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BSCES PLUS FOUR

Presidential Address of Charles C. Ladd

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Introduction

As with most presidential terms of office, aspirations do not always correlate well with actual accomplishments. By reviewing events during my term and presenting some specific recommendations, I hope to offer some guidance that will prove beneficial to the Society, and especially my successors.

The remarks focus on five topics: some adverse aspects of performance arising from my presidential learning process; accomplishments that went well, both from a personal point of view and that of the Society as a whole; some new activities and changes, the success of which has not yet been determined; benefits derived from the Ad Hoc Committee on the Budget; and some recommendations for future operations of the Society.

Presidential Learning Process

In spite of extensive involvement in Society affairs (e.g. serving as Chairman of two Technical Groups and spending several years on the Board of Government), I did not fully understand several important problems facing the Section until well into my term of office. Consequently, a major portion of my efforts was devoted to resolving the most critical of these, our financial crisis, rather than playing a leadership role in tackling two of my major goals, namely: implementation of Manual 55 concerning employment conditions; and better interaction and cooperation between academic institutions and the practicing profession for the purpose of improving engineering education (both curricula and teaching), devising new methods for dealing with its escalating costs, and developing more meaningful programs of continuing education. Being in a position of reacting to unforeseen problems, rather than formulating plans to accomplish new goals, had other undesirable effects. For example, after getting chairmen for the Society's numerous committees (the first major task facing each incoming president), I did not follow through to see when they needed help or ensure that all were doing their jobs properly.

Accomplishments

As in past years, and to the envy of most other ASCE Sections, our seven Technical Groups presented an excellent program involving about 30 regular meetings, each typically attended by 25 to 75 or more persons, plus two very successful lecture series, one last fall on Structural Welding for Engineers sponsored by the Structural Group (303 registrants) and another this spring on Foundation Design for Dynamic and Repeated Loading sponsored by the Geotechnical Group (about 250 attendees). The spring and fall refresher courses, each with 11 lectures, put on by the Continuing Education Committee to assist practicing engineers in preparation for the state registration examination also proved very successful. I should mention, however, that the Society still lacks "general topic" meetings which help bring together a membership having very diverse backgrounds and interests.

Thanks to the initiative of last years president, Bertram Berger, the Society moved into new headquarters having additional space and more pleasant surroundings that are shared with several closely allied societies. And we continue to be blessed with an exceptional office staff in Charlotte Dalrymple, Executive Director, and Susan Albert, Administrative Secretary. Due to the Herculean efforts of our Treasurer, Saul Namyet, the Society has a budget most of us can understand and uses the income from its endowment funds more productively. Also the Investment Committee carefully reevaluated how these funds are being managed.

As President, I had the pleasure of representing the Society at several events that made me especially proud to be a Civil Engineer. The first of these, a dedication held last August, honored the recreational facility built by the Northeastern University Student Chapter for the Boston Center for Blind Children, a project that has been widely and justly acclaimed both in the local press and by national ASCE. I was Master of Ceremonies last September at the dedication of Minot's Ledge Lighthouse as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark and again in April for Boston Naval Shipyard Dry Dock No. 1. H.H. Holly, Chairman of the History and Heritage Committee, deserves special credit for making these two events possible. I also had the honor of handing out the BSCES awards at Student Night. Over 135 students enjoyed this well organized dinner-speaker meeting, thanks to Paul Trudeau's hardworking and most active Student Chapter Committee. Unfortunately poor attendance by non-academic Society members did not reflect well our interest in student affairs.

New Activities and Changes

The past year saw several new activities and changes in traditional modes of operation, though we cannot yet evaluate their success. As follow through on my inaugural address, I appointed two ad hoc Committees: one headed by William Zoino recommended much needed revisions in the format of the traditional afternoon portion of our Annual Meeting; the other chaired by

Richard Scranton identified many problems associated with our social functions that will, let us hope, pave the way towards progress next year in making these events more attractive to the general membership.

The Board of Government voted, though just barely, to subscribe to a newly created Joint Governmental Affairs Service at a cost of \$140 per month. Most agree with the need for more involvement by BSCES in governmental affairs, but major problems exist in determining exactly what legislative action is being proposed, understanding its implications and then taking appropriate action in cooperation with other societies. I believe the new service will alleviate these problems and also provide other benefits to Rodney Plourde's Action Program - Professional Practice Committee.

The Society discontinued publication of the FORUM and initiated last December the BSCES NEWS, a newsletter sent out with the monthly meeting notices. This trial experiment effected a considerable cost saving and I am confident that the NEWS will become more interesting and relevant to the membership now that it has attained official status.

Our records indicated a substantial decline in dues paying members (about 300) during the past year and it appears that only one half of ASCE members residing in Massachusetts actually subscribe to the Section. Thanks to the Membership Committee, headed by Phil Caruso, a special brochure was prepared and recently sent to prospective members. This represents an important first step, but the Committee will require considerable assistance via personal contacts to mount a truly effective campaign.

Ad Hoc Budget Committee

This ten member committee, appointed last September with Howard Simpson as chairman and Rubin Zallen as clerk, tackled the single most important problem facing the Society, a "normal" operating budget having an annual deficit of nearly \$10,000. Though this endeavor required considerable work by the Committee, for which I am most grateful, the effort produced extremely valuable results, as enumerated below:

- (1) The Society, for the first time in recent history, has a clear picture of its financial operations, along with a revised budget format that reflects this improved understanding.
- (2) The study encompassed a comprehensive evaluation of most Society activities, especially those involving publications, membership and dues structure, operation of the office, and lecture series.
- (3) The Committee made concrete recommendations, contained in a detailed report, to both alleviate the budget deficit and improve service to the membership. These were accepted by the Board of Government in April, 1978.
- (4) The incoming President has a much clearer picture of Society operations and problem areas than probably any of his predecessors.

Recommendations

- 1) As recommended in the ad hoc Budget Committee report, a Vice-President will head up the Publications Committee that now includes a formal representative from each of the seven Technical Groups. Although Ed Keane has done an outstanding job as Editor of the JOURNAL, its overall quality must be improved and this will not be accomplished unless the Technical Groups play an active role in soliciting professional papers of suitable interest to our membership. I also suggest that the Publications Committee be responsible for the BSCES NEWS and a separate editor be appointed to oversee its monthly publication.
- 2) The ad hoc Budget report also recommended establishing a Lecture Series Committee, to be chaired by a Vice-President, though the charge of the existing Program Committee could be expanded to include this function. In any case, either Committee should first obtain accurate records of past lecture series attendance, income and expenses and then develop suitable guidelines regarding honoraria for speakers, fee schedules, sharing of "profits", etc. I hope BSCES membership will count more heavily than in the past when setting fees, and caution against any lowering of quality in the interest of economy.
- 3) The Membership Committee will require considerable assistance in its efforts to expand our membership and I recommend that the Secretary be asked to play a major role in this task. This might well start by developing a readily accessible list of current members to facilitate making personal contacts.
- 4) The Operations Manual needs revision to incorporate changes made this past year. I further suggest that all Committees formally report to the Board of Government at least once each year and that a tentative schedule for this be established once Committee Chairmen have been selected.
- 5) The role of the Action Program - Professional Practice Committee grows more complex and important with each passing year. It also is frequently forced to make decisions and recommendations without formally consulting the Board of Government. To better coordinate and assist the APPP Committee in its duties, its membership might well be expanded to include at least one Vice-President or Director and perhaps a past Board Member.

In conclusion, though several of our activities still need improvement, the Section enjoyed another highly successful year due to the efforts of the Technical Groups, Society Committees, the JOURNAL Editor, the Board Members and our fine office staff. I feel deeply honored to have been President and sincerely appreciate the quality support given by so many during the year.