

# RRS

*Cabin*

**RADICAL  
STATISTICS  
NEWSLETTER  
NO. 3  
AUG. 1975**

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This is effectively the third issue of the Newsletter, following those mailed by Liz in February and by John in May. The aim is to provide a congenial medium so that members may work out and express their views, read what others are articulating, and give and receive feedback. (Following the view that it is at least as blessed to give as to receive, your editor has provided a Feedback Form on the last page of this issue.) We will also announce as many events as readers let us know. See the "Announcements" section for news of our September weekend conference.

The views expressed may be on the evolving role of statistics and of statisticians, as well as on wider social and political issues. The main thing is that people should feel free to "try out" their ideas "among friends" as part of the process of articulating and elaborating them.

Much of the activity of the RS group is centred around the activity of the study groups. Those currently active are: Education, Health, Statistician as Employee, and Teaching/Methodology. (See the "News" section, for reports from these groups.) In addition, there is a proposal to resurrect the Economics group (especially with reference to prices and wages) and others to create a "Community Advice" group. (See the "Letters" section.) Use the Feedback Form if you wish to be informed of the meetings of any of the study groups.

It is planned that the Newsletter should appear bi-monthly, around the middle of "even-numbered" months. (A little bit of quantification there, just to indicate that this is a serious publication .....) Each issue will be edited by a volunteer editor or group of editors; it is hoped that the editorship will thereby circulate as widely as possible. It is the responsibility of the current editor to arrange for (a) successor(s) from the volunteers at the most recent general meeting. The editors for RS<sub>4</sub> are John Irvine and Paul Dixon (c/o 14 Upper Wellington Road, Brighton, Sussex; tel. Brighton 684424).

Contributions for the next issue should be sent to the editors by 30th September; they should ideally be typed single-spaced on one side of A4.

Production and mailing may be arranged by contacting John Bibby. This process will take about two weeks (longer if any typing is needed).

Readers who have not yet contributed to the funds are asked to send something between 50p and £1.50 (according to ability) to Liz Atkins.



# NEWS

## Radstats General Meeting - Issues and decisions

This report is going to suffer from all the methodological weaknesses of participant observation - and probably have none of its virtues. I make that remark in both a jocular and serious sense since it is intended to underline both my own limitations and two of the problems the group left unresolved at the end of this meeting - the problem of defining what the "Group's View" is - and whether, if it existed, it could ever be presented by a "representative". Since I doubt the existence of the first and the possibility of the second, this description of the meeting can only be partial, subjective, and therefore misleading representation of what it was about! ! Perhaps this has implications .....

The discussion at the meeting centred around two aspects of the group's development, what one might describe as its "aims" and its "methods". I shall try and describe each separately although it's obvious that one can't really separate them.

### "Aims"

The central point made was that as a group we have no "Party Line" and no common view of what our aims should be. We are united at the moment more by our criticisms of the existing use and methods of statistics than by any shared view of how our analysis of the present situation can lead to Radical alternatives - and what these should be. This presents problems in terms of presenting the group to potential members - and to the "public". This was clearly pointed out by the comments of a newcomer to the group. Other radical groups, he said, were involved both in criticising and analysing their discipline's philosophical foundations and in making their expertise available to people who want to challenge the "official" view. Since the group did not seem to be involved in either of these, he couldn't see what was radical about us. One suggested meaning of radical was offered in terms of the exposing of assumptions and misuse in application of statistics, as was being attempted by the



Education subgroup, but this was not a view shared by others in the group. It was clear that this was a fundamental problem which we should discuss further, and one in which the whole group should be involved. One decision which was taken will provide an opportunity to do this - a day meeting is to be organised for the autumn (Sept./Oct) aimed at helping the group to get together more - in the above sense, but equally importantly in the social sense.

### "Methods"

One aim of the meeting was to review the existing organisation of the group and suggest ways of improving it. It was clear that with now nominally 150 members and the high level of interest in the group, we would require more active organisation. The working of the subgroups set up at the January meeting was reviewed (see reports) and it was decided that those which were going should continue, and aim to provide contributions to the newsletter. In order to draw more people into these discussions we should circulate their meetings to a wider list of members, who might be interested in participating for occasional topics, even if not attending regularly. The suggestion was made of holding a series of meetings with invited speakers e.g. from other radical groups, so that we were not always 'talking to ourselves', but doubts were expressed about the value of this type of meeting at this stage, and it was agreed that two members would give some further thought to the idea and come up with some proposals.

The question of the formation of an "advice and help" group - a kind of statistical fire brigade was the subject of a long and interesting, but rather inconclusive discussion! Doubts were expressed about the need of other radical groups for statistical expertise from outside, and it was also pointed out that the role of the statistician as outside-expert was something the group should be trying to break down. It was suggested that members of the group would be more able to play an active part in the issues these groups are concerned with from the inside, and that in many cases



the statistician was no better placed, e.g. to make criticisms of a policy proposal, than anyone else. There was a danger in attacking these proposals using the same methods as were used to justify them - that one accepts the definition of the situation provided by the originators of the proposals. This amounts to an acceptance of the status quo - something we should be attempting to challenge. It was still felt that in terms of offering a practical way of getting involved directly with the issues we are concerned with, it may still be worth trying to establish some network within the group for doing this. (See letters from Nic Wright and John Bibby).

#### Funds Situation

Liz Atkins

Contributions Received	£30.40
Circulation Costs (not including this issue)	£ 9.95 -----
Balance	£20.45 (Note: Each issue of the Newsletter costs roughly £8.)

At the moment, we are trying to avoid the necessity of levying a sub to cover costs (though the typist is sinking fast- Ed.), but see p.1 about contributions.

#### HEALTH GROUP

The Health Subgroup has met three times. Various issues such as pollution statistics, reporting of industrial accidents, statistical competence of articles appearing in medical journals such as The Lancet, have been raised. The group heard from Anne-Lise Goetzsche, a medical journalist, about the use and misuse of statistics in the fluoridation controversy which was particularly interesting. Contact has been made with the Medical Sociology group of the British Sociology Assn.

I would suggest that the group could profitably examine and bring together statistics on social class (and other deprivation measures) differences in health and health care, and how these are or are not changing over time. The General Household Survey provides some data on this, but it is interesting to see how little is to be found in Social Trends which presumably should be highlighting these data. This is an issue which needs to be discussed further, after the summer.

Ian Plewis

(Ian has been ill, with glandular fever, this past month; we hope he is feeling better soon.)



Radical Statistics Education Group

This group has been meeting to discuss the five volumes which describe the 'Educational Priority Area' projects (HMSO, 1972-5).

These projects arose from the Plowden report's concern with positive discrimination in primary education. Five deprived areas were chosen and in each of these, 'action research' projects were set up. They were intended to experiment with programmes designed to 'improve' schools in these areas, and an integral part of the research was an evaluation of the success of each programme. In Professor Halsey's words (Preface to Vol. I) the evaluations "constitute a pioneering effort in the use of the action-research method in Britain".

The evaluations, it turns out, consisted of pre- and post-test administrations a year apart, to groups of children given 'treatments' consisting of measures such as special language training courses. In most experiments control groups of children were chosen, and in others the researchers attempted to use national test norms as control information. In addition, a number of surveys of teacher, parents and schools were carried out, mainly reported in volume II.

When the group came to study these experiments in detail, two things were evident. First, the technical statistical competence of the analyses was poor, and secondly, the experimental designs were generally so bad that the results of the evaluations were pretty useless. For example, attrition of the sample between pre- and post-test administrations was sometimes as much as 50% with no attempt made to study possible resulting biases. The confusion which exists at the technical level is illustrated by the following footnote (Vol.II, p.84):

"Although the parental survey sample cannot be regarded as a truly random one because of the confusion over the replacement procedure,  $\chi^2$  with one degree of freedom has been used within areas to test whether observed differences in the sample reflect differences in the total population of EPA families in that area. Unless specified otherwise a 0.05 level of significance on a one-tailed test has been accepted. The reader may if he wishes disregard the reports of the significance tests."



We are now interested in trying to discover why the action part of the research should be so poorly supported by the evaluations. Are there important political implications, and what are the lessons for future evaluation research projects? One of the group is presently drafting an article intended for publication, perhaps in New Society or Times Educational Supplement.

H. Goldstein

Reference

Educational Priority (1972-5) Vols. I - V, HMSO.

STATISTICIANS AS EMPLOYEES SUBGROUP

The subgroup began as just 5 or 6 of us, mainly from central or local government, meeting now and then for a chat. We were thinking about trying to write and promote a code of ethics for statistical work, as a means of starting some controversy over <sup>our</sup> position as employees. We decided that we didn't have a wide enough range of experience to write the code.

More recently more contacts in government were made, and there were a couple of meetings with more people, though different people each time. We talked about Radical Statistics in general and what the subgroup could do, but didn't come to an agreement on either. Everyone had come along to find out from everyone else what it was all about. There seemed to be a great variety of interests and political aims. A number of people were interested in the use made of government social surveys.

It was agreed that people would send in their suggestions for the subgroup to be put together as a discussion paper for the next meeting, but nothing was received and only two people turned up at the meeting. (There are several people outside London who cannot easily come to meetings) Perhaps there is no basis for this subgroup yet, and people can take part in other subgroups according to their interests.

I suggest that anyone interested, whether or not they have so far been in touch, write to me their views, ideas, experiences on the position of statisticians as employees, and what activity (if any) they would like to see the subgroup undertake. If there is a sufficient response, I'll put together what I receive into a bulletin to send round to those interested, and call another meeting to try to agree on some specific activity.



## Teaching and Methodology Sub-groups

It was decided by the convenors of the groups on teaching and on methodology that these two groups should initially meet together. A first appraisal of the groups' objectives seemed to yield some commonality - indeed they shared a common core of members. The concern of the teaching group was not so much with aspects of teaching technology or technique, but rather with questions about where 'Statistics' fitted in, what should be taught as 'Statistics' and in what way should it be presented. These questions soon lead to the consideration of general methodological problems. On the other hand, most of those in the methodology group were involved in the teaching of Statistics and further the nature of Statistics makes it unclear what directions are most appropriate for a group looking at methodology abstracted from any substantive associations.

The first meeting spent some time in discussion of whether a commonality did, in fact, exist and it was agreed with reservations by some, that the two groups should meet together until such time as distinct and diverse objectives might emerge. The intent was to follow the pattern of questions arising from the teaching interest and to leave the methodological problems and discussions to evolve from these. We also hoped that if any other group threw out methodological problems these might also be discussed.

The issues raised at the meeting included the following:

What is the position of Statistics within "scientific method"? What are the implications of different positions in the philosophy of science? (Books and articles by Hindess, the Willers, Lakatos, Popper, etc. were suggested.)

'Equifinal' is a name for alternative models leading to equivalent empirical results. Is it possible to catalogue such equivalent models?

In what way do "non-objective" factors intrude into the research process - in sampling decisions (e.g. the trade-off between precision and cost), choice of data-collection method, measurement procedure, inference?

What is the nature and extent of Bayesian "subjectivity"? Are the important value judgements made more explicit than in classical Statistics?

How important is the centrality of the notion of "probability" in the various Statistical programmes?

Should methodology be taught separately from a substantive area of application? What differences in teaching strategy are appropriate in the education of "budding" statisticians, natural scientists, social scientists, the public-at-large (e.g. shop stewards)?

How should we get involved with institutional strategies (e.g. related to the manner in which Poly degrees are approved), or with questions of educational policy (e.g. student grants)?

The second and third meetings focussed on the problems of introductory courses for social science degrees. Jeff Evans described the objectives and institutional context of the 'Methods and Models' course at Middlesex Poly (Enfield) - and briefly contrasted this with the approach described by C.R. Rao ("A Multidisciplinary Approach for Teaching Statistics", Int. J. Math. Educ. Sci. Technol., vol. 2, 295-312 (1971)). Paul Chalmers-Dixon and Roy Carr-Hill described the history of a course offered within the School of Social Sciences at Sussex University, again indicated the institutional problems, and presented a detailed syllabus of a recent version of the course.

The fourth meeting began a series of discussions on the role of probability in Statistics programmes, by looking at the Bayesian approach. We shall also consider to examine teaching programmes and problems presented by members.

DAVID BALMER  
JEFF EVANS



To the Editor of Radical Statistics Newsletter

Dear Liz,

One of the topics that was mentioned at the inaugural meeting of R/S. which keeps coming up, but seems not to be being dealt with by any of the study groups, is that of statistical advice for community groups. It seems to me that there are many statisticians who would be willing to give advice on the extraction, interpretation and collection of data to people and groups unable to afford paid statistical help. Similar groups are starting in our fellow professions: for example, there are many legal advice centres now, and there is even a group giving free accountancy advice.

From the point of view of R.S. itself, the establishment of such a group would be good. It is always helpful in a movement such as ours to have a section rolling up its sleeves and getting on with a job the need for which is already recognised, while aims and policies are still being formulated. The latter prevents the former from forgetting the more long-term aspirations of the group, the former prevents the latter from becoming a talk-shop, and provides a base from which further action can arise. Particularly in the areas of demystifying statistics, public availability of data, exposing mis-use of statistics, and in emphasising our belief that Statistics does have a positive contribution to make to our society, could, I think, a group grappling with the problems of community and action groups contribute valuably.

I would like to hear from people interested in joining such a group. There are many things to discuss: how to contact organisations likely to want our help, how to allocate members to organisations, whether to seek the cheap use of computing facilities, and so on. Perhaps we could meet to discuss these and other ideas. As a start, here, for criticism, is a very rough draft of an advert that could be put in newsletters read by community groups offering ourselves:

"Statistics prove ...", "Our statisticians tell us"..., "The computer has predicted ..."; we are often faced with statements starting with phrases such as these, and have very little ability or power to verify the facts they present, nor even to assess their importance in relation to other aspects of the problem that maybe haven't been considered. Very few "men in the street" nor "groups at street-level" have the money to pay statisticians and run computers to collect and assess the data they feel to be important.

'We are a group of statisticians who would like to help such groups meet those who make such statements on their own ground; to help them to be as well informed as possible. There are two ways in which we can help: firstly, in getting and interpreting statistics that are in theory available to the public, but are in fact so inaccessible that no one can find them without an intimate knowledge of the volumes in which they appear. Secondly, we could give advice on carrying out surveys; getting a proper sample, designing questionnaires, and so on.

'If you feel your group could do with our sort of help please contact .....

home: Winchester (0962) 66971  
office: London (01)-633 7532

Nic Wright



Dear Jeff,

9.

Presumably as 'guest editor' of Radstat News, you will allot a few pages to 'letters from our readers'. Could you please include this from me?

1. I should like to thank all those who participated in the July 3rd meeting of the SSRC Research Seminar Group in Quantitative Social Science. I must confess to being rather disappointed myself, particularly with the discussions. I think that future get-togethers of Radstats could well learn from the mistakes of this meeting. In particular, the following hints may be gleaned.
  - (a) More time should be alloted for discussion.
  - (b) Discussants should be 'briefed' to set the discussion going in the desired direction.
  - (c) Some sessions at least should take place in small groups.
  - (d) Possibly a completely different format should be adopted.

Of course other people may offer other hints, and they should be encouraged to put them forward.

2. The possibility was mentioned of publishing the proceedings of the July 3rd meeting in some shape or form. The discussion was recorded with this end in view. However, I now feel it would be better if people could send me written critiques of the papers presented there, as well as anything else they may care to contribute on the theme of Radical Statistics, and I will see if anything can be done with them. (Initial correspondence with John Wiley suggests that they may be interested in such a publication.)
3. In the Radical Statistics meeting on the evening of the 3rd, people suggested a firebrigade, flying squad or whatever of statisticians who could offer their services to left-wing groups. I will contact Counter-information about this. Will anyone who wishes to be included in this group please contact me, and also let me have ideas about how we should advertise this group.
4. A group of us are planning to look into the statistics of wages and prices. (A case for the flying squad?) Please contact me if interested.

John Gibby

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(I am including an outline written by John before the July 3rd meeting. -Ed.)

'RADICAL STATISTICS'

An Outline for a possible Publication

The book would consist of a set of articles, sub-divided by subject matter, with linking sections and introduction provided by the editor. A paperback version would seem desirable. The book would probably contain between one hundred thousand and two hundred thousand words.

Content

No definitive plan is available at present, but the following would seem to be a possible outline.

I Introduction

1. What is 'radical statistics'? (an outline and survey).
2. How statistics can confuse the issue. (examples in various fields).

II Teaching

3. Statistics and the problem of induction (see paper for 3rd July meeting).
4. Statistics at the Open University (based on paper for 3rd July meeting).
5. The 'density-free' approach to teaching statistical theory.
6. A survey of the literature on teaching statistics.
7. Summary of discussion from 3rd July meeting.



- 8. Housing (paper for 3rd July meeting).
- 9. Penology (paper for 3rd July meeting).
- 10. Economics (paper for 3rd July meeting).
- 11. Other subject areas: health, education, technology, politics.
- 12. General themes.

IV Statistics in the socialist world

- 13. Cuba.
- 14. China.
- 15. Eastern Europe.

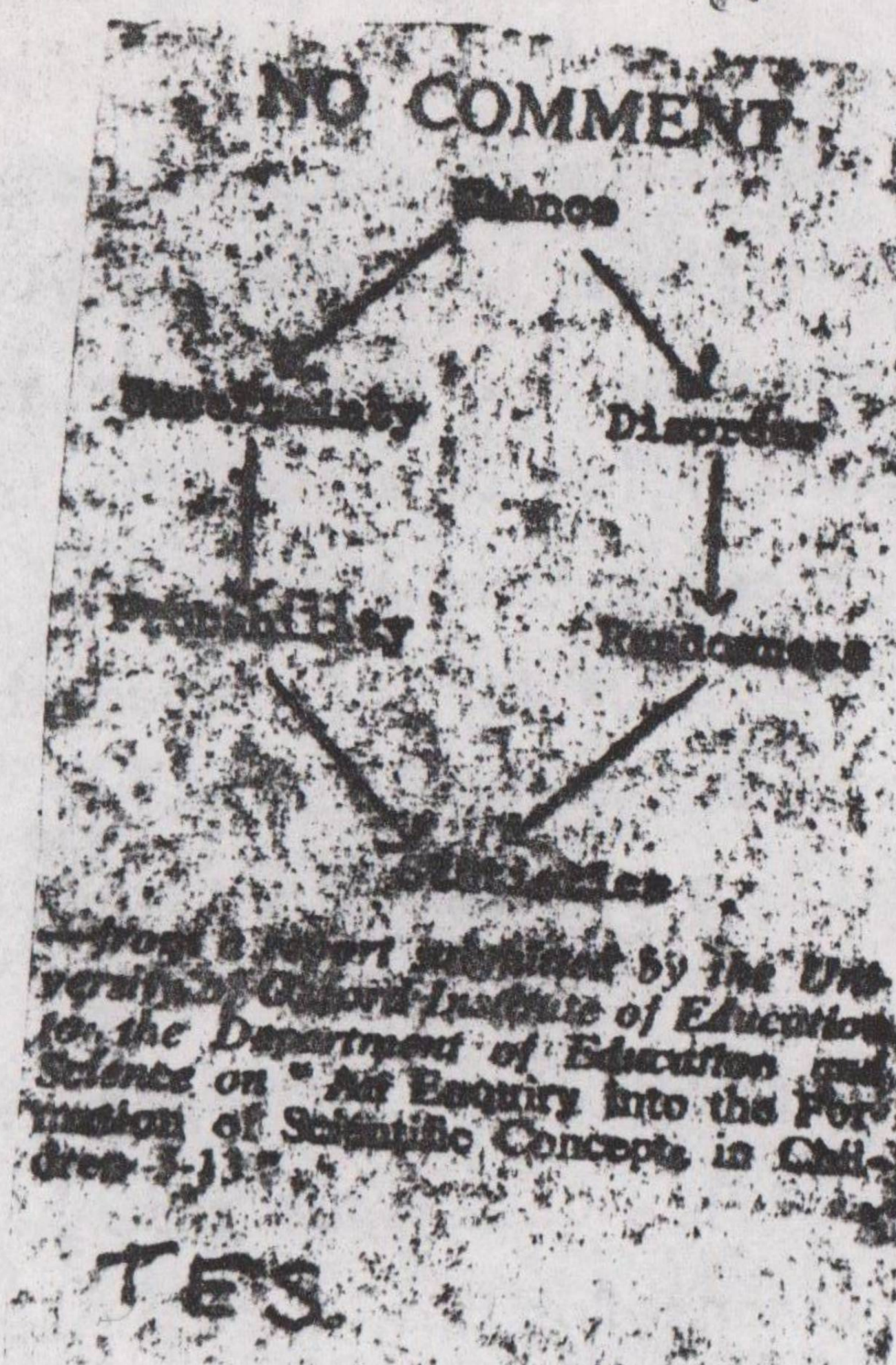
V Implications

- 16. Implications for the development of statistical and substantive theory.
- 17. Implications for practice.
- 18. Conclusion.

Comments and Suggestions gratefully received. Please send to

John Bibby

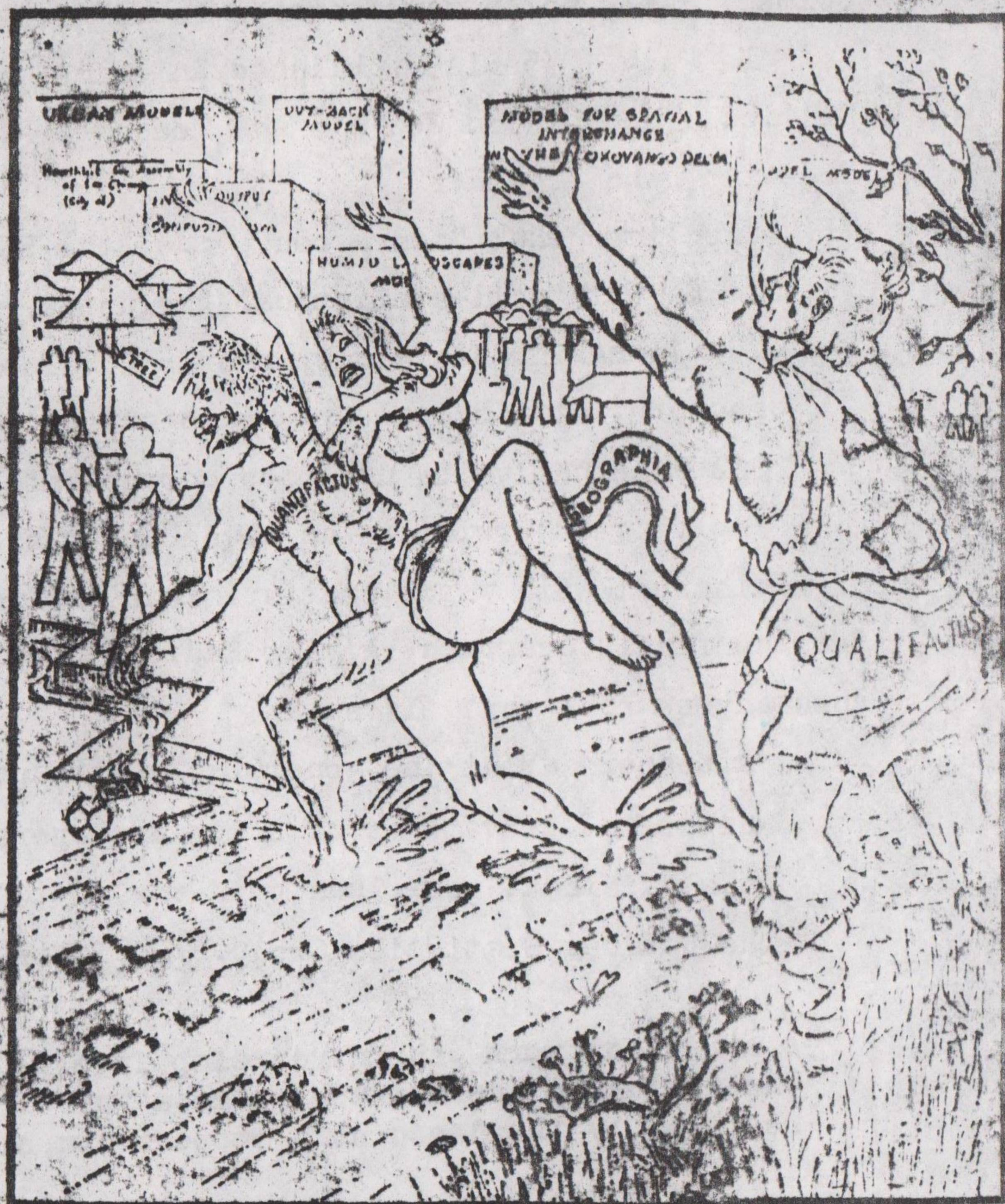
CITABLE SIGHTS



Former Finance Officer P B told governors that computation of student/staff ratios by subject was very difficult but that the poly now has a formula which will be used to analyse subject areas.

In looking at figures prepared by Mr B, governors speculated on how they could be "improved," only to run afoul of statistics lecturer/staff governor K E.

"No value judgements, please. Figures don't improve or not. They only get larger or smaller."



The Rope of Geography. A circa 1960s view of the seduction of traditional geography by quantification. While the language of mathematics is now recognized as essential to social as well as physical science, the revised attitudes of "new geography" go a great deal further than mere quantification. (Drawing from "Geography, a Modern Synthesis" by P. Haggett, Harper and Row, 1972, after L. Curran, "Canadian Geographer", Vol II, 1967.)



## BIAS AND "BIAS"

"BIAS" is the Bulletin in Applied Statistics, published twice yearly by Mr G K Kanji of the Statistical Laboratory, Department of Mathematics and Computing Science, Sheffield Polytechnic (Pond St, Sheffield S1 1WB). In the January 1975 issue an article was published by W A Pridmore - "Weights and Measures - A Story in European Statistics". This article argues, in effect, that the EEC laws on weights and measures, requiring only that labels show the average content of a type of packet, make more sense statistically than the present UK regulations, based on guaranteed minimum contents. Mr Pridmore, who is also in a Royal Statistical Society study group supposedly making objective professional recommendations on the subject, urges us (cuts in quote to save space):

"So when ... the comments over a pint in the pub begin, think hard as a statistician. ... You may well come to the conclusion that the Continental proposals have some merit in them. ... If so, would you please say what you know? Please say it clearly, and please say it often."

It so happens that Mr Pridmore is employed by the firm Reckitt and Colman, Hull, which manufactures food, drink, pharmaceutical products etc.

In July 1975 BIAS published an edited version of an article "Some Critical Thoughts on Weights and Measures" by someone using the name Greenman, who argued:

"Feelings that "its a con" (i.e. the EEC regulations) may have nothing to do with anti-statistical prejudice, but express justified misgivings. ... In making decisions, people's values and aims are the determining factors; statistical arguments can only clarify (or confuse) the issues. One alternative is not more correct statistically than another. Implying otherwise is an abuse and mystification which increases the distrust with which statisticians are regarded."

But the final paragraph, giving Radical Statistics a plug, was omitted - does anyone know why? It said:

"A concern about the general situation of statisticians as employees whether of private or of State employers, and the influence this has on statistical work, has been one of the reasons for the formation of the Radical Statistics Group. ... It is my personal view that

statistical work can only develop freely and cater to human needs when the employment relationship, as a way of conducting social affairs, is replaced by the democratic cooperation of freely associated producers."

S. Greenman

(It was hoped to publish one or two responses from readers to John Bibby's "How Statistics can confuse the Issue - Some Preliminary Thoughts" from the last mailing, but we are short of space, and esp. time. So hopefully, the next issue will include these.)



Review of "Statistics for Bargainers" by K Hedderwick, (Arrow Trade Union Industrial Studies, 1975.)

In the current attempts to define our identity as a Radical Statistics Group, proposals for "doing something" are beginning to figure quite prominently. It is with this thought in mind that I would like to discuss the issues raised by Hedderwick in his recent book "Statistics for Bargainers."

This book forms part of a series of monographs put out by Arrow books for the Society of Industrial Tutors, each volume concentrating on a different but related contemporary issue of importance in industrial relations, and written in a way "specifically directed to the needs of active trade unionists who want to equip themselves to be more effective." (cover notes) In this case, the focus is upon the ways in which statistics are used in collective bargaining, and how, "if today's trade unionist is to bargain effectively, he must match management's statistical sources and techniques." (back cover) But, first, it is necessary to dispel a few myths about statistics, for as Hedderwick rightly points out "the very word statistics may be enough to produce a defensive reaction." (p.12) The key aspect here is intelligibility, and by being sensitive from the outset to such problems a lucid exposition of quite complex technical arguments is made without using concepts not previously defined and illustrated. This lack of jargon is perhaps the most positive aspect of the book.

The aim of the book, then, is to provide the means for trade unionists to acquire an understanding of the techniques necessary to argue effectively within the collective bargaining process, for "statistical problems arise at nearly every stage of the preparation of the claim. Difficulties always arise; often the required information is unobtainable, at other times the information is not in the form which leads itself to adoption. A familiarity with statistical techniques and statistical sources will resolve many of these difficulties; establishing that degree of familiarity is the aim of this book." (p.13) Assessment of the value of the book must include, therefore, an evaluation of whether, in fact, a demystification and popularisation of already existing technique to improve the skill of union collective-bargainers is the best way to protect workers' interests, or whether new techniques should be developed based upon alternative ways of seeing and acting towards the industrial structure. This will be considered later.



The major part of the book consists of an attempt to illustrate, through worked examples of the various facets of a wage claim (assuming collective bargaining), the uses of basic statistical concepts and methods of presenting data for putting forward a case - particularly in the form of graphical representation. Hedderwick shows quite clearly here that the so-called "objective" measures of changes embodied in the indices commonly used to assess the right to a wage rise, such as those of money and real earnings, inflation and unemployment, or the earnings gap, tend to reflect the interests of the group responsible for defining the nature and scope of the statistics produced, the methods of collection, and the means of presentation, etc.

In doing this, Hedderwick is extremely successful in making intelligible the often misunderstood, (and, therefore, often misused), concepts representing variance. For example, in discussing the difference between average wage figures based upon the arithmetic mean as opposed to other measures of central tendency related to the median, he outlines the conditions under which each is most appropriately used, stressing how important it is for trade unionists to appreciate this by means of an example in which the average wage of seven employees in a firm, when worked out according to the arithmetic mean, is such that six employees have wages less than the average due to one being paid an inordinately high salary. (p.22)

To round off the book, a useful checklist is provided of factors to be taken into account when interpreting statistical data. These include asking questions of the data such as, who is covered by the statistics and who excluded, or what is the basis of any weighting undertaken?

To come back to our unanswered question, then, is this attempt by Hedderwick to provide trade unionists with statistical expertise ultimately the most fruitful way of achieving wage satisfaction, and, if so, would this constitute a form of activity which we as radical statisticians might wish to emulate in other fields? Here, the question of "successful" wage negotiation becomes of importance, for without some idea of the dimensions of this we not proceed much further. The age-old adage of "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay" exhibits certain ideological characteristics in that no criteria for critical assessment of "fair" are presented, or even suggested, and the same may be said of the results of collective bargaining. Hedderwick, for example, advances no views on what he means by talking about "the successful



outcome (of wage negotiations) from the shop stewards' point of view," (p.12) other than that the terms finally agreed upon might have been less agreeable had the negotiators involved been less conversant with statistics.

My answer to the last question is a firm no on both counts, but to fully justify the latter decision criticism must be directed against Hedderwick's conceptual framework. This delimits the problematics set and the tools, techniques, and forms of political action allowable in their solution. Hedderwick's "given" is collective bargaining - an extremely uncritical method of setting wage-levels based largely upon the manipulation of official statistics around normative structures of wage differentials. Further, in collective bargaining the workers themselves are rarely involved in any of the negotiations, and are presented with already finalised sets of figures to be rubber-stamped without really understanding their basis - a forced accession to a pseudo-rationality endorsed by their "union men." In many ways, Hedderwick's book stands as a justification to this intolerable situation.

The results of pursuing such a dependence upon historically fabricated norms are clear to see. Collective bargaining may be understood as an adjunct to the modified ideology of laissez-faire now operative in industrial relations - often being hostile to state-intervention whether the rationale behind it is reactionary (eg. the current "voluntary" £6 wage-limits) or progressive (eg. equal pay for women or blacks). In fact, to his discredit, Hedderwick is able without one word of critical comment to discuss in the section on "an index : catching up or falling behind" (p.44 - 47) the relative movement of male and female manual earnings between 1953 and 1973 in which male earnings actually increased more in percentage terms (297.8%) than those of females (282.0%). In conjunction with the book's cover picture depicting a bikini clad lady juxtaposed to the question "do you run away from statistics?" - a naked exploitation of a woman's body for commercial purposes - this sexism is intolerable. But, how is this related to the present reliance in industrial relations upon normative techniques such as collective bargaining? The answer is clear in this case. On commercial grounds, such sales techniques cannot be faulted for the sales of this book are aimed at negotiators and bureaucrats who are predominantly men - people who at the last TUC. Congress organised a stag party with strippers to entertain themselves (numbering 946 men) at the expense of the 84 women delegates from only 30 unions, many of whom protested bitterly at this but to no avail. Clearly then, if women are desirous



of equal pay - a situation not going to come about merely through the implementation of a government decree - then women must either gain equal representation in the union bureaucracies or push for the institution of alternative mechanisms for wage-fixing

The thrust behind this argument, then, is that if we are to see the possibility of a radical statistics applied to backing-up wage demands, then we must address our efforts not to union bureaucrats but to organised rank and file pressure. Hedderwick has clearly demonstrated the utility of statistical understanding as a means of furthering economic interests. But, a critical understanding of statistics must be made available to the ordinary worker so as to encourage develop self-help methods uncontaminated by the constricting division of labour imposed upon demanding a fair wage through collective bargaining.

In addition, Hedderwick imposes upon statistics a relativism which I find unsatisfactory. Wage negotiations seem to be reduced only to a conference table at which "each party to the bargaining process is tempted to quote the measure of central tendency which best suits its case," (p.22) for, "as this book will show, practically any collection of figures can be arranged and rearranged to show contradictory results." (p.13) This relativism, however, is not in any way a necessary feature of statistics and is rather a reflection of the theory to which the particular statistics are tied. A fair day's wage cannot be assessed normatively, and any attempt to impose a pseudo-rationality upon it through collective bargaining must ultimately fail.

As radical statisticians we must begin to attempt to apply radical perspectives upon the solutions to such problems, and this involves to some extent the development of new technique. The measurement of a fair day's pay might be related, for example, to measures of the rate of exploitation, as opposed to profit or wage-differentials. This potential that exists for the formulation and popularisation of scientifically based measures useful in political struggle is for me the issue with which the Radical Statistics Group must come to terms with. The demystification of traditional technique is one worthwhile step, and we should give due credit to Hedderwick for this. But radical statistics means more than dealing with technique, and improving upon this is a task which I feel is one worth considering in our search as radical statisticians for "something to do."

J. IRVINE



ANNOUNCEMENTS

\* \* \* Radical Statistics Conference \* \* \* Radical Statistics Conference \* \* \*

to be held 26-27 September, 1975

at the Notting Dale Urban Studies Centre,

Harrow Club,  
189 Freston Road, (formerly Latimer Road)  
LONDON W10 6TH tel: (01)-969 8942.

It was decided at the last meeting of the Radical Statistics Group to hold a conference at the end of September. This would take not only the form of a traditional conference, but would also include workshops and dialogues between the various sub-groups and the members of the RS group-at-large.

The broad functions of the Conference are seen in terms of:

- (i) getting people together;
- (ii) working towards defining the identity of RS through a series of discussions/papers/proposals for action/descriptions of previous or ongoing projects - dealing with particular spheres of interest;
- (iii) a happening to show that the RS group is alive and well, and thus to continue to attract interested and committed people.

As yet the arrangements are not finalised. The Saturday will take prominence so as to ensure that people not able to make it down to London for Friday evening won't miss too much.

What can you do to support the Conference? Suggestions concerning both structure and content are welcome. You (singular or plural) could lead a discussion on your work and its relation to Statistics, or on how you perceive Statistics and its relation to research procedures/social policy/ideology. You can help with the organisation and/or offer accommodation for Friday and Saturday evening if you live in London. Please return the Conference Support form on the last page to John Irvine.

Quantitative Social Science Group - Thursday, 25 September, all day, at the L.S.E.

Another symposium of the Q.S.S. Group will take place the day before the RS Conference. Readers on the Q.S.S. mailing list will receive details in due course; other interested readers may contact David Balmer, Statistics Department, L.S.E.

Address List

Amendments

p.1 John Bibby - new work phone no.: Milton Keynes (0908) 63150,  
home phone as before: (0908) 312372.

Roy Carr-Hill - new address: Social Indicator Section, OECD  
2 rue Andre Pascal, Paris 16, France.

p.4 Sybil Knowles - address corrected: 198 Jubilee Street, London, E.1.

(Further amendments via the Feedback Form, please. The recent p.5 is available from John Bibby.)



FEEDBACK

1. Please send the Feedback Form to:

Liz Atkins,  
105 Noel Road,  
LONDON, N.1.

OR

John Bibby,  
Faculty of Mathematics,  
The Open University,  
Walton Hall,  
Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

2. Please send the Conference Support form to:

John Irvine,  
14 Upper Wellington Road,  
Brighton. tel: 684424.

----- FEEDBACK FORM -----

To: Liz Atkins or John Bibby FROM: \_\_\_\_\_

\* My address is now \_\_\_\_\_ (was \_\_\_\_\_ )  
\_\_\_\_\_

\* Reactions to current Newsletter/ \_\_\_\_\_  
Suggestions for future Newsletters \_\_\_\_\_

\* I should like to be informed of the activities of the following sub-groups:  
(if you are not already) Health \_\_\_\_\_ Education Research \_\_\_\_\_  
Teaching/Methodology \_\_\_\_\_ Statistician as Employee \_\_\_\_\_

\* I am interested in working in the following new sub-groups:  
Economics \_\_\_\_\_ (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
"Community Advice" \_\_\_\_\_

\* Other comments/suggestions for the Group \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

----- CONFERENCE SUPPORT -----

To: John Irvine et al. FROM: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Address/phone) \_\_\_\_\_

For the RS Conference 26-27 September, \_\_\_\_\_

\* I/We would be willing to lead a discussion/organise a session on:  
\_\_\_\_\_

\* I/We will help with organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

\* I/We can offer accommodation for Friday \_\_\_\_\_ / Saturday \_\_\_\_\_ night(s)

\* Other suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_