which is often ignored. More effort should be devoted to collecting information about walking.

Definitions of accidents and safety were also discussed. It is usual to examine safety in terms of numbers of accidents. Data is collected on accidents which involve personal injury, but this sort of data is not always relevant in the decision making process. An example given related to the decision of providing a pedestrian crossing in a busy road. To say that the road is safe because nobody has been killed there ignores the fact that individuals may not even attempt to cross the road because it is too dangerous. That road would be acting as a boundary for the community concerned and would make some area inaccessible to them. The idea of using death as a measure of danger is based on the need to establish priorities for public expenditure. The most dangerous spots should be improved first. The example of the Clapham train disaster became relevant here; passengers were able to make phone calls from the train but the train driver did not have a telephone available to check on the condition of the track; now that there have been deaths this sort of improvement becomes a priority.

Personal safety is another area where we lack data which is relevant to decision making. Crime often goes unreported, and only recorded data is considered to be relevant when assigning resources.

There are deficiencies in data definition. For example, a problem is the definition of injury. There are clear guidelines of what injury means, such as injuries which require stay in hospital, but even in the concept of death different countries use different definitions when it comes to allocating deaths to transport accidents.

There are also deficiencies on data recording. This is often done by policemen who have other things in mind and make mistakes when coding the relevant information. Many mistakes are made when entering geographical co-ordinates in the relevant forms.

Policy decisions have greatest impact on transport. Deregulation of public transport and the building of new roads are relevant here. A coordinated public transport policy has many advantages. In Tyne and Wear the coordination of buses and metro was very successful, it resulted in less traffic and better use of buses. Deregulation meant that direct bus routes operated in competition to the metro, increasing congestion and abstracting passengers from the metro. Overall, this lack of co-ordination may well have resulted in a community loss.

The decision to build better roads and to invest in infrastructure is also an important political decision that has many implications for local communities. It allows firms to create large warehouses or production units far away from customers. This results in more goods moving further away. Typically this produces concentrations of jobs and production facilities in some wealthy areas, while the development of poor areas is hindered by better road facilities. But the matter does not end here, better roads does not only mean that goods come from further away, it also means that when new jobs are created in poor areas people can come from far away to take them up. In this case an increase in travel is accompanied by a social cost.

Social costs, and externalities, are often not taken into account. The main body for transport research, the TRRL, seldom looks at social cost. Studies into social costs are relatively rare. There are inequalities on the use of transport. We need better data on the characteristics of those who use different modes of transport. We need to consider whether travel needs of different people are being satisfied by present transport position. Is it the case that pensioners are more likely to use buses than other forms of transport? Are there any particular bus routes that should be supported because of their social value? Relatively little work has been done to answer these questions; when such work has taken place it has been on a one off basis. We need systematic collection of relevant data. Perhaps the degree to which public transport is subsidised is a measure of the importance that is attached to the social value of certain types of journeys. London receives one of the lowest levels of subsidy for public transport amongst large European cities. Some people are proud of it.

We should not be afraid of subsidising transport. Transport already generates a large amount of taxation revenue and, perhaps, only something like half is invested back into the transport structure. Part of the problem is that the tax structure encourages the use of motor cars. An alternative way of solving congestion problems in large cities would be to have toll charges for urban roads, and to use the money thus generated to provide good public transport.

We should be aware of the fact that it is impossible to provide for full motorised demand. Traffic forecasts used to justify the building of new roads always underestimate demand. New roads lead to increased traffic, and this results in demands for more new roads. The M25 London orbital motorway is a good example of this process. Fighting a proposed new road scheme is very difficult. It is necessary to have technical expertise and to be aware of the planning procedures. Only the organised middle class such as the Archway Road lobby in London can undertake such a task with a chance of success.

A series of conclusions follow from all this. We should focus on accessibility rather than mobility. We should pay more attention to walking. We should develop new measurements for safety. We should always be careful about how we interpret this kind of data. We should be available to support groups with problems. Campaigning is very sophisticated and some groups are very expert, one can try them as a starting point. Some names are:

Transport 2000
Walkden House
10 Melton Street
Euston
London NW1 2EJ
01-388-8386

Planning Aid Unit
Town and Country Planning Association
17 Carlton House Terrace
London SW1Y 5AS
01-930-8903

Friends of the Earth
377 City Road
London EC1V 1NA
01-837-0731

Campaign to Improve London's Transport
(CILT)
3 Stamford Street
London SE1
01-928-9179

The Pedestrian Association
1-5 Wandsworth Road
London SW8
01-735-3270