

# **A pivotal episode for the Radical Statistics Group and the Royal Statistical Society – the presidential election of 1977**

## **1. Introduction**

*Ludi Simpson*

This section presents four accounts of the contested election in 1977 for President of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS). Contested elections for senior positions in professional societies are unusual. In common with many voluntary organisations, it is difficult enough to find volunteers to fill the vacant positions. A contested election usually heralds a larger dispute which may sometimes result in a weakening of the organisation or, as argued by Harvey Goldstein in this case, the breakthrough to lasting wider organisational change.

As Jeff Evans and John Bibby recall, Radical Statistics had recently come into being and played a key part in the episode, in which Campbell Adamson, ex-President of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) with no statistical affiliation, was defeated first in an election for RSS Council membership, and then in an election for RSS President. David Hill, at the time one of three RSS Honorary Secretaries, points out that in previous years RSS presidents with such ‘external’ roots had occasionally made useful connections outside statistical practice. ‘Externality’ was not so much the issue, as was the place that the CBI represented in British society at a time of large public disputes in which business and labour were opposed, and the role of elections in giving a say to the RSS membership (its Fellows).

Radical Statistics' role was first to support one of its members Liz Atkins as candidate for RSS Council, forcing an election in which Campbell Adamson was the only candidate not to be elected. When the new Council nonetheless proposed him for President, Radical Statistics members encouraged an alternative candidate, Henry Wynn. Henry Wynn was not active in Radical Statistics but did believe that an election was necessary to allow RSS fellows to express their views. They did so by convincingly electing Henry with 932 votes to Adamson's 614.

The presidential election may have touched a democratic nerve in many RSS members, who even if not concerned about the political significance of the candidates felt that Adamson's failure to be elected to Council should have ruled him out for nomination for President by Council. Council was perceived to be ignoring the membership's expressed wishes, and this was explicitly stated as the main reason not to vote for Adamson, in a letter to the membership by Henry Wynn's proposers<sup>1</sup>. This was perhaps the 'naughtiness' which David Hill wonders about. To his credit, Adamson had asked RSS officers if he should still be nominated for President after losing in the Council election. David's uncertainty, and others' certainty that Adamson's candidacy was appropriate and would encounter no serious opposition, were undemocratic and in the event proven to be naïve.

I am very grateful to all the contributors for their time and thoughtful perspectives. It is a shame that we have not been able to trace Liz Atkins whose memories would have been particularly relevant. Thanks to the RSS Archivist Janet Foster, to the then RSS News & Notes editor Tony Greenfield, to the current RSS for agreeing to open discussion on the episode by all concerned, and to others who have helped or simply admitted their lack of memory! Thanks to Harvey for setting the ball rolling by uncovering his notes of the time, and writing the first piece, for which reason he also has been allowed a final response. I personally was not involved at the time, but will use this introduction to address a few loose ends, and have added a note on

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<sup>1</sup> RSS News & Notes June 1977, p3. The proposers were Liz Atkins, John Bibby, Philip Brown, Peter Freeman, Ian Russell and Adrian Smith.

the Council election of 1976 which should be seen as the real catalyst for what followed.

Harvey asks who first suggested Campbell Adamson for RSS president, and suggests that it is plausible that it may have been a political pay-off for his support for a previous RSS President, the later Prime Minister Harold Wilson. It seems that we will never know for sure. The minutes of the Presidential Nominating Committee for the relevant years are missing from the Archives, presumed borrowed and not returned. In any case, such proposals are made informally, and the CBI may well have been seen by many as of sufficient established status not to raise any eyebrows among the senior RSS officers who saw themselves as part of the same 'establishment' in wider society.

The RSS changed in the 1980s to become a more outward-looking society. It openly challenged government on statistical issues such as performance indicators, and the organisation of official statistics. It now encourages and relies on active engagement from its membership on issues of public importance. The contested Presidential election of 1977 certainly shook the RSS into taking its membership more seriously, and allowed voices for change to be heard more effectively.

That the Radical Statistics Group should be the midwife in such an episode is understandable too, as it was itself a product of the cultural and political changes which were affecting society more widely, including confident radical individuals whose confidence was boosted in the student, anti-Vietnam war, and labour movement protests of the previous decade.

Perhaps the changes in the RSS would have happened without that contested election. In the year before it, the contested Council election had already stimulated RSS proposals to change its procedures to nominate Council, and established a panel to review the Fellowship's views on matters pertaining to the Society's affairs (News & Notes, March 1977). But the elections, and the following year in which Henry Wynn, Liz Atkins and others on RSS Council pressed for further democratic procedures, were certainly great stimuli to those who were prepared to implement change.

Radical Statistics has continued to act mainly outside of the Royal Statistical Society, but also as a welcomed reliable voice of constructive criticism within it. As examples, in 1992 Dave Drew

circulated within *Radical Statistics* a paper on the RSS's future prior to the RSS's AGM, and in 1998 *Radical Statistics* issued a response to the government consultation on the organisation of official statistics, which has itself been initiated both by critical reports from the RSS and by media attention fed by *Radical Statistics* publications and campaigns, especially on measurement of the health service and of unemployment<sup>2</sup>.

This is not a full historical treatment of the election and its context. *Radical Statistics* is in the process of creating archives and transferring them to the Wellcome Trust library in London. This newsletter welcomes other contributions on the history of *Radical Statistics* and wider statistical practice.

## **2. The Royal Statistical Society's first contested presidential election**

*Harvey Goldstein*

In the run-up to the 1974 February general election, some rather surprising support for Labour emerged in the form of Campbell Adamson, president of the Confederation of British Industry who supported the repeal of Heath's Industrial Relations act, which was indeed later repealed by Labour under Harold Wilson. Before this in 1972 Wilson, after having lost the 1970 election, was elected president of the Royal Statistical Society for a period of one year. In those days no voting took place since the nominee, whose name emerged from the president nominating (sub)committee (PNC) of the Council, was never contested. Likewise, the requirement to fill six vacant Council places each year consisted of six names being put forward to Council with no elections taking place. In 1975 Stella Cunliffe became president, with Wilson continuing to take on some responsibilities, including serving on the president nominating committee. In early 1976 the list for six council places was published to the membership, and one of the names was that of Campbell Adamson, who had only very recently

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<sup>2</sup> The *Radical Statistics* Group has not attained universal recognition. David Finney asked me recently 'What is/are "Radical Statistics"? - a new flight of Bayesian fancy??'

been accepted as a fellow and who had announced his intention to retire from the CBI by mid 1976. He had been proposed for Council as a prelude to being put forward as the following president, to which he had agreed. Was it Wilson's idea to put him forward? Could one suppose that it was a 'thank you' for helping to win the 1974 general elections? This is where my story begins.

Radical Statistics started life in 1975 and at that time there were a couple of Radstats members on the RSS council. In February 1976 the Council was asked to support the nomination of six new replacement members, one of whom was Campbell Adamson. This recommendation came with a note that the 'proposed president for 1977/78' was among the names. The PNC, at their earlier meeting in February 1976 with Wilson present, agreed to propose Adamson as the 1977/78 president. It is quite clear that election to Council was a precursor to election as president.

A group of radical statisticians felt that this was rather outrageous, given that he had no obvious connection to statistics, had particularly unacceptable political views and had been proposed and elected to fellowship in some haste. The result was that Liz Atkins, then a researcher at a Medical Research Council unit, agreed to stand for council membership – and was elected, with Adamson coming last and failing. One result was that the annual general meeting that year carried a motion asking for a review of election procedures. It was assumed by most of us at the time that we had heard the last of Adamson.

I had been on Council since 1973 and for the 1976-1977 session was asked to serve on the President nominating committee. I have since puzzled over this, since my views about Adamson and membership of Radical Statistics were well known, and it seems quite clear that the president and senior officers were determined to put Adamson forward for president. The most rational explanation I believe for this is that they wanted to include a member of RadStats to sign up to the recommendation for Adamson. I don't think it was an oversight. The crucial meeting of the nominating committee was held in February 1977 and was supposed to include Wilson, but he had forgotten about it and didn't turn up. To my astonishment, once the meeting had started the only name suggested was that of Adamson, which was

greeted with approval by all the other members of the committee. When I pointed out that this didn't seem to respect the wishes of the fellowship since he had only recently been defeated for election to Council, it was suggested that it was irrelevant since this was a presidential election and not one for Council!

Needless to say, the proposal was carried with only myself voting against. It was then conveyed to Council and again carried with six votes against. At this point RadStats was galvanised into action and discussions and meetings held to see if an alternative candidate could be found to stand against Adamson. Eventually Henry Wynn, then a lecturer in statistics at Imperial College, agreed to stand and was duly nominated. None of us expected him to gather very many votes, but felt that a protest was important. This was not a general opposition to 'external' presidents, as suggested by Plackett (1984) in his reference to it, but a belief that the Society had to become more democratic. In fact, of course, Henry won, and by a handsome majority. It was quite clear that the fellowship did feel that the Council was out of touch and had ignored democracy. The publication of a letter in the May 1977 issue of 'News and Notes' sent to all the fellowship, prior to voting, from three of the Council members who had voted against Adamson, was, I believe, crucially important in alerting fellows to what had happened.

My view is that this was an important turning point for the Society. The shock helped to make the Society's procedures more open and at the same time to take more seriously the way statistics is used in political and social settings. This did not happen immediately, but gradually as the old officers who had run the society were replaced, so a new ethos and social awareness developed, actively assisted by RadStats. It also gave a great impetus to Radstats itself. Today, the RSS is active in all kinds of public activities as well as maintaining its role as a professional body. The Campbell Adamson affair was the key event that began the move to what we now have.

### **Reference**

Plackett, R.L. (1984), Royal Statistical Society: the last fifty years: 1934-1984. JRSSA, 147, 2, 140-150.

### **3. External Presidents and the Adamson Affair**

*I.D. Hill*

It had always been the custom within the Royal Statistical Society to take an external President from time to time, that is to say, someone who was not noted as a statistician or an existing Fellow of the Society but eminent in some other way. In the 20th century these Presidents were usually important business men. Since the end of the war in 1945, we had had Lord Woolton, Sir Geoffery Heyworth, Lord Piercy, Sir Hugh Beaver, Paul Chambers and Arthur Cockfield. Harold Wilson might be regarded as semi-external, being an existing Fellow of the Society.

Such externals had been thought to be very useful to the Society during their terms of office and in continuing to be helpful in various ways thereafter. It was as a continuation of this tradition that Campbell Adamson had been approached to be President for the 1977-78 session. This had happened before I became personally involved and I know nothing about who it was who decided that it was time for another external, or who proposed Adamson.

Harvey Goldstein gives the impression that we were trying to do something naughty rather than that we were merely following a tradition that had not, until then, been opposed. If it was naughty to try to elect him to the Society and straight onto Council, then it must be said that the tradition was much naughtier than that, as it was the custom to elect such externals both to the Society and immediately to the Presidency. In this instance it was decided that it would be preferable to give him a year on Council, to learn about the Society, first, so he was proposed for Council for 1976.

At that time it was unusual to have an election for Council. Normally the existing Council nominated the exact number of people to fill the vacancies and they were elected unopposed. There were even some Fellows who thought that anyone nominating anyone else was being disloyal to the Society. I am glad that we have got rid of feelings such as that. In this instance Liz Atkins was proposed as an additional

candidate but not specifically in opposition to Adamson or anyone else.

Voting was by the very unsatisfactory system of a multiple-X vote, still used even today in public elections to English local authorities. This is a system that can, and very often does, hopelessly misrepresent the wishes of the voters. There was a very small turn-out. Liz Atkins was among those elected and Campbell Adamson was not. Every election, of course, must be decided in accordance with the rules in use at the time, no matter if some people think those rules to be bad ones and no matter how small the turn-out, but in deciding other matters later, it may well be sensible to take those things into account.

Many of the votes were for Atkins only, although 6 Xs were allowed for the 6 seats. Those voters were, of course, fully entitled to adopt whatever strategy they wished to try to get her elected, but some people seemed to think that such action was cheating.

Knowing that the plan was to put him up for President the following year, my immediate reaction, as the Honorary Secretary who had now become responsible for serving the President Nominating Committee, was to say that we should call the Committee together at once to consider what should be done. But Stella Cunliffe, as President at the time, said that we should not panic but leave the Committee to meet at the normal time later in the session. With hindsight, I wish that I had stood up to her and tried to get her to change her mind. Had we met at that point, there would have been time to consider the various possibilities in detail and, perhaps, to have done a survey of opinions from a random sample of Fellows. To my regret, though, I gave way and such moves did not occur.

When the time came for the Committee to meet it proved impossible to find a date that suited everyone. Depending on the date chosen, either Henry Daniels or Harold Wilson could be present but not both. Wilson insisted that any meeting he attended had to be somewhere with division bells for the House of Commons, so that he could go there and vote if the bells rang. Stella Cunliffe arranged that, with a room in the old Home Office building. I was left with the task of deciding whether to have Daniels or Wilson present, and I decided in favour of Wilson, thinking that his political nous might well be helpful. In the event that was certainly the wrong decision, as he failed to turn up and, when



contacted at the House of Commons by telephone, said that he was unable to do so. I should add that this was not typical of his actions for the Society; during his year as President, he had been very good at always turning up for everything.

Henry Daniels supplied his opinions in writing and the rest of us discussed the situation. On the one hand it was strongly felt that Adamson having been beaten for Council, it would be wrong to go ahead with the proposal for President, possibly combined with a dislike for the system of external Presidents anyway. On the other hand, it was strongly felt by others that, having once invited him to be President, it would be discourteous to withdraw the invitation, and that the loss of the Council election should not be decisive when it had been on such a small turn-out and an unsatisfactory voting system. Furthermore, if we did withdraw it, there was a difficulty in that, at that time, external Presidents normally served for only one year but internal ones for two years. To choose another external would certainly not be thought satisfactory, but an internal would expect to be chosen to do two years, and that would be awkward because (also before I became involved) Claus Moser had already agreed to be willing to stand in 1978 and it was not wished to upset that prospect.

The Committee, of course, could only recommend. It would be for the full Council to decide whom to propose. With Harvey Goldstein dissenting the Committee decided, in these difficult circumstances, to recommend Adamson, and when it came to Council that was agreed. It should be admitted that, among the pro-Adamson group, there was a smug feeling that any opposition would not be able to find a suitable candidate who would be willing to stand, or could win even if someone could be found. In that they were wrong. Henry Wynn was willing, and solved one of the difficulties by saying that if he won he would wish to serve for only one year. In the event he easily won the election, Council at once accepted the result without dissent and he made a good President.

Nowadays we have a good method to elect Council, the rules enforce a contested election every time, and there is no animosity against anyone proposing an additional candidate. There has never been any further attempt to put in an external President, and the Society seems to thrive without one.

I am grateful to the Royal Statistical Society for agreeing that, so long after the events, there is now no good reason for these facts and opinions not to be published.

## **4. The Early Days of Radical Statistics: Unsettling the Traditional Patterns of RSS ‘Elections’ in 1976 and 1977**

*John Bibby and Jeff Evans*

What prompted the founding of Radical Statistics? There were doubtless many factors, including the ‘spirit of the age’ (an ongoing spirit of questioning and not accepting ‘what you were told’), and the fact that many young statisticians were being recruited to posts in post-Robbins academia, including the polytechnics, and into the statistical service to help deal with the expansion of official information that had begun after the Second War. But the Hull RSS Conference on Multivariate Analysis in 1973 was important. Following Roy Carr-Hill’s paper on the Angry Brigade (in which transparency of data was an issue), the need for a “British Society for Social Responsibility in Statistics” was mooted from the floor.

In 1974 (Feb. and October), Labour under Harold Wilson was elected to replace the Conservatives under Ted Heath: it proposed, among other things, a “prices-and incomes policy”, to deal with rising inflation, as part of what they called a new ‘Social Contract’. As had happened before when Labour came to power (1964/66) after a period of the Conservatives, there quickly ensued some disappointment concerning the policies of the new government. The social science and social statistical communities felt this keenly; at a meeting of the Quantitative Social Science group in autumn 1974, John led another discussion on the need for statistical transparency, by pointing out that the then Chancellor, Denis Healey, should not really have produced an ‘annual inflation rate’ by multiplying the fortuitously low

rate for one of the summer months by 12 to put the government's policies in an overly favourable light. Lots of informal discussions ensued in London and elsewhere.

Eventually an inaugural meeting was held at LSE on the last day of January in 1975, where the organisation Radical Statistics was founded at a public meeting at the LSE in January 1975, attended by about one hundred people. This was preceded by a letter to the *RSS News and Notes* in the same month (signed by Liz Atkins, John Bibby, Roy Carr-Hill, Jeff Evans, Ian Plewis and Dave Webster, which advertised the meeting and suggested the following issues for concern and discussion:

- (a) the detachment of statistics and statisticians from other disciplines;
- (b) the developing mystique surrounding quantification and the statistical "expert", and its relationship to power structures inside and outside the statistical community;
- (c) the value judgements implicit in the selection, collection and interpretation of statistical information in certain substantive areas, e.g. wealth/law/education/prices; and the possible provision of counter-information in these areas;
- (d) statistics in the socialist world;
- (e) implications of these ideas for teaching.

During its first year, Radstats held a successful conference in September, and set up subgroups on Health, Education, Economics, Teaching, and perhaps others. The Radical Statistics newsletter started in 1975. Early issues were produced at The Open University. It would have been called a "journal" from the start, were it not for a trade union agreement at the OU which made journal-printing far more complicated and expensive than newsletter-printing. Thus it was "temporarily" called a newsletter (just as "Radical Statistics" was just a "temporary" name for the organisation, until we thought of something better).

In 1976, a new challenge arose, as Harvey's article makes clear.

Many Radstats members were surprised and affronted in April 1976 by the appearance of the name of the President of the Confederation of British Industry, Sir Campbell Adamson – who had no known connection to statistics – on the list of 6 new nominees for Council of the Royal Statistical Society, recommended by Council itself on April 1<sup>st</sup>. By the end of April, Liz Atkins, who was emerging as a leader in the organisation of Radical Statistics and in the articulation of its concerns, was nominated by Stephen Shenfield and five others (RSS Council minutes, 28 April 1976), so there were 27 candidates for 26 positions. This forced an election, for Council membership. This was certainly rare and had not occurred in at least the previous ten years, as Council had habitually suggested who should fill its vacancies. Indeed, the same Council minutes record disappointment that Liz Atkins had not volunteered earlier in the process, in order to avoid the expense of an election: Council had not understood that her nomination was a protest against Adamson's, which could only be resolved by an election. In the poll, Liz Atkins was elected as one of the new members of Council, with Adamson coming last and not elected. This was an early indication that Radical Statistics' concerns chimed with those of many others in the RSS, and indeed more broadly with those of the period.

Liz Atkins immediately got involved with working, along with several others on Council, to make the workings of the Council more 'transparent' (as we would now say). She set down three prominent issues for discussion in Council:

1. A working party to review the byelaws relating to elections to Council, a result of a motion passed at the RSS AGM, which criticised the existing procedure as being undemocratic.
- 2a. A more democratic way that views of the Society on 'matters of public interest' could be formulated and reported to the public, after using *News & Notes* to solicit the views of Fellows (members).
- 2b. Agreement in principle that open meetings should be held occasionally, again on 'matters of public interest', and 'fairly spontaneously' (Liz observed that if Radstats wanted 'to be in a

position to take advantage of these meeting, it may require a much more active and concerted organisation than we now have'. (*Radical Statistics* 7, Summer 1976, pp1-2).

In addition, 'Ms Atkins had suggested that more information should be available to Fellows about the background and interests of Council members. Agreed that consideration be given to this point next session as a general review of Council's image in relation to the Fellowship at large.' (Council Minutes 10 June 1976). In terms of substantive issues that may have been raised by Radstats and other statisticians, later in the year, there was a long discussion on challenging Traffic Forecasts (e.g. Council Meeting 15 Dec. 1976). This issue had been raised in *Radical Statistics Newsletter*.

Despite Adamson being rejected for Council, he nevertheless allowed his name to go ahead for election as President. He was recommended by the RSS Presidential Nominating Committee, for one year, 1977/78, as an 'external president', and agreed, on a majority vote of 19 to 6 of Council (voting not recorded; Council Minutes 17 March 1977).

Some were aghast. Others were delighted at the prospect of a beautiful "own goal" by the establishment. No one realised at the time how much support an alternative candidate would have.

However, it was difficult to find someone who wanted to stand. John Bibby in particular (and possibly others) tried to persuade several prominent members of the RSS to stand but met with refusals (though at least one of those did become President some years later). Many key phone calls were made from Jeff Evans's 'famous blue telephone', with rotary dial, which unfortunately was retired from active service in the 1990s, before the Wellcome Foundation established today's Radical Statistics Archive. John Bibby recalls a critical phone call with Henry Wynn from a Milton Keynes telephone box about two days before the nominations closed, when John deployed his 'killer argument' (as one would say today): if Henry didn't stand, then John would stand himself! Henry's concern was that RSS should be democratic, and should not be afraid of elections.

Note to younger readers: Nobody had a mobile phone in 1977, probably not even generals in the Pentagon. People sometimes even stayed at home for short periods, ‘waiting for an important phone call’!

A call to support Henry Wynn was made in *Radical Statistics 10* (May 1977), edited by Roy Carr-Hill, in an article ‘All the Men’s President’ (p3, no author specified). In addition, RadStats members lobbied as many ‘respectable’ statisticians as we knew, and were surprised by the support of individual prominent statisticians. Council had clearly underestimated the resistance there would be to a non-statistician, ‘parachuted in’ for a second time in two years – when one would have thought that the membership of RSS had spoken clearly enough in 1976. But we never imagined the alternative candidate would win.

The results of the count were as follows:

Ballot Papers returned	1571
Invalid	24
Sir Campbell Adamson	614
Dr Henry Wynn	933

There is an implication in the Council Minutes (16 June 1977) that some had been told that Henry Wynn would resign, if he were elected. Although this was sometimes done by winners of elections in order to underline a protest stance, neither of us, nor Henry himself, recalls that being a feature of Henry’s candidacy.

What is important is that Henry Wynn served his term as president of the Royal Statistical Society, according to the principles that he stood on. And Radical Statistics played a crucial role in making the Society function in a more democratic way. Of course, in the ebb and flow of political struggle, no such change is ever permanent, and continuing vigilance and a readiness for action is always needed.

## 5. The Royal Statistical Society election of its Council in 1976

*Ludi Simpson*

While the RSS Presidential election of 1977 is partially documented, with votes recorded and some discussion of the candidates in RSS News & Notes prior to the election, and memories are clearer because it was an event in the public eye, there is much less record of the RSS Council election of 1976. Nonetheless, without the 1976 Council election in which Campbell Adamson was not successful, it is likely that his candidacy for President would not have been opposed, and if opposed it would certainly have been more likely to be successful without one defeat already in his pocket.

Liz Atkins was proposed by six RSS Fellows as allowed by RSS bye laws, and is remembered by all those involved as standing in response to Campbell Adamson's nomination for Council, but *not* on a declared platform of opposition to him. There is no record in the RSS Archives nor in any Radical Statistics correspondence of the time of any mention of Campbell Adamson in association with Liz Atkins' candidacy. In correspondence now in the RSS archives,<sup>3</sup> in response to Council lamenting the expense involved, she argued simply that an election was a reasonable procedure to be carried out. She had requested that a short statement from her be circulated to Fellows, with other nominees doing the same, but this was not taken up, understandably given the short time period between her nomination and the date by which voting papers had to be sent out according to the bye laws. So there is no formal statement of her reasons for standing.

The voting ballot was long, not complicated, and included the RSS Council's recommendation of all candidates but one. In those days terms were of one year and so all of Council were candidates (not just the current practice of six places each year as mentioned in David Hill

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<sup>3</sup> Letter Elizabeth Atkins to Mr IH Blenkinsop, June 14th 1976, in archived file 'Council election and Nomination Procedures 1976/77', from which the evidence on voting papers in this note also comes.

and Harvey's Goldstein's contributions). RSS Honorary Officers' discussions on the form of the 1976 voting paper resulted in a list that began with the unopposed candidates for the Society's officers, and continued with the 27 names of other candidates for Council in alphabetical order, ironically therefore starting with Sir Campbell Adamson and continuing with Ms E. Atkins. Under Liz Atkins' name was the line 'Nominated by S. Shenfield, J. Bibby, J.T.Evans, R.A.Peacock, I.F.Plewis, D.W.Balmer.' Under each other name was the line 'Recommended by Council'. The preamble to the ballot paper included the instruction: 'Fellows are therefore invited to erase one name (or more if desired) from the list of "other members" below.' The ballot was to be returned by Wed 16<sup>th</sup> June 1976, and was sent out at some time after its announcement on June 1<sup>st</sup> along with the agenda of the 42<sup>nd</sup> AGM of 23<sup>rd</sup> June at which the result would be announced.

The votes cast were kept secret and are now untraceable. Retiring Council member Professor SC Pearce, and Stephen Shenfield chosen by Liz Atkins' nominees, supervised the count. They were each asked to sign a statement of confidentiality in a letter stating: "At its June meeting, Council agreed that the two scrutineers should be sworn to secrecy about the details of the ballot. It was agreed that the announcement to be made at the Annual General Meeting should be limited to a statement of those elected, but that a record should be kept in the office of the number of votes cast and the number of valid and spoilt papers." That record is now unable to be traced. Stephen Shenfield remembers that the count took a long time, in an RSS office without air conditioning, with between 100 and 150 voting papers to be counted.

All that is known about the voting pattern is that Campbell Adamson was the one candidate not elected. David Hill remembers voting papers in which all but Liz Atkins name were crossed out. However, there must have been sufficient other papers with Campbell Adamson disproportionately crossed out, or he would not have been the one candidate not elected. Although there is no evidence of campaigning against him, sufficient Fellows must have felt disposed against voting for him while voting for others, more so than any other candidate.

A New Scientist news report on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1976 suggests that Adamson 'was beaten by Liz Atkins, one of the founders of the Radical



Statistics group' but this post-hoc description of a contest between the two does not accord with the written records of the election as described here, although the unwritten record may still fairly interpret the result in that way.

## **6. End-note from the first contributor**

Many thanks to Ludi for putting together these contributions and providing a thoughtful introduction and details of the elections. I am happy to be corrected in terms of the number of candidates put up for election to Council. I very much enjoyed Jeff and John's piece on the early days of RadStats. I'm pleased too that David Hill has corroborated much of my account of events and provided some useful background. I'm glad that he believes many of the decisions made were, at least with hindsight, unfortunate, and nothing he says makes me wish to modify my own views. I should say, however, that David's recollections of the feelings about Adamson as expressed by those at the President Nominating Committee meeting, do not fully accord with my own. When it came to suggesting a name to be put forward, the only one proposed was that of Adamson. I was alone in objecting, and my recollection is that the rest of the committee regarded the proposal as relatively unproblematic and did not take the view that these were 'difficult circumstances'. This was reflected in the subsequent ratification of Adamson's nomination by the majority on Council who, as David notes, were rather smug about it.

Finally, whatever views were expressed about the role of RadStats at the time of the Adamson affair, it is very gratifying that the Royal Statistical Society has come to recognise the importance of RadStats as a stimulus for its own development.

*Harvey Goldstein*