The purpose of the bulletin is to keep members informed of BSRS activities and to be a forum for political debate on its work and aims. Key issues to be debated in the bulletin include:

The long term aims and strategy of BSRS.
In particular the Draft Policy Statement (see The Way Forward).

BSRS and the Trade Unions.
Should BSRS members play a more active political role in the unions?
If so, what should this role be?

Health Hazards at Work.
What are the immediate and long term aims of this struggle? With whom should we collaborate?

Industrial Scientists, Technicians and Engineers.
How can we involve more of them in our activities?

BSRS, Organization and Structure.
How can the local groups and individual members have more say in the formation of BSRS policy?
How can local groups organise more effectively and overcome the limitations of a college base?

The bulletin will not be just a 'talk shop'. Its other, equally important role will be to report not on our words but on our work! Local struggles, publications, conferences and meetings will be reported on and commented on in full. The discussions and decisions of National Committee meetings will be summarised.

The bulletin's editorial group intends to do very little editing and soliciting of material. In this way the bulletin will serve as a forum and not a mouthpiece. Clearly for this approach to work we need your ideas, reports and proposals!

Contribute........Contribute........Contribute

But please be self critical! Tell us what you see as the limitations of your activities and your arguments. Hopefully, the bulletin will receive constructive criticism itself.
In its early years BSSRS worked as a 'pressure group' to publicise the abuses of science. During those years it campaigned against chemical and biological warfare, the use of CS gas in Northern Ireland, nuclear testing, and pollution. A series of conferences were held on topics such as Science Education and The Social Impact of Modern Biology. These conferences were 'talk shops' concerned with abuses of science not 'workshops' aimed at organising scientists and technicians around specific issues.

Times have changed!

During the last 18 months BSSRS's work on health hazards in industry has brought it into contact with the shop floor and left groups. Its interpretation of the role of science and technology in society has shifted away from a use/abuse model towards a marxist based analysis. This shift is apparent in the Draft Policy Statement reproduced below.

The statement was first discussed at the November AGM. It was written by a group of National Committee members who feel that the present policy statement no longer reflects the work and political aims of the society.

The policy statement is important both as a basis for our actions and as a recruiting document. However, it should also be useful as a discussion document through which BSSRS members can clarify their individual interpretations of BSSRS's political position and contribute to the formulation of BSSRS policy.

This document is only a draft. While the consensus at the AGM was favourable most of those present felt that the draft required considerable revision. In fact, the 'majority opinion' seemed to be that the draft should be used only as a discussion document. One or more shorter statements of our work and aims might serve us better as a way of introducing others to the society.

**Draft Policy Statement**

There is almost no aspect of our daily life which has not been transformed with the help of science and technology in the last 300 years. Many of these changes have been for the better, and thus it has often been assumed that scientific advances are automatically beneficial. Yet we live in a world in which the threat of imminent nuclear extinction is a fact of day-to-day life, where billions have been spent on the "space race" while children starve, where we live and work in conditions of pollution and danger, and where even the very possibility of work is threatened by technological rationalisation, speed-up and automation. Faced with this it becomes hard to believe that most people are benefiting from scientific advance!

**Science in Society**

So just who does benefit? We can get some idea simply by looking at where the money goes. In Britain and elsewhere in western Europe and the U.S.A., more...
than 80% of the total money spent on science goes on weapons, space, atomic energy and industrial research. In 1974-75 the Ministry of Defence, for example, spent £436m on Research and Development whereas, by contrast, the Department of Health and Social Security spent only £19m. Nor can it be claimed that this is only true of 'applied research' and that 'pure science' is autonomous. As the history of science shows, the problems pure science attacks, the techniques it uses, and the theories it produces are all heavily dependent on the society in which it is carried out. So the social and technological organisation of competitive capitalism was a pre-condition for the development of such abstract theories as natural selection and the second law of thermodynamics. And which area of 'pure' research has received the greatest funding since the war? It is an area which has had its potential for destructive usefulness amply demonstrated — nuclear physics.

So we cannot consider science and technology apart from the social structure in which they are embedded. In advanced capitalist countries like Britain, the bulk of scientific activity is dominated by two goals: production for profit and military and civil social control. Real social needs remain unsatisfied while industry creates and maintains spurious needs in order to keep consumption, and hence production, and hence its profits, flowing. The priorities of science are set by and in the interests of the capitalist class; we can see this even in apparently 'obvious' beneficial uses of science such as medical research, where proportionately far more effort goes into curing the diseases of affluence, such as coronary heart disease, into helping potentially productive workers back into the factory, into filling women with drugs to help them accept their role as wives and mothers, than is spent on diseases of the young, the elderly or the 'non-productive' mentally handicapped. Even in a rich society like Britain, where the press is full of speculation about the promised marvels of genetic engineering, the preventable deaths of new born babies in working class areas like Liverpool and South Wales are far above those in the stockbroker belt of South-East England.

This skew in the interests to which capitalist science is oriented is international. Many poor countries see modern technology as a key to their industrialisation and modernisation. Since, as we have seen, this technology is owned by the capitalist classes in the rich nations, poor nations find themselves having to pay very large sums of money to buy this technology. And what do they get for their money? They get a complex, large scale, capital intensive technology developed to meet the needs of advanced capitalist industrialisation, and quite inappropriate for nations, with high unemployment, few scientific and technological skills and so on.

Science as Ideology
Science is used not only to oppress us directly with weaponry such as atomic bombs, mindbending drugs and electronic surveillance devices, but it has ideological functions as well. If we dare to oppose the existing order of society, cohorts of 'experts' appear to tell us that it has to be like this, that it is scientifically efficient and technologically inevitable. If we persist, ethologists explain to us that humans are innately aggressive, men territorial and women submissive; psychometricians measure us up and explain our resistances as the result of intellectual inferiority; and operational research experts 'calculate' how to exploit those few skills we have most efficiently. The ideology of 'scientism' and its claims to be 'neutral' and 'objective' are powerful weapons for mystification and domination in the hands of our rulers. Increasingly decisions which are essentially social and political decisions are taken behind a smokescreen of scientific objectivity. If challenged such decisions are justified (and hence put beyond further challenge) by appeals to the neutrality of science and
and impartiality of scientists. Thus it wasn't just that Britain was technologically superior to the African and Asian people that it colonised, but the apparatus of 'objective science' was used in order to 'prove' that other peoples - from the Irish to the Africans - were biologically inferior, and so the British were merely fulfilling a biologically inevitable destiny in oppressing and exploiting them. Similarly, in a period when first blacks and then women challenge their 'proper place', theories of innate racial and sexual superiority arise again in science.

Scientific Labour
The practice of science and technology, to the 300,000 odd scientists and technologists directly engaged in it in Britain, reflects all these contradictions. The know-how and 'technology' they produce does not directly benefit them. Indeed, more and more scientific workers in industry, government service, and the universities are becoming deskilled operatives whose work is scrutinised, and directed and controlled by others. Their work existence becomes increasingly similar to that of the shop-floor workers and increasingly distanced from the image of the 'professional' scientist. And all their work is fragmented by the hierarchical, status-ridden organisation of science.

Scientific and Technical Education
Yet such is the mystique of science, the strength of the ideology which is pumped into science students at school and at university, that many only slowly come to realise who are their friends and who their enemies; they learn the neutrality of science, the ideal of a 'scientific community', even that scientists have some sort of expert, objective responsibility which sets them apart from others. Thus they conceive of themselves as being part of an elite. And this myth is fostered by the many real privileges which scientific workers still have compared with others. The educational system ensures that they are an elite group, for it closes the doors of science to the vast majority of a working class population half educated and half mystified by an inadequate so-called 'comprehensive' educational system. And the sexist nature of this society makes sure that the possibility of ever becoming one of the 'experts' is practically derived to half the population.

The Aims of Science
We live in a capitalist society and are confronted by a capitalist science. There is, therefore, nothing inevitable in the present organisation of science - it can be directed toward other goals - goals which serve the interests and needs of all people, rather than just a small minority; it can be organised on a non-elitist, non-hierarchical basis......and so on. However, since, as we have argued, science is in no way independent of its wider social context, it is clear that if we are to change the social role of science we must change this context. A socialised and socialist science can only exist in a socialist society. Our ultimate task then is to work towards the creation of such a society.

The Work of BSSRS
It is easy to make rhetorical and polemical statements about the need to change society. As important, but much harder, is to work out strategies to facilitate the transition to such a society, and to take action based upon these strategies. BSSRS is attempting to do this in a number of ways:

(1) In our work on occupational health hazards our aim is to help the working class arm itself to meet a management-owned science which denies
or disguises the existence of these hazards. Thus we are not only concerned to provide information about hazards to people affected by them, but are also concerned to initiate self-monitoring of such hazards. Workers exposed to dangerous chemicals should not be forced to rely on management for information about their levels of exposure etc. but should collect this data themselves and confront management with it.

(2) We seek to expose the social control functions of science under capitalism; both direct through our work on the technology used by the security forces in Northern Ireland and indirect (ideological) through our involvement in such issues as race and IQ and sexism in and of science.

(3) By attempting to increase the identification of scientists with other members of the working class through the encouragement of unionisation and an understanding of the elitism of science and its increasing proletarianisation.

(4) To work towards an understanding of what science in a socialist society will be - to explore what science for and of the people would mean. This involves us considering how far scientific ideas and techniques transcend the social system in which they are produced, how science can be made accessible to all and not the preserve of an inner sanctum of the initiated, whether and how technologies can be developed which do not reduce people to the status of a machine appendage and slings them broken onto the scrap heap or into the dole queue.

Possible history insert.

BSSRS was established in 1969. Its initial concern was with the 'abuse' of science and in particular its application in the war in Vietnam. Science itself, was regarded as neutral, only in its application did abuses arise - the so-called 'use-abuse' model of science lay at the basis of many of the early discussions of the society, and the socially responsible scientist was the scientist who confronted these abuses. However, social responsibility as such is a vacuous concept, and once questions began to be asked about how an individual scientist could be socially responsible and why abuses seemed to appear so consistently, it became clear that the problem was not particular abuses of an otherwise benevolent science but the deliberate, conscious and systematic abuse of science by the class which financed and hence owned and controlled it. BSSRS's analysis of science thus began to move in a more radical direction. This change of direction had a number of implications for its membership. The 'broad front' on which it had started began to break up and the early members who were liberals began to get left behind.

The radicalisation of its analysis served also to radicalise another part of its membership and served as a basis for recruiting yet others who had not been attracted to the old-style, less obviously political, socially responsible image.

We would like your reactions to the draft! They will be either reproduced in full or carefully summarised. Special consideration will be given to replies signed by three or more members.

The Draft will be discussed again at the Local Groups Meeting in Edinburgh at the end of February (see NEWS for details). The task of amending the draft will be undertaken at a Special General Meeting in May (see the next issue of the Bulletin for time and place). All members are welcome to attend both these meetings.
The AGM Discussion

At the AGM relatively little time was devoted to the discussion of the draft itself. Instead, some basic questions about the nature of BSSRS, its political position and its constituency were raised, including:

- the need for BSSRS to serve as an 'umbrella' group for individuals of varying political positions.
- BSSRS's task is not so much to radicalise scientists and technicians as to provide a focus for the activity of radicalised scientists and technicians.
- BSSRS's present structure with a National Committee and central office combined with autonomous local groups should be maintained. However, in the current situation of increasing unemployment and cuts in the social services, the importance of having a clear national policy and a national organisation to implement that policy was underlined.
- BSSRS must increase its membership amongst industrial scientific workers, i.e., our membership is still too college based.
- we must avoid becoming bogged down in theoretical debate, i.e., our theory should be closely linked to our action.

See Science for People No. 31 for full AGM report.

Two written comments on the Draft Policy Statement were prepared for circulation at the AGM. They are reproduced below. Both comments express individual opinions.

The first comment comes from Bill McMillan, the External Relations Officer for the Chemical Industries Association:

The draft statement appears to be a collection of ideas that have come from some of our active members over the past few years. There is no doubt that a new policy statement is needed, but must it be so long and so morose? One must first ask the purpose of the statement and whether adherence to it is to be a condition of membership. If the Society's aims are uncompromisingly left-wing politically, then the statement should say so clearly instead of being jargonistic.

Taken at its face value, the draft statement infers that BSSRS is anti-capitalist, anti-defence, anti-industrial research, anti-comprehensive education, anti-space research, anti-nuclear physics, anti the 'diseases of affluence' including helping production workers get back to work, anti-automation etc. etc. With all these 'antis' there seems to be little room for any 'pros'!

In several places there are conflicting statements. For example, BSSRS is against 'elitism' on page 3 but for it on page 4.

The aim of BSSRS, the statement implies, is 'socialist science' (undefined). But the experience of this member is that science in socialist countries is really no different from here: research for defence purposes is still No. 1, with research for industrial production coming a close second. The rate of innovation is slower than in the West, resulting in these countries having to buy know-how and plant from the UK, France, Germany, Italy and the US. It is also interesting that, far from equalising rewards, the wage and salary differentials in socialist countries' industries are often twice what they are here, creating a new hierarchy.

In fact, support for a contrary view would be gained from a glance through Science for People, and in particular the articles on occupational health and safety, where the greatest number of praiseworthy efforts quoted came
from the No. 1 capitalist country! (the work of OSHA, NIOSH, FDA etc.)

The BSSRS aim of socially responsible science, along with other good works like social welfare, medical research etc., can only be financed nationally, out of taxation - which in turn comes from income tax paid by, inter alia, scientists and production workers engaged in what BSSRS would consider undesirable work.

More important, these aims can only be achieved if industry continues to provide sufficient taxation revenue for Government to spend on them. Only profitable companies pay tax.

Unfortunately, the total amount paid by private industry in taxation (£2,023,000,000) is currently being swallowed up in meeting the losses of our State owned industries - leaving nothing for expansion of socially desirable projects.

The above comments are not meant to be a criticism of the sincerity of many fellow members of BSSRS, but by playing devil's advocate I hope that members will think a lot further than facile slogans.

A properly thought-out statement of policy could help re-establish BSSRS as a body to which a growing number of scientists would wish to belong.

29 November 1975

The second comment was written by Maurice Wilkins, Professor of the MRC Biophysics Unit and President of BSSRS.

My main criticism is that the statement gives the impression that the BSSRS thinks it knows all the answers and has made up its mind about the nature of the solution: socialism is the cure-all and that anyone who has any reservations about this clearly has no place in BSSRS. I don't think that this represents the BSSRS outlook anyway. It seems to me that the BSSRS commitment to socialism goes along with a considerable degree of open-mindedness about the difficulties of putting socialism into practice in such a way that it produces the benefits which we wish to see. My impression is that BSSRS members are seldom hard-line left-wingers with dogmatic views. They are, for example, acutely aware how socialism has gone wrong in many situations, e.g., the Soviet Union. They are aware that, although there is much to learn from China, Cuba, etc., that none of these models provides all the answers. In particular the need to get away from centralised State government applies with almost equal force to so-called socialist countries as to capitalist countries. This particular point is not mentioned in the statement. On the other hand, there is a refreshing acknowledgement that we need to consider how far scientific ideas can transcend the social system in which they are produced, and that we need to do much work to find out what the nature of science would be in a socialist society. It seems to me that this is the sort of thing the BSSRS should be concentrating on. This leads me to specific criticisms. Consider the health hazards in factories. This very important work appears largely as merely providing a tool to "confront management". I thought the BSSRS was very clear that this work went beyond this and that it explored people's science, community science, socialist science, etc., in a particular instance. There also seems a tendency to regard the misuse of science under capitalism as a deliberate and conscious act. To give the impression that the contradictions of capitalism arise from conscious and deliberate acts of capitalists, i.e. it is all a nasty plot - is surely not the intention. This rather simplistic impression is given in other places, e.g. I don't think it sensible to refer to "the 80% of the total money spent on
science goes on weapons, space, atomic energy and industrial research". Why should one lump together industrial research, and space and weapons? Although industry is distorted so that it doesn't direct itself properly to the interests of the community, it does clearly even under capitalism produce many benefits, and it is clearly not right to say that these benefits are solely for the capitalists. I think these complex questions need more sorting out. A small point - does BSSRS want to condemn the comprehensive system of education? If it wishes to criticise it I think it has to go into some detail about what the criticisms are.

To sum up, I believe that there are many young scientists today who have strong leanings towards socialism but are put off by hard-line socialists who appear to close their eyes to the difficulties of operating socialism successfully. I think it is important that BSSRS does not scare these people away. I think it should be possible to carry out policies which appeal to the convinced socialists yet do not exclude many very useful people who wish to continue to work their ideas out and may well develop into socialists.

25 November 1975

OPINIONS AND PROPOSALS

Suggested Principles of Action for SfP 'Hazards at Work' Groups

The following points are presented for discussion for groups and individuals involved already in health and safety. It is the draft of an article for publication in the first issue of the BSSRS bulletin.

Many of the points have been unashamedly nicked from the 'Suggested Principles of action for BACOSH-Bay Area Comm. on Occupational Safety and Health' - as published in Science for the People in September 1975 issue.

1. We should aim to help workers (Trade Unions/activists) to improve health and safety. But in practise would emphasis be with the activists? Most SfP groups will be unable to provide many free services to large numbers of people. Certain hazards that are locally important should be selected and researched, legal advice provided, presentation of public meetings and request to address union branch meetings.

2. Our strategy should not be just about achieving short term improvements in the health of workers, nor, even in making permanent improvements in a few dangerous hazards. Instead it should be about the demystification of science, technology and medicine. As much as possible we should provide working people with the relevant information and tools, so that they can actively use them to bring about change. We should try to demystify all the skills and concepts involved in our work. We should be a group that simply acts on behalf of working people, nor should it be our strategy to bring about change by wheeling and dealing with bureaucrats - trade union bosses.

3. Back up services should be aimed at by winning support of university/polytechnic departments and those sympathetic in Occupational Hygiene
departments in industry. These institutions may charge consultation fees - matter for local negotiations. The Group could be expected to be paid for consultations at request of union branches? But a continuous demand must be made for the State to pay for these services.

4. Our projects and the people working in them should have accountability to the organisation. We should not be in the business of simply referring people to experts over whom we have no control (although we might provide this service in some cases). Similarly, people who are invited to be SfP speakers should have accountability to the group when acting in this capacity.

5. However, in any project involving an activity at a particular workplace, the people at that workplace must make all the decisions that immediately affect them. SfP may offer advice, but it should certainly not presume to tell people what to do in these cases.

6. We should have a set of priorities for choosing projects, and people in the Group should make some commitment to work on projects chosen by the Group. There should be a range to suit many people, and people should be encouraged to create new ones. However, there must be some collective decisions made as to what projects to work on, or there is no point in having an organisation in the first place.

7. Criteria for choosing projects should include: How useful we can be, availability of alternative help or services (eg from the Union involved), degree of ability to work with the rank and file, potential for some political action to develop out of the project, timeliness of working with a certain group.

8. We should carry out internal education so that members have an opportunity to gain competence in the areas involved in H & S.

9. We should structure SfP in such a way as to make it possible for large numbers of people from different backgrounds to participate. Different people will be able to participate with different levels of commitment and time, and we should make it possible for people with small amounts of each to participate.

SfP should primarily be an activists organisation, and the coordinating community should make every effort to link up people with activities they can work on. It is important that we discuss what we do, but SfP is definitely not a debating society.

Where possible we should try to coordinate activities with community groups that have similar interests, eg, fighting pollution from factories where there is workplace pollution.

We should try to involve unorganised as well as organised workers in our activities.

Comments please to Dave Hayes, 14 Goodwin Road, Sheffield 8.