

Editorial

A glimpse at the inside cover reveals that there have been some changes to the Troika since the last newsletter. Anthony Staines has stepped down after a great deal of effort over the last couple of years—although we hope he has not retired yet, and see him at future meetings. Pat Dugard has agreed to remain treasurer. Sue Starkings and Phil Bertrand are staying on, and Julian Wells is a welcome new face.

Worthy of note is that the next AGM is in London and Julian Wells' call for contributions. So drag out those pieces and transform them from having an audience of one ...to more than one!

Don't forget too this is *your* newsletter and it is as good as your contributions. Some people are prolific, but most people do not submit enough, so instead of hanging your head in shame, do something! *Radical Statistics* is unique: we all use statistics and appreciate the underlying political assumptions of our work, but where else can we write about it? We have common experiences, so let's bring them out into the open!

Just in case it had escaped anyone's attention, there will be a general election in the next year which means that it is broadsheet season! It is a rare opportunity in which RADSTATS has an important role to play. Alison Macfarlane begins with some suggestions.

John Martyn reports on the StatsWatch initiative which has been monitoring the broadsheet newspapers, the London Evening Standard and the Economist magazine for information and commentary on official statistics. This is most welcome and it could be a regular feature in 'what's in the news about the figures' in the future perhaps? Any volunteers who would like to write something on a regular basis in their area of interest?

Sue Kerrison provides an update on the contents of the second edition of Unofficial Guide to Health and calls for contributions. If the contents are anything to go by...it looks excellent.

Ludi Simpson has an article on the index of local conditions (ILC) which argues that the index has been transformed from being used for the purpose of its design into many areas for which it is inappropriate. Indeed, he illustrates the socio-political undercurrents behind the selection of variables, their transformation and the form of data selected. This form of 'political arithmetic' is a neglected area which should be taken up on a regular basis in *Radical Statistics*.

Shevanthie Goonesekera reports on a recent *Age Concern* conference she attended and asks whether the great majority of people, after a lifetime's work,

are retiring into poverty. Indeed, her piece also illustrates the wealth gap between the top and bottom halves in society.

Martin Pitt provides a report and commentary of a strike in a London college to defend jobs, the provision of services and quality of education to its students. He reports on the strength of support given, urges that a realistic and successful strategy was pursued which could be generalised, as opposed to wait and hope for the politicians to do something. He adds that Radical Statistics groups have an important role to play in supporting trade unionists in their attempts to defend jobs and services.

Roy Davies provides an account of the grim situation in the poorest county, Mid Glamorgan, in the poorest nation, Wales. He shows the dramatic decline which took place in the 1980s particularly in the mining industry which through conscious Tory policy and market failure has produced mass unemployment and the ruin of whole communities. One interesting comparison Roy provides is Mid Glamorgan and East Sussex, both in terms of regional differences and in terms of the scale of unemployment which is spreading to relatively prosperous areas unlike the 1920s & 1930s.

Philip Bertrand offers a personal view on radical statistics, how statistics are misused and the underlying complexity of the issues involved. In a second piece Philip provides his view of statistics missing through deliberate suppression and ought to be made public in an informed society.

Andrew Philpott Morgan looks at the socio-economic system through which statistics about capital are produced and argues that they are driven not by 'truth' but reflect the interests of those who control the system. He then picks up on recent research which may well be misused by the Conservatives to illustrate their 'excellent record of success in industrial investment' and argues that the interpretation may point rather to accumulating difficulties for the UK economy.

Thanks are due to Siôn Philpott Morgan in his help with the cover design.

Andrew Philpott Morgan