

APS—The Changing Society

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Some years ago The American Phytopathological Society was serving its members in a limited but effective manner. It published one scientific journal, had a start on the Monograph series, and was providing members with a group of Classics, a program of visual aids, and "Fungicide and Nematicide Tests." All services were made possible by volunteers. Then 15 years ago the members said: "We need a change. We want more, but more is not possible with a purely volunteer system. So let's have a very small professional staff."

Fortunately the Society was able to "rent" staff by joining in an administrative partnership with the American Association of Cereal Chemists. As the Society grew and expanded its services, it had built-in management to accomplish its goals. At first our needs were limited: relieve the business manager of day-to-day chores, help the secretary with some of the routine mailings and membership record keeping, and provide the editor-in-chief of *Phytopathology* with a technical editor and assistance in processing manuscripts. Certainly these were simple tasks, and the valuable time of volunteers was freed to address the more critical issues of the Society and the profession. This appeared to be a reasonable and logical approach.

Thus, change brought about the need for a professional staff, and the staff brought about more change. The staff made it easy to improve and expand services. The more efficient the staff became, the more we asked and the more we received. Our treasurer's role was changed from handling all details to handling a few; the position became that of a guardian and policymaker, as it should be. The secretary's responsibilities were somewhat lightened, to taking the minutes, assembling the annual report, preparing agenda for Council and business meetings, and handling official correspondence, the major time-consuming elements. The editors could concentrate on policy and reviews and leave the details of production to the staff. The annual meeting program chairman discovered the staff could handle abstracts, help schedule meeting rooms, prepare the program booklet, and arrange for audiovisual needs. The local arrangements chairman found that when local volunteers were in short supply, staff could handle registration and arrange many of the activities directly with the hotel.

The greatest change occurred in the area of publications, an area where staff can be most productive. The most obvious additions to our publications have been the Compendium series and *PLANT DISEASE*. Neither would have been possible without adequate and competent staff. These publications not only serve our own members but also serve the larger purpose of making our knowledge of plant health available to the entire world. The Compendium series, more than any single effort in the past, has made the name of the Society familiar to thousands of persons outside our normal professional sphere. Growers are pleased to

have access to our knowledge, and they respect that knowledge because it carries the name of our Society as publisher. To date we have published seven titles (two in second edition), with sales of more than 75,000 copies. Four new titles are in various stages of production and seven titles are being considered.

While producing the Compendium series, we have also managed to add five book titles related to our professional interests as well as to continue the Classics and Monograph series. Little of this could have been accomplished without joint efforts of staff and volunteers. As these changes have taken place, adding greatly to member services provided by our Society, the sales of nonjournal publications have more than offset the cost. Without nonjournal income, member dues would have increased more than the current adjustments for inflation. To maintain our present level of activity, however, we need to recognize that the Society has indeed changed—changed to the point where our approach to fiscal matters must also change if we are to survive in the coming decade with our current programs intact. We know from experience that volunteer time is in short supply. Our institutions and companies are no longer able to provide us with the "time" they once did. Our income must increase if we are to keep up with rapidly increasing costs. In January 1982, postal rates for second- and third-class mail were increased substantially. For example, the minimum rate for mailing nonprofit bulk mail—the rate used for most of our routine mailings and book promotions—increased by 55%! The cost of mailing the journals, now averaging \$1,880 per issue, will increase in midsummer to a level that has not yet been determined by the Postal Service.

For financial reasons, if for no other, we must make choices and support those services that are most important to the majority of our members. We must be sure that the membership is properly represented in each decision. During my tenure on Council, steps were taken to stagger the term of the six division councilors so that two rotate off Council each year and special procedures were adopted to ensure that all members of Council are well informed on items to be discussed at each Council meeting. These changes were made so that not only the Executive Committee but all members of Council would be in the very best position to represent the membership. Also during this period, action was taken to have the three councilors-at-large (who are elected by the total membership) serve as the Committee on Committees, with the Senior Councilor-at-Large as the chairman of this important committee.

As I look back on the 7 years I spent on Council, including last year as President, I am encouraged by signs of progress, both in increased service to the members (another Society journal and quality nonjournal publications are examples) and on Society committees. Committee structure is the backbone of our Society. However, many conscientious members are still not being properly informed, do not feel they have appropriate input into decision making, and are not named to Society committees. And many in our Society do not care to participate in Society business. Only through the active participation of individual members can we ensure a properly functioning Society. For the benefit of our profession as well as of our Society, I plead with you to interact with Council and committee members so you are properly informed and your ability to contribute is recognized.