ASA President’s Report 1977

The ASA Executive Committee gave particular attention to long-range planning and to the Society’s public responsibility during the year. Two ad-hoc committees were appointed to assist with long-range planning. The 1977 chairmen of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, Budget and Finance Committees were appointed as an ad-hoc committee (A211.1) to consider financial planning for the society. They were asked to consider financial planning and expenditure and financial aspects and recommended long-term guidelines for officers and directors in the years ahead. The Society has been well-managed, and we have continuing increases in net worth, assets, and investment valuation. We have not yet agreed as to the levels of cash reserves which are needed, but feel it is time to give this matter serious consideration.

Committee A201.3 was appointed to study the Executive Vice-president position. Currently he also serves as Editor-in-Chief of ASA publications. The Society’s growth in members and in activities indicates some that we may need to separate the total responsibility into two positions. Since the incumbent is approaching retirement age, the decision will need to be made before a replacement is sought.

The Executive Committee authorized the ASA officers to visit Washington, D.C. to become more acquainted with persons in responsible positions relative to agriculture and to offer the services of the Society to them in any way they thought helpful. Dr. Charles Lewis, ARS/USDA, Beltsville, Md., and Dr. James Miller, Univ. of Maryland, arranged and conducted the visit. The Executive Committee considered various issues to discuss in the visits and nine were identified as appropriate and timely. Most of the conferences centered around support for agricultural research and education — the issue considered most urgent at this time. A number of good discussions developed on relative merits of formula funding and competitive grants.

We were challenged to help establish national priorities for agricultural research. We are considering ways in which we can tackle this task — with input from the membership.

The ASA officers met with members of the U.S. Congress, Congressional aids, and Department of Agriculture, National Science Foundation, and Office of Technology Assessment officers. We also met with staff members of the President’s Science Advisory Office and the National Academy of Sciences. We let these people know that the Society is concerned and willing to help in any way.

ARCPACs was officially underway during the year with the appointment of Dr. Openshaw as Director. Certification has begun, and those who have worked diligently for many years to get this program established can be proud of the fine start. The program is financed by a loan from the three societies and we look forward to the time when ARCPACs can be self-supporting.

The number of members continues to increase and approaches 10,000. A vigorous, dedicated membership committee and the general feeling that the benefits of membership far exceed the modest cost are thought to be mainly responsible for continued growth.

The publication activities of the Society continue to increase. These include publication of journals, books, monographs, and special publications. All these publications have reputations for high quality, and Society employees and officers work to safeguard the reputation.

One of the most gratifying aspects of service as a Society officer is the opportunity afforded or working with so many fine people. The members who serve on committees, as editors, as officers of Divisions and Branches, as Directors, and as Executive Committee members all give generously of time and talent. The employees of the Society are also devoted, loyal, and competent in their professional positions.

It has been my distinct privilege to know all these people and to work with them. While we have three Societies, we have essentially one purpose. The officers of CSSA and SSSA serve on the ASA Executive Committee and they thus carry dual responsibility and do it without conflict. While our table of organization appears complicated, the system really works marvelously well. It does so because of the fine people who make it work.

—M. D. THORNE

69th Annual Meeting, American Society of Agronomy

Based on the theme, "Agronomy in Today’s Society,” the joint annual meetings of the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of America were held in Los Angeles, Calif., from 13-18 Nov. 1977.

The meetings were attended by 3,500 members and guests. They had the opportunity to select from more than 1,150 papers presented in paper sessions and symposia. They also attended functions at meals, tours, and visited book and commercial exhibits. Highlighting the week’s activities were the presentations of awards, naming of new ASA and SSSA Fellows, and the introduction of 1977-78 officers.

An ASA special session on Tuesday afternoon included papers on, “Agronomy in a Global Age,” by Dr. Roger L. Mitchell, vice president for agriculture at Kansas State Univ.; “Agronomists and the Food Chain,” by Dr. J. B. Peterson, associate director of the Laboratory for Application of Remote Sensing at Purdue Univ.; and “Morality of Agronomy,” by Dr. B. E. Day, professor of plant physiology at the Univ. of California-Berkeley. This session was arranged and presided over by Dr. Johnny W. Pendleton, ASA President-Elect.

On Tuesday evening, CSSA-SSSA held a joint program titled, Effect of Legislation on Agronomy in Today’s Society. Dr. C. A. Black, executive vice president of the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST), spoke on, “Science in the Public Arena.” The presentation was followed by T. W. Edminster, administrator of ARS-USDA, who presented a paper on, “Legislation: Does It Control Crop and Soil Science Research?”

All five of the preceding papers will be included in an ASA Special Publication.

Several symposia were held during the week, including; "Physiological Aspects of Grain Yield in Maize" (Divisions C-1 and C-2); "Tissue Cell Culture Methods in Crop Improvement" (Division C-1); "Advances in Forage Physiology" (Divisions C-1 and C-2); "New Techniques in Soil Mineralogical Investigations" (Division S-9); "Teaching in Century III" (Division A-I); "Biological Nitrogen Fixation in Crop Plants" (Divisions C-1, C-2, S-5), "Current Status of the Aflatoxin Problem" (Divisions C-1 and C-6); "Spatial Variability of Soil Properties" (Divisions S-1, S-2, S-4, and S-5); "Fertility Management in Tillage Systems" (Divisions S-4, S-6, and A-4); and "Fertilizing Irrigated Crops" (Divisions S-4 and S-8).

Other symposia included: Critical Levels in Plant Analysis" (Divisions S-4 and A-4); "Crop and Forage Production With Limited Water: I and II" (Divisions A-3, A-6, C-2, C-3, S-1, S-4, and S-6); "Applications of Near Infrared Spectroscopy for Improvement of Grain, Feed, and Forage Quality" (Divisions C-1 and C-6); "The Universal Soil Loss Equation: Past, Present, and Future" (Division S-6); "Plant Variety Protection After 7 Years" (Divisions A-4, C-1, and C-4); "Quantitative Genetics and Its Application to Plant Breeding" (Division C-1); "Diversity of Soils in the Tropics" (Divisions A-6 and S-5); "Soil Environment, Root Growth, and Crop Yield: I and II" (Divisions C-2, C-3, S-1, and S-6); "Grass Tetany (Divisions C-1, C-2, and C-6); and "Spatial Variability of Soil Properties: II and III (Divisions S-1, S-2, S-4, and S-5). An ASA special session titled, "Agronomy in Today’s Society," was held on Tuesday afternoon.

Providing that the papers satisfy editorial requirements of the societies, new Special Publications are expected to be produced from the symposia on “Diversity of Soils in the Tropics,”