

newsletter

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THE PACIFIC STATISTICAL CONGRESS—1985: SOME REVIEWS**by Jocelyn R. Dale, Stephen J. Haslett and M. Kelly Mara**

The (first) Pacific Statistical Congress has been and gone, and, apart from 153mm of rain in one 24-hour-interval during the congress, it was an unqualified success. The various organizing committees, especially the "Congress Committee" and the "Local Organising Committee" deserve a vote of thanks for the smooth way in which the conference proceeded. The keynote addresses were all well-crafted and enthusiastically delivered and received—recall Terry Speed's lively comment that Jim Berger's keynote address was based on a misconception that "most frequentist statisticians interpret p-values as a measure of disbelief in the null hypothesis" and the clever suggestion from one member of the audience that perhaps all those present should have been subjected to a randomized response question on the matter, prior to the address.

The various session organizers deserve congratulations for masterminding some excellent sessions. All those who attended the session on 'Matrix Methods in Statistics' chaired by Shayle Searle not only enjoyed the very clear presentations by the speakers, Simo Puntanen, Harold Henderson aka H. Neudecker and George Styan, but also the by-play among the speakers and the "front-row" consisting of Golub, Seshadri and Speed.

There were more than 210 registrants for the congress, about 60% from New Zealand, 30% from Australia, and about 6% from North America. About 120-130 papers were presented with up to three sessions running concurrently. Given the large number of papers and extra-curricular activities, the editor asked three "bright, young" statisticians to do a "Hunter S. Thompson" on the congress and their pieces appear below.

Jocelyn R. Dale:

The Congress was one of personalities. Auckland's Mayor, Dame Catherine Tizard, gave a distinctive welcome and Professor Peter Armitage, the first keynote speaker, shared his experience of many aspects of clinical trials.

The Forum on Statistical Consulting, held on Monday night, gave 8 speakers exactly 10 minutes each to tell us their consulting environment, their approach to consulting and how they thought statisticians and clients should be trained. Communication skills and a knowledge of simple statistical methods were emphasised. Some suggested that there was no need to develop any more statistical theory but rather to document better the known methods. Others recommended that consultants should be trained in problem solving techniques. I was disappointed in the absence of women from the panel. Nevertheless, many

in the audience contributed effectively during the discussion.

Theoreticians and bureaucrats were contrasted with applied statisticians throughout the week, as they had been at the Consulting Forum. Dr Terry Speed showed in his keynote address on cumulants that he has the right skills to make even this subject come alive and make sense. Professor Jim Berger presented an interpretation of significance levels that will make many of us think twice when interpreting 5% points. Analysis of complex surveys using logistic regression seemed straightforward, after hearing Professor Alastair Scott's approach. Professor Gene Golub defined an applied mathematician as a person who "solves almost the problem you're interested in", and the final keynote speaker, Professor Dennis Lindley, gave us insights into Jeffrey's classic book on probability theory.

There was, if anything, not enough discussion of the contributed papers which were generally well-presented. The venue was suitably compact, but the chair people could have been more strict in getting speakers to finish punctually, for participants who needed to change rooms. It was refreshing that apples and fruit juice were served as well as more standard victuals during the breaks. This is usually when interesting contacts are made, but too little time was allowed for it. Bravo to the organizers, who managed on the whole to get similar papers in the same session and very few "genuine clashes".

The conference dinner at the Sheraton was enjoyable, and typically Noo Zild, with no formal speeches. I shall remember PSC as a friendly conference, with high calibre speakers. Roll on 1989 for PSC2 in Fiji, or Australia.

Stephen J. Haslett:

Just watching the darkness fall over the Manukau from the air, heading south. The end of the P.S.C.

The P.S.C., or Pacific Statistical Congress for the non-initiate, was held in Auckland during the week of 20-24 May, 1985. In fact I'm reliably told that while the Conference began on the Sunday evening with a cocktail party, it could well have been confined to the working week if the caretaker had been successful in clearing the building of undocumented interlopers at the height of their entertainment. Maybe he was persuaded by a suitable quantity of Bluff oysters!

The Conference proper began Monday, and between then and Friday afternoon some 150 speakers generally in three parallel sessions addressed the meeting. Technical details of papers will be available in the Conference Proceedings, so only passing reference need be made here to statistical content.

Monday morning dawned fine and clear, and it was on into Clinical Trials, Bootstrapping, Time Series, Medical Statistics, Stochastic Processes and Experimental Design, run, with the exception of

Professor Peter Armitage's keynote address, in three parallel sessions.

The afternoon sessions concluded with drinks at 5.30 and later there was an animated evening session, a forum on statistical consulting, which was very well attended despite the 7.30-9.30 p.m. slot. Matters aired included the division of work between the consultant and consultee, their relative status, and the technical and professional training which should be required before hanging up one's shingle.

The pattern of three parallel sessions and separate keynote addresses was the form for the remainder of the week.

Tuesday brought sessions among others on Medical Statistics, Statistical Genetics, Microcomputers in the Tropical Environment, and Inference, together with Dr Terry Speed's keynote paper on Cumulants at which the apparent division between theoretical and practical statistics was mentioned. The evening brought the Mayoral Reception, very enjoyable, with Statistician jokes to the fore, and also brought the rain.

It rained for the next two and a half days almost unceasingly. Grafton Road among others became a side stream of the Stanley Street river; one Congress participant was heard to comment that it was the first time he'd ever needed to wring out his plastic mac. The rain dampened enthusiasm for Wednesday afternoon's excursions. The Rangitoto trip was converted into a harbour cruise. I went instead to visit friends on Waiheke through short choppy seas; the return journey at 6.30 a.m. Thursday during a slight lull in the weather was sufficient to remind me of the beauty of Auckland from the sea.

Thursday brought more Time Series, Inference, together with sessions on Statistical Computing, Social Statistics, Censuses and Surveys, and Discrete Multivariate Analysis. The rain continued. Meetings of the N.Z. Statistical Association and the Bernoulli Society were held; support for the standards of the Survey Appraisals Committee and a vote of thanks for their work was passed at the N.Z.S.A. AGM.

By Friday the weather was clearing, and the time to depart approached. The highlight of the morning was Professor D. V. Lindley's eloquent keynote address "On re-reading Harold Jeffreys". This brought out the Bayes/"Berkeley" debate to add to the apparent theoretician/practitioner division which had surfaced earlier in the Conference. The Biometrics Society meeting was held.

The week was, despite the weather, an enjoyable and informative one, the various Congress Committees are to be thanked and congratulated on their efforts (and the timing to coincide with the Monet exhibition at the Auckland Art Gallery!). The next P.S.C. has been tentatively arranged for Australia in 1989 or 1990.

Wellington Airport approaches and the city lights sparkle in a moonless night. I leave the final words on apparent divisions to Leonardo Da Vinci:

"He who loves practice without theory is like a sailor who boards ship without a rudder and compass and knows not where he may be cast".

M. Kelly Mara:

Having struggled out of bed at some nasty hour to get to Wellington airport and having fought (and lost) the battle with the wrappers on Air New Zealand's cheese and crackers, I arrived in Auckland on a very balmy morning. The pleasantness of the morning augured well, I thought, for the progress of the 1st Pacific Stats Congress. (It did not, as it turned out, augur well for the weather—but that is another story for which you will get

two different versions, one from defensive Aucklanders and the other from long-maligned Wellingtonians.)

Having previously examined the list of papers I was very impressed at the level of contribution to the congress and I came expecting a very stimulating week. I was not disappointed. The keynote speakers were first rate (particularly of course the Bayesians, objective or subjective).

The parallel sessions, of which there were three, opened for me with talks on bootstrapping in which we were given some thoughts on the connection between the bootstrap method and permutation tests for the problem of estimating confidence intervals in regression. I was a little surprised that more papers were not presented on re-sampling methods given the apparent interest in the subject. (Perhaps desktop? Crays for everybody would improve this.)

The choice of papers was quite substantial and the program had been designed very well so that at most times there was no problem finding talks on topics of interest. A minor quibble: I found the problem of time overlap of the sessions sometimes frustrating. Some talks were 20 minutes long, others 25 minutes, or 30 minutes long. It seems to me that allowing a fixed time, say 15-20 minutes, for any talk is more suitable. This allows people to change from one session to the other without disturbing any talk in progress.

On the first evening of the congress, the seminar on statistical consulting was held. I wondered if the audience might be witness to a battle to the death between the theoreticians and the "practical" statisticians—blood on the floor etc. However it was not to be a rehearsal for big-time wrestling. It seems clear that, as a profession, statisticians have a mild identity crisis. What is the meaning of life for a typical Taihape statistician? Indeed, if the composition of the invited discussant panel were examined one might be tempted to believe, purely on the basis of the sample, that all statisticians are male. However, I have a priori reason to suppose that this is not true. The forum provided an excellent opportunity to express some thoughts on the subject. I do not think anybody's problem was solved, but some of the comments were very thought provoking.

The quality of the work presented at the talks I attended was very high. Statistics is alive and well. I did find however that the *presentation* of the subject matter varied from excellent to quite lamentable. I know that it is very difficult to compress into 20 minutes work that may have taken months or years to develop, but I don't wish to know the detail. It is the *idea* and *principles* which are important. The talks which I found most enjoyable were those which avoided extraneous technical detail and procedure but which focussed on concepts. This is a plea to statisticians in general (myself included): Please address the audience as well as the topic.

On the whole I regard the congress as a considerable success and I hope that it is a precursor of similar events in the future.

NOT-THE-MINUTES OF THE 36TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 36th Annual General Meeting of the New Zealand Statistical Association was held on Thursday, May 23rd in Auckland during the Pacific Statistical Congress. Several important issues were raised at the meeting:

(1) Subscriptions for 1985/86

After presenting the financial statement, the association's treasurer, Alex Neill, commented that there was no need to increase subscription fees for this

financial year, but a substantial increase would be likely in 1986/87, particularly if the association has to collect GST's from its members. The meeting accordingly set this year's fee at \$15 (the fourth year fees have remained at this level). Next year's fee may well be close to \$20.

(2) The Survey Appraisals Committee

Professor J. J. Deely read the annual report prepared by the convener of the committee, Vic Duoba. The report is contained elsewhere in this issue. Many members present at the meeting, principally those who don't read *The Auckland Star* or *New Outlook*, were surprised to learn that SAC has been embroiled in a controversy over their appraisal of a survey conducted by AGB: McNair concerning the Auckland regional Authority's proposed Aotea Centre. Apparently, the appraisal pointed out some weaknesses in the survey questionnaire but the appraisal breached agreed protocol in that the appraisers omitted to contact the survey organisation (AGB:McNair) before communicating the appraisal of the survey questionnaire to the complainant.

The presidents of the two sponsoring bodies of the SAC, the Market Research Society of NZ and the NZ Statistical Association, issued a joint press release stating that "the appraisal has been found to be deficient in that agreed procedures of the Survey Appraisals Committee have not been followed" and recommended the appraisal be withdrawn. The SAC reconsidered their appraisal, sent it to AGB:McNair for comment and gave them six weeks to respond, then re-released the appraisal to the complainant. The matter is to all intents and purposes dead except that several questions relating to the independence of the SAC from its sponsoring bodies have been raised. For example, the SAC is not an incorporated body and there is some suggestion that its "parent bodies" could be legally liable if an appraisal generates a law suit. A committee comprised of members of both sponsoring bodies is to review the SAC's constitution.

The AGM passed three resolutions: the first called for the maintenance of the SAC's independence, the second gave thanks and support to the members of the SAC for their efforts over the past year, and the third empowered the executive committee of the association to appoint members to the SAC.

(3) An Australasian Applied Statistics Journal?

During "Other Business", the president of the Statistical Society of Australia, Dr Richard Tweedie, spoke on his society's proposal to split their journal (*The Australian Journal of Statistics*) into two parts (theory and applications). Subject to the approval of their membership, and ours, the revised journal could be jointly sponsored by both societies and the applied section might become an alternative to *The New Zealand Statistician*. If the proposal went ahead NZSA members would be expected to take the new journal as part of their annual subscription, with an initial cost of perhaps \$A15 in the first instance (this cost could be partially offset by the savings, \$NZ11 per subscription, from terminating *The New Zealand Statistician*).

The advantages for the Australian society include "a greater natural source of quality papers and an increased readership base" and the advantages for the New Zealand society include access to a "more widely distributed and recognized outlet for publication" and the chance to subscribe to a new applied journal at "lower than current rates".

A short discussion followed. Reaction to the proposal can probably be described as tepid. Members are urged

to write to the new executive committee of the association with their thoughts on the proposal.

(4) Annual Conferences and Regional Meetings

The AGM agreed to hold the 1986 AGM and conference in Wellington at the traditional time. Members present were urged to attend and present papers at the one-day regional meeting in Wellington, 28 August, 1985.

(5) 1985/86 Executive Committee

The AGM elected the following members to serve on the association's executive committee:

President: Garry E. Dickinson (Dept. of Statistics, Wellington)

Secretary: Dave J. Cox (Dept. of Statistics, Wellington)

Treasurer: W. Alex Neill (Applied Maths Div., DSIR, Wellington)

Corporate Members' Representative:

Mick G. Roberts (Wallaceville Animal Research Centre, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries)

Committee:

Megan J. Clark (Dept. of Mathematics, Victoria University of Wellington)

P. Colin Cryer (Wellington Clinical School of Medicine)

David Harte (Biometrics Section, MAF, Wellington)

John H. Maindonald (Applied Maths Div., DSIR, Auckland)

Clare E. Salmond (Epidemiology Unit, Wellington Hospital)

WELLINGTON REGIONAL MEETING OF THE NEW ZEALAND STATISTICAL ASSN.

Time: Wednesday, 28th August, 1985

Venue: Easterfield Building Conference Room,
Victoria University of Wellington.

No registration is required, but intending speakers are urged to contact, by 31st July, either:

Garry Dickinson, Department of Statistics,
Private Bag, Wellington,
Telephone: (04) 729-119,
or, Colin Cryer, Department of Community Health,
Wellington Clinical School of
Medicine,
Wellington Public Hospital,
Telephone: (04) 855-959.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SURVEY APPRAISALS COMMITTEE 1984/5

(as read to the 36th Annual General Meeting of the NZ Statistical Association)

The Survey Appraisal Committee met formally three times in the 1984/5 year (ending June 1985). As many individual members of the two sponsoring bodies will be aware, the energies of the SAC were mainly occupied with the Aotea Centre issue.

The SAC's enforced preoccupation with this single issue prevented the addressing of the more fundamental survey and survey reporting issues which prompted the formation of the SAC. Hence, the SAC in its extra-Aotea Centre survey activities was limited to writing (on its own initiative) to two major newspapers and market research organisation regarding survey reporting standards. A pleasing result of the approaches made to these newspapers (with advice on what additional minimal material to supply when reporting surveys) was the positive attitude to criticism taken by the editors. The response by the market research firm was (as in the previous year by some market research firms) unco-operative.

With regard to the AGB:McNair Aotea Centre survey issue, the SAC came under considerable pressure from the National Council of the Market Research Society of New Zealand to publicly retract its first appraisal of the questionnaire. The SAC took stance that while an apology for a breach of protocol was appropriate there were no technical grounds upon which to base a withdrawal of the appraisal.

The SAC was later requested by the NZSA to reconsider its appraisal and McNairs were approached for technical information relevant to the appraisal issue. They refused to co-operate and continued to apply pressure through the National Council of the MRSNZ. This pressure continued to the point where the MRS representatives received a 'directive' from the NC of the MRSNZ to play no part in a reappraisal until certain conditions were met. However, this 'directive' was received after the re-appraisal so its challengeable authority did not need to be tested. The SAC's reconsideration of its earlier appraisal had been unanimously re-affirmed by the SAC's members and the NZSA and NC of the MRSNZ were informed in writing of this. The matter rests at that point.

Despite the very considerable pressure placed upon the SAC's MRSNZ representatives based in Auckland, the SAC as a body weathered the stresses surprisingly well. The committee retained a strong sense of cohesiveness and the SAC's responses to the MRSNZ were based on a fair consideration of all viewpoints.

The SAC members support the continuation of the joint sponsorship of the SAC by the MRSNZ and the NZSA. It would be very difficult to act in isolation of the MRSNZ's support, especially given the educational and monitoring role that the SAC wishes to pursue, as distinct from a purely critical role.

The coming year may yet bring a few surprises for the SAC. The NZSA and the MRSNZ are to re-examine the constitution of the SAC. This re-examination must not be carried out with the consequence that the SAC is subordinated to either sponsoring body. The SAC must have the trust and support of its parent bodies and be allowed to pursue its objectives effectively.

V. Duoba
Chairman

SURVEY APPRAISALS COMMITTEE 1984/5

MORE TIPS FOR SCIENTIST-CLIENTS

"In statistical training centers, something is done to teach young statisticians how to get along with scientists. While in the presence of a number of distinguished scientists, I would like to give a few hints on how to get along with statisticians. In any extensive discussion of a statistical problem, some wag is likely to repeat the old chestnut about the three kinds of lies: 'lies, damn lies, and statistics'. If you feel an urge to give birth to this witticism, please

remember that it is not new, and it was not funny when it was new. The statistician also gets tired of hearing the scientist say 'Of course, I am no statistician,' in a tone of voice which implies that he is mentioning one of his most sterling virtues. If you are no statistician, this fact will probably reveal itself in the course of the conversation, and if you must tell us about it, please do so with an apologetic air."

From an address entitled 'Research Techniques in the Study of Human Beings' delivered by W. G. Cochran to an audience of clinicians, and quoted in,

Meier, Paul (1984) *William G. Cochran and Public Health*.

In, Rao, P.S.R.S. and Sedransk, J. "W. G. Cochran's Impact on Statistics", John Wiley and Sons, New York.

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND LECTURESHIP IN STATISTICS

Closing date: 15 September 1985

Applicants with research interests in most branches of Statistics and Probability are welcome to apply. Applicants should have postgraduate qualifications and proven research ability, and will be expected to play a full part in the Department's consulting activities. Careful consideration will be given to the applicant's potential as a Teacher.

Commencing salaries will be established within the range \$NZ23,622-\$27,928.

Conditions of Appointment and Method of Application are available from the Assistant Registrar (Academic Appointments) University of Auckland. Application in accordance with the Method of Application should be forwarded as soon as possible, but not later than the closing dates stated.

W.B. Nicoll
Registrar
University of Auckland
Private Bag
Auckland

FUN WITH MONOTONE SERIES

For readers who do not regularly browse *Nature* we reprint the following salvo which appeared in the issue of 18 April 1985 (Vol. 314, page 586):

"SIR—Rampino and Stothers make the interesting argument that the correlation they found between ordered sequences of nine mass extinction times and nine galactic plane crossings ($r=0.996$) is statistically significant, while the correlation that I found between the same ordered extinction times and the first nine prime numbers ($r=0.986$) is not. Of course, this leaves open the question of the significance of the correlation of the ordered extinction times and the first nine odd numbers ($r=0.995$).

The question of how to test statistical relations between serial data is a serious and difficult one of long standing, going back at least a century to W. Stanley Jevons' attempts to show a connection between sunspots and the business cycle... All monotone series appear highly correlated, all regular monotone series appear even more so... The intriguing connection Rampino and Stothers suggest between these two phenomena may well be a real one; their analysis has not yet proved it to be real.

S. M. STIGLER"

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Future Plans for the Journals of the NZSA and SSA

I wish to contribute a few remarks about the future of the Australian and New Zealand journals, mainly to add a little background to the suggestions from the Australian Society which were presented at the AGM.

A few years ago, during informal discussions with some of the Australians, the point was made and generally accepted I think, that it is difficult for local statisticians to read good applied articles that reflected local problems, and conversely difficult for them to find appropriate avenues of publication when they carry out some work themselves. This is true particularly when the methodology used does not contain any significant innovations (so it is not very enthusiastically reviewed by the statistical journals) and its scientific or industrial content is fairly specific to the local situation, so that it is not very enthusiastically received by the subject journals either. At the time we felt that some attempt should be made to develop a local journal that would be of value to local practising statisticians, that would carry case studies and applications carried out locally, together perhaps with discussions of local topical issues such as the Depo Provera controversy. *The New Zealand Statistician* was seen to come closer than *The Australian Journal of Statistics* to filling such a role at that time, and so one suggestion that I put forward was that it should try to evolve towards fulfilling such a role more explicitly, and not only for New Zealand but also for Australia. One reason for starting this Association's Newsletter was to leave the *Statistician* more free to develop this role should it wish to do so.

Some practical difficulties then arose as to the costing of the exercise, neither side showing any great enthusiasm for inflicting on their members any additional costs, as would be required from Australian members if *The New Zealand Statistician* became a second journal for them, or from NZ members if they were to share in some reciprocal arrangement which included maintaining the present costs of *The Australian Journal of Statistics*.

As a result, some kind of impasse has occurred, which seems to me a pity. I am not convinced that the Australian Society's current intention to develop an applications section with their existing journal will cover the need referred to, but it may make a joint venture that much more difficult to achieve.

I continue to feel that with so much recent development in consulting and applied work generally, there is scope for a practical journal that will publish local work of this kind, and that articles would be forthcoming (though this has generally been the problem in the past, that good practical articles are hard to get hold of). My feeling here is that standards have been too high and have put people off who have good competent work to discuss, that solves a local problem and incidentally illuminates points of practice that would be of general interest.

Is it still worth considering the possibility of moving *The New Zealand Statistician* in the direction of fulfilling such a role, and seeking the collaboration of Australian statisticians in such a task?

David Vere-Jones,

Institute of Statistics and Operations Research,
Victoria University of Wellington.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE

The deadline for submitted material for the August 1985, issue of this newsletter is July 31. Please send all notices of seminars, news items, letters-to-the-editor, etc. to . . .

John Reynolds,
Newsletter Editor,
AMD/DSIR
P.O. Box 1335
Wellington.

The deadline for "News and Announcements" for the November 1985 issue of *The New Zealand Statistician* is October 31.

OVERSEAS CONFERENCES

XIIIth International Biometric Conference

To be held in Seattle, Washington, USA, July 27 to August 1, 1986. For further information write to Dr Gerald van Belle, Department of Biostatistics, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98135, USA.

The Second International Conference on Teaching Statistics (ICOTS II)

This conference will be held in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, August 11-15, 1986. The conference aims to improve the quality of statistics teaching on a world-wide basis. Sessions will take place on teaching statistics at all levels, from school to university and in government, business and industry. Opportunities will be provided to see and experiment with the latest in computer hardware and software for statistical work.

The New Zealand coordinator for ICOTS II is:

John C. Turner,
Department of Mathematics,
University of Waikato,
Private Bag,
Hamilton, New Zealand.

American Statistical Association/Biometric Society

The 1986 joint meeting is to be held from August 18-21 in Chicago, Illinois. For further information write to ASA, 806 15th Street, N.W., Washington DC, 20005, USA.

International Association for Statistical Computing, COMPSTAT'86

This meeting is to be held in Rome, Italy, September 1-5, 1986. For further information write to COMPSTAT'86, Dipartimento di Statistica Probabilità e Statistica Applicata, Università degli studi di Roma, 'La Sapienza', I-00185, Rome, Italy.

Bernoulli Society—First World Congress

This meeting is to be held in Tashkent, USSR, September 8-14, 1986. For further information contact S.Kh. Sirajdinov, Institute of Mathematics of the Uzbek SSR Academy of Sciences, Hodjaev F., 29 Tashkent, 700143, USSR.

International Symposium on Probability and Bayesian Statistics

To be held in Innsbruck, Austria from September 23-26, 1986, this symposium is in honour of Bruno de Finetti's 80th birthday. For further information write to Professor R. Viertl, Institut für Statistik und Wahrscheinlichkeitstheorie, Technische Universität Wien, A-1040 Wien, Austria.

VACANCY APPLIED MATHEMATICS DIVISION, DSIR

Applied Statistician

The Applied Mathematics Division of DSIR has a vacancy in its Industrial Statistics Section. The position is a temporary one for one or two years but it is likely to become permanent. It is based in Wellington. The work will involve taking part in AMD's service for Industry and Government. This includes carrying out projects, providing advice and conducting seminars for clients, chiefly in quality assurance and industrial experimentation.

Requirements:

- Good honours degree, MSc, Diploma or PhD.
- Ability to use computer packages.
- Good communication skills.
- Potential to solve practical problems.
- Enthusiasm, initiative, etc.

Apply to:

The Director,
Applied Mathematics Division, DSIR,
P.O. Box 1335,
Wellington.

FAMOUS UNIPEDAL STATISTICIANS, No.1

"In 1938 Hartley joined Scientific Computing Service, a company founded by the formidable tablemaker L. J. Comrie, a one-legged New Zealander whom Karl Pearson had introduced to the marvels of his Brunsviga on Armistice Day, 1918. Hartley (or HOH as he was widely known) enjoyed telling how Comrie would plant an occasional error of 1 in the last digit of a table entry in order to detect unauthorized copying!"

David, H. A. (1982) Obituary Notice. H. O. Hartley, 1912-1980. *International Statistical Review*, 50, 327-330.

CAPITALIZE ON PERVERSIVE DISCONTENT!

"When we ask for the true sources of significant innovations in statistics, we find two sources, each indispensable:

- * a desire for mathematically neat and tidy accounts of what to do in more or less idealized situations;
- * a slow, pervasive disquiet about either the practical functioning of familiar techniques or the absence of ways to approach important questions.

The second of these sources seems only to be developed by continuing, diverse, practical experience with problems and with what we know how to use in dealing with them . . . pervasive discontent is a normal stimulus to research."

Tukey, J. W. (1982) Discussion. In J. S. Rustagi and D. A. Wolfe (eds), *Teaching of Statistics and Statistical Consulting*. Academic Press, New York.

NOT A NEW ERIC HILL LIFT-THE-FLAP BOOK ABOUT A PUPPY

"The Misunderstood Split Spot" by W. T. Federer. In *Applied Statistics*, R. P. Gupta (ed), 1975, p.9, North-Holland.

MORE STATISTICAL BUZZ-WORDS FOR SMOOTH-TALKING POLITICIANS

"It is summer again, so supermarket prices for tomatoes and other fresh vegetables should be falling sharply.

But by the time produce prices wend their way through the government's computers into their place in the Consumer Price Index, they may be shown to be going up.

What can change the direction of tomato prices, and much of the government's data, is a statistical manoeuvre known as 'seasonal adjustment' . . .

'Seasonally adjusted, the Great Lakes never freeze over, said Robert Ortner, the chief economist in the Commerce Department, echoing some of the complaints about the distortions caused by this process.

President Reagan, trying to put a better face on rising unemployment figures this spring, made seasonal adjustment an issue, complaining that it made the jobless figures look worse than they really were.

But as Ortner said, 'at a juncture like this, where we are watching every straw in the wind for a sign of an economic recovery, it is especially important that we have seasonal adjustment so that we don't call a normally expected seasonal rise in retail sales, for example, the signal of the upturn.' "

From an article by J. Fuerbringer in *The News and Observer*, Raleigh, N.C., Sunday, June 27, 1982 and quoted in,

Brocklebank, J. C. and Dickey, D. A. (1984) *SAS Views: SAS Applied Time Series Analysis and Forecasting, Volume 1*. SAS Institute.

SURVEY OF NZ GENSTAT USERS

If you have ever used GENSTAT and if you have not been contacted by Jean Thompson please telephone her at Applied Maths Division, DSIR, Wellington (04) 727-855. If you have been contacted and have lapsed into the category of "non-respondent" you are urged to respond.