

# *RADICAL* STATISTICS

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The **Radical Statistics Group** is a group of individuals based on the distribution of this newsletter. The small amount of central administrative work is done by a committee known as "The Troika", and elected at the Annual General Meeting. The editorship of this newsletter rotates; the next editor will be **Philip Bertrand** who can be contacted via the address and telephone number given below. Apart from producing this newsletter, the work of the RSG is done by its subgroups whose membership is open to all interested parties. Please consult the contact people below if you wish to get involved. Use the newsletter to advertise if you wish to start a new group.

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## Editorial

Radical Statistics' Annual General Meeting and Conference took place in February in Bristol which I understand was both lively and well-attended. As per tradition this, the first issue after the AGM, carries a number of items which are in some way related to it. It also carries two excellent pieces by Paul Abberley and Walter Barker, which were presented as talks at the conference. Paul gives a poignant reminder of 'disability' being socially constructed and shows deficiencies in the OPCS Disability Surveys. Walter Barker shows how the emphasis on the measurement of activity is misguided and inappropriate as a measure of NHS performance. I inherited Brian Nolan's article on EC poverty measures from Christy Maginn, editor of RS50, which I am happy to include.

The Newsletter also includes items on the activity of the Radical Statistics Northern Group. As the official room-booker and tea-maker at its meetings I am happy to confirm the good health of this group. You will note on the inside front cover details of a new sub-group on economics being started by Andrew Philpott Morgan.

Colleagues may also remember the minor event that took place in April, the General Election, comments on the outcome of which are unnecessary. However, I am happy to say that whereas Paddy Ashdown failed to become a 'prime minister maker', Ludi Simpson has triumphed in this issue as an 'editor-maker'. He is solely responsible for the technical production of this issue. Thanks also to Brian Howlett.

I am delighted to announce that Philip Bertrand will edit the next Newsletter: please send your contributions direct to him.

Waqar Ahmad



Cartoons are reproduced with thanks to the Guardian

## Notes from the Annual General Meeting, Bristol 22nd February 1992

### 1. Troika report

- i. Current active subgroups are Health and Northern.
- ii. RSS Council: perhaps more radical proposals needed for membership. Should RadStats put forward candidates? [see news item on a later page]
- iii. Membership: Now up to 340. (+16 from January).
- iv. Finance: £2,000 in Bank, surplus around £500 last year.
- v. Activities proposed: a) Write 'Lies, Damned Lies, ...' broadsheets. b) Write Broad sheets and Information sheets on various topics. c) Cost of fares to meetings inhibits potential members from joining Troika. Would meeting approve claims for reasonable attendance at such meetings from Troika members? (Approved).
- vi. There had been 4 Troika meetings in each of the last 2 years. Alison MacFarlane proposed vote of thanks to Troika of Christy, Ludi and Andrew for all the work they had done. (Carried unanimously). Elect new Troika for next year: (Responsibilities are Membership, Conference, Finance, Publicity) Steve Ludi Simpson Elected; Anthony Staines Elected; Mike Parker Reluctant to serve due to other commitments. Philip Bertrand reluctant to serve due to other commitments. Philip Bertrand agreed to serve on Troika & organise Birmingham meeting 1993.

### 2. Subgroup Reports

**Northern Group:** Meetings in North of England held in Leeds. Concerns: Information in the Public Sector. Three meetings so far: (1) Official Statistics. (3) Purchasing in the Health Sector. (3) Performance Indicators. Fourth meeting in April to be on Information and Community Care.

**Health Group:** This is longest standing. Past year: Revision of unofficial Guide to OPCS statistics. (Contact Alison Macfarlane if desire to contribute). 'Health of Nation' proposals from Government: Instant response from Health Group. Article in BMJ. Sept 1991 joint conference with Public Health Alliance. Plans: To produce document on 'Misleading Uses of Statistics'. Allyson Pollock: Article in BMJ. London members of Health Group and others mail out newsletter, and discuss future activity, due 26.2.92.

**Lies Damned Lies... broadsheets** (see RS49): very little material has come in for these, so the production team of Tim Hunkin, Sue Haslam and Ludi Simpson are lying in wait. All material may be sent, draft form preferable, to Ludi Simpson, address on front cover.

**Rules for subgroups:** Draft (see RS50) circulated but no chance to consider



it fully, so will be used as guidelines for the time being without being formal rules.

**Economic subgroup:** Andrew Philpott Morgan wishes to start one. Issues to be Income, Unemployment, etc (see RS50).

### 3. Other matters and ideas

RSS organising meeting on National Statistics. Paul Willis and others wish Radical Statistics to be involved. Elections: How can statisticians comment? Write on what politicians have said, preferably to named correspondents in newspapers. (Usually ineffective to write direct to politicians). After census: RADSTATS meeting on census data. RSS elections (to Council etc.) 9 vacancies to fill. RADSTATS proposals?

5.50 pm meeting concluded. Other discussions adjourned to Highbury Vaults.

Philip V Bertrand

## The 1993 conference - book this date

It's going to be in Birmingham, and is being organised by Philip Bertrand (address inside the front cover) with Tony Fielding and others. Final details are yet to be decided, but here are the preliminaries :-

Time:	10.30am to 5.30pm	Date:	Saturday 27th Feb
Place:	To be determined!	Social:	Before and after

We need VOLUNTEERS (but draftees will do...) to run sessions, lead discussions, talk, and have good ideas. Preliminary topics for discussion are

Health and Education    Information for Accountability    International statistics.

Good ideas and volunteers should contact Anthony Staines (address inside front cover) now, as the programme is already under discussion! Typical presentations at previous annual conferences have been of work in progress, so don't be bashful.

Subgroups and potential subgroups should consider this as an open invitation to all of you to participate... There will also be lots of social activities at the 1993 AGM, hopefully occupying both Friday and Saturday nights. Anyone who can help with this should get on to Philip.

## Membership report for 1992 Conference

### 1. Membership at 28.1.92 (RS50)

Membership is defined here as receipt of *Radical Statistics* through payment up to 4 issues previously.

Unwaged	22
Low-waged	15
Waged	240
Institutions	54
Overseas	11

Total 342

Free copy (exchanges and journalists) 8 included in the 182 'contacts' who are not members.

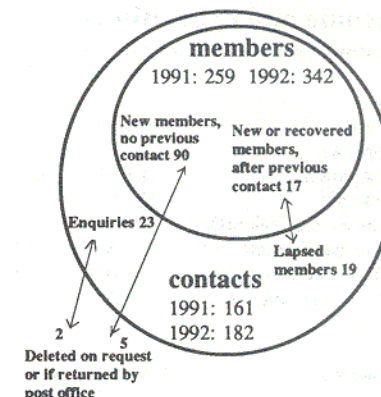
### 2. Method of payment

Last payments of members at RS50.

	Standing orders	Cheques or cash
£3	9	17
£5	9	16
£7	1	1
£7.50	0	1
£10	92	196
Total	111	231

The two at £7 are a standing order that needs updating and someone on their final reminder to pay 1992; I've no idea how the one at £7.50 arose.

### 3. Membership changes 31.1.91 -28.1.92 (RS47-RS50)



### Notes on membership and payments

Membership has grown by one third, due at least partly to the 5,000 promotional leaflets distributed in the past year. Maybe the regularity of the newsletter is retaining old members too. The number of overseas members is rather low.

Moving to a calendar year subscription has helped me keep track of things, to the extent that I've had a chance to chase the standing orders that hadn't been updated: there's now few paying at an old rate.

**Does anyone know an A.N.Pearce, who used to be in New Zealand: their mail is returned from there so I've deleted them from the membership database, but they still send an annual £2 standing order!**

Ludi Simpson February 1992

## 1991 Finance report

### 1. Income and expenditure

1991: calendar year; 1990: 23rd Jan - 31st Dec.

	1991	(1990)
<b>Income</b>		
Conference	310.00	(662.50)
<b>Subscriptions</b>		
Standing orders	683.00	(348.00)
Cheques/cash	1,875.10	(1,177.91)
<b>Publications sold centrally</b>		
Subgroup publications	33.90	(41.15)
Central publications	68.10	(42.80)
Deposit account interest	29.89	(14.52)
Donation	9.83	(200.00)

**Total income** 3,009.82 (2,486.88)

#### Expenditure

Conference	161.08	(743.12)
Radical Statistics 47,48,49	1,737.40	(1,248.57)
Bank charges	17.58	(6.09)
PO Box at LHC	50.00	(50.00)
Affiliation Bradford Resource Centre	10.00	
Survey of members	124.60	(52.04)
Stamps, discs, labels, stationery, other admin	122.17	(200.57)
Radstats North launch	22.00	
London Official Stats event	22.50	
Promotional leaflet (5,000)	210.00	(31.00)
Transfers to subgroups for publications sold	0.00	(27.50)

**Total expenditure** 2,477.33 (2,358.89)

**Excess of income over expenditure** 532.49 (127.99)

### 2. Balance of assets & liabilities

<b>Bank balances</b>	Current	604.57	(1,075.51)
at 31.12	Deposit	1,540.11	(510.22)
Stocks of stamps, labels, disks		41.72	(90.07)
Uncashed cheques		nil	(26.46)
<b>Net assets</b>		2186.40	(1,702.26)

### 3. Budget 1992

Assuming conference and publications break even, and Radical Statistics and Administration costs (including promotional leaflets and surveys of members) rise by 10%, we should have a surplus of around £500 for events and publications, without any increase in subscriptions.

**Income (from subs)** Total: £3,000

**Expenditure** Total: £2,499

Radical Statistics £1,911

Administration £588

#### Notes on finance:

Income from subscriptions has been 65% up on 1990; 1991 was the first full year of new rates, and there's been an increase in membership.

Radical Statistics has cost 40% more, as we've had more pages, more copies printed, and the printing rates have gone up considerably.

The apparent conference surplus is due to some advertising expenditure for the 1991 conference being made in 1990. In fact the 1991 conference broke even nearly exactly.

Overall we had a surplus of £532.49 in 1991, and have over £2,000 in two bank accounts.

#### Agreed at AGM:

1. No change in subscription rates (last conference decided that any future changes should consider a differential between individuals and institutions, and between home and overseas subscribers.

2. Encourage groups' and members' suggestions for use of assets.

3. Underwrite *Lies, Damned Lies...* broadsheets by up to £1,000.

4. Make fares available for Troika meetings.

Ludi Simpson, February 1992

performance indicators in accountability. It is essential to 'unpack' exactly what performance indicators are indicating, and to whom they are measurements of accountability. Further we need to ask whether selection of preferred performance indicators pre-empt the implementation of other arguably more selective measurements.

Against an historical socio-political context, 'Caring by Numbers' will offer a critique of performance indicators via individual case studies. Our positive thesis will put forward recommendations towards measurement systems of greater complexity, placing quality as the baseline for the success of any performance.

We need examples of the use of performance indicators supposedly to improve accountability, and quotes about them and their use. Do you have any? Send to Anthony Staines, Northern Group (address on inside cover).

The April meeting discussed statistics available for measuring community care needs and services, led by Colin Cryer.

The September meeting will probably take place on the 24th. A reminder is usually sent to all members living in Yorkshire and Humberside, the North or the North west.

Laura Strathearn

## **RSS Council: elections...**

This year, unusually, there is an election to the Royal Statistical Society's national Council. Six members, peeved at the omission of a statistician from the pharmaceutical industry, have proposed a

Mr Grieve to compete with the Council's own recommended list of nine members to fill the nine spaces this year.

The result of the election is as yet unknown, but it highlights what some feel is the undemocratic practice of the Council avoiding elections by each year nominating a slate to fill the vacant seats.

Elections were also called for by Deborah Ashby, Alison Macfarlane and Steve Simpson in the May issue of *News and Notes*. They argued not just that elections were a healthy practice, but that Council lacked those who were willing to tackle the "nitty gritty" of statistics as they are used in *Society*", and furthermore that the number of women on Council was insufficient. They openly asked for others who shared these concerns to consider with them whether "early preparation for next year's elections" is relevant to these concerns.

The issue of women's place in the RSS has been recently raised in different ways by others in *RSS News and Notes*. In March, Margaret Rangecroft criticised the RSS conference planners in inviting solely male speakers, while in May Lindsay Paterson complained that the Social Statistics section of the RSS had gained a good gender balance on its committee, it was being somewhat thwarted that the *News and Notes* editor had used the term Chairman in their report expressly against their wishes.

## **Troika news**

First of all, the 1993 Conference in Birmingham. Make a note of the date - 27th February, and read the plans for it on page 4 of this issue.

We have editors for the next newsletter (closing date August 30th), and the one after (closing date November 30th). But it's not clear for the one after that - the first of 1993.

We also need people to start thinking about someone to handle membership and finances on a PC. Between Cecilio and Ludi this has now been got running smoothly, and someone will have to take over in 1993. It takes an hour or two per week, and it is absolutely essential to the running of RadStats. This may sound like a very long period of notice, but it will give people time to come forward. We need you! You need access to a PC.

Finally for all those who are going to the RSS conference in Sheffield next September - we'll be there as a group. We're planning to have a stall, and (hopefully) a fringe meeting. Interested parties should contact Ludi Simpson (address on front cover).

## **Community Operations Research Network**

Two projects are seeking co-operators from RadStats membership. One is with the Patients Association on consultation methods. The other is with the British League Against Rheumatism, on a Health Service Provision Audit. There may be more information in the next Radical Statistics, but in the meantime contact Andrew Pepper if you wish to offer help on either of these two projects. Andrew Pepper, 2 Chestnut Close, Brampton, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE18 8TP. Tel: 0480 451541 or 0727 864200.

## **Student placement wanted (prison research) and volunteer offer**

Two offers recently made to RadStats. We cannot take them up directly, but can you help out?

Paul Wilkins, a 3rd year mature student of Sociology, needs a (paid?) placement for one year from October, preferably for research in probation, youth in prison, or any related subjects. 22 Wychbold crescent, Lea village, Birmingham B33 9SY, or contact RadStats for a copy of his letter.

Cecilia Giussani asks for research/administrative volunteer work in the voluntary sector. Her CV shows considerable skills in these areas. 37 Camden Mews, London NW1 9BY, or contact RadStats for a copy of her letter and CV.

## **Health of the Nation: our report now available**

The report of the Radstats Health Group and Public Health Alliance conference on "The Health of the Nation" is now available.

This conference, held in September last year, took a constructively critical look at the green paper and offered some alternative approaches, which deserve to be considered for inclusion in the forthcoming white paper.

Geof Rayner, of the PHA, examined what was included in the paper and, more importantly, what was omitted. Alex Scott-Samuel, also of the PHA, gave a fascinating review of the international

context of Health for All by the year 2000. Alison Macfarlane of Radstats looked at the use and misuse of health statistics and David Hunter of the Nuffield Institute discussed the tensions and conflicts within the Whitehall machinery which could scupper the implementation of the government's proposals.

Workshops made some recommendations for action on areas which were not well covered such as housing, inequalities, ethnicity and food.

The report is available at £3.75 including p & p for PHA/Radstats members and £5.00 for non-members, from the Public Health Alliance, Room 204, Snow Hill House, 10-15 Livery Street, Birmingham B32 NU. Also from Radical Statistics Health Group.

*Public Health Alliance*



*Radical Statistics* is available by subscription. Current rates are £5 per year for low waged (self-defined) and £10 for waged, institutions, and overseas. The cost to the unwaged is £3. This newsletter is available from the Radical Statistics Group (Subs), c/o London Hazards Centre, 3rd. Floor, Headland House, 308 Gray's Inn Road, London, WC1X 8DS.

*Radical Statistics* is usually produced three times per year.

All members of the Radical Statistics Group are invited to contribute to the Newsletter. Articles may vary from brief notices to detailed articles. Letters and reviews are also welcome.

Articles should be sent to the next editor using the address given below.

### **Data Protection Act**

In accordance with the Data Protection Act, any member of the Radical Statistics Group is entitled to ask:

- a) For a printout of his/her personal details and name and address as kept on the Radical Statistics Group computer.
- b) That his/her personal details do not be so stored. Anyone wishing to avail themselves of this right, please contact the Troika (address on inside front cover) with requests in triplicate.

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## **Deadline for copy: 31st August 1992**

For those with access to computers, the next editor will take contributions on 5 1/4" or 3 1/2" DOS discs, using WordPerfect or ASCII text. Please include a hard copy of the contribution. You may also send your contribution by Email on the above number, but please also send a hard copy by post. The editor does not have extensive publishing facilities, so if you are able to send clean finished copy, please do so using the following specifications:

A4 paper, 1"=25mm margins on all four sides.

Articles use Bookman font, 13point for text; subheadings are 18point bold, title is 24point bold.

Any other details: copy off this newsletter, or contact the editor.