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 chairman 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 expenditures, and other financial aspects and to recommend 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 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 better 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 aides, and Department of Agriculture, National Science Foundation, and Office of Technology Assessment. We also met with staff members of the President’s Advisory Office and the National Academy of Sciences so 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. It began, and those who have worked diligently to get this program established can be proud of the Program. The program is financed by a loan from the U.S. government, and we look forward to the time when ARCPACS can be supporting the program.

The number of members continues to increase — we now have 10,000. A vigorous, dedicated membership committee in general feeling that the benefits of membership at a 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, manuals, and special publications. All these publications have high quality, and Society employees and officers work to guard the reputation.

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

It has been my distinct privilege to know and work with these people. While we have three Societies, we have essentially one purpose. The officers of CSSA, SSSA, and ASA are on the ASA Executive Committee and they work together with us and to support and do it without conflict. While the organization appears complicated, the system really works marvelously well. It does so because of the fine people that make it work.

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 1,100 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 presentation of awards, naming of new ASA and SSSA Fellows, and the introduction of 77-78 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 Applicability 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. D. Miller, administrator of ARS-USDA, who presented a paper on “Science in the Public Arena.” His presentation was followed by one by T. W. M. THORNE.