

Presidential Address

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS

MILEPOST FIVE

Presidential Address of Howard Simpson¹

Introduction

This month marks the completion of the fifth full year of operations since the merger, in April, 1974, of the Boston Society of Civil Engineers and the Massachusetts Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers. The year past, which has been a very busy one indeed for the BSCE Section, has been marked by significant progress and accomplishment; however, there remain several areas requiring continued attention. In these remarks I shall touch briefly on a few highlights of the past year and make recommendations concerning needed improvements in certain areas of the Society's operations.

The ASCE Spring Convention

Certainly the most notable event of this past year was the outstandingly successful national ASCE convention, for which credit is due to the Convention Committee under the chairmanship of Bertram Berger and to the rest of the hundreds of BSCE Section members and national headquarters staff involved in the planning, organizing, and conducting of the convention.

Total registration at the Convention was 3,617; this establishes a new record for a spring meeting, exceeding that of the runner-up (San Francisco, 1973) by more than 83 percent. Other marks set include:

- Second largest registration of any national meeting
- Largest student registration
- Largest total luncheon attendance
- Largest volume of publication sales
- Third highest average technical session attendance
- Second largest registration of spouses at a spring convention
- Sixth largest registration of spouses at any national convention

¹Presented before Part I of the Annual Meeting of the Boston Society of Civil Engineers Section, ASCE, April 17, 1979

BSCE Section Journal

During the year, the new Publications Committee, under the chairmanship of William Zoino, worked diligently at the task of upgrading the format of the *Journal*, and of compiling a memorable "national convention" edition for free distribution to each Convention registrant. The attractive and interesting issue, dated January 1979, is testimony to the success of the Committee's efforts.

BSCE News

The *News*, replacing the old *Forum*, appears to be performing its function as the Section newsletter quite well, and has been developing a character of its own. Regular features include a discussion of the highlights of the previous month's Board of Government meeting, a message from the President, and advance notice of special meetings, conferences, and workshops. With one exception (the result of a goof by the printer) mailings have been regular and timely.

Technical Groups

As usual, the activities of the Technical Groups, in total, represented our major activity and principal service to the membership. In general, programs were strong and meetings (with the exception of those of one group, which I will touch upon later) quite well attended.

Joint Governmental Affairs Council

Our participation in this activity, together with the CECNE, MSPE, MALSCCE, and AIA, has proved to be rewarding. The monthly Government Affairs Bulletin, prepared by the MSPE staff as part of this service, has been keeping the Board of Government abreast of legislative developments of interest to the Society. Of special value has been the opportunity, on several occasions, for BSCE Section representatives to participate in small discussion groups addressed by leading state officials. These latter, incidentally, appear to recognize the importance of the Joint Governmental Affairs group as a vehicle for simultaneous communication with five major engineering and architectural societies, and have been cooperative in making themselves available for these meetings.

Social Events

The new Social Affairs Committee, under the able and resourceful direction of Bob Snowber, planned and conducted two extraordinarily successful affairs, a clambake and a Valentine's Day dance. In contrast to the distressingly poor attendance that was becoming characteristic of our social events in recent years, both events were fully subscribed.

Problem Areas; Recommendations

While the Society overall is in relatively healthy condition, there are several areas where progress has not been entirely satisfactory or which otherwise require additional or special attention during this coming year.

These include:

- Membership
- Lecture Series
- Publications
- Luncheon Meetings
- Implementation of Manual 55
- Computer Technical Group

Membership

In spite of the diligent work of the membership committee, this year has seen another small decline in the number of dues-paying members. It is important to the health of the Society that this trend be arrested and reversed. One promising but largely untapped source for potential new members is new graduates. It is suggested that we institute a program for identifying new graduates settling in this area and for contacting them first by mail and then by telephone or in person. As for other non-members, an effective technique may be to approach one or more key BSCES members in each engineering agency or firm in this area to solicit their assistance in obtaining names of potential members in their organization and in contacting each of them.

Lecture Series

Technical Group Lecture Series are a popular and technically very valuable activity of the Society, and constitute an important source of income to help support our general operations. Due in part to the demands on members' time and energy associated with planning for the ASCE Spring Convention, no lecture series were given this past year. It is hoped that the Lecture Series Committee will take the necessary action to ensure that at least two strong programs are scheduled for the coming year.

Publications

There continues to be a dearth of good quality papers offered for publication in the *Journal*. It is suggested that the Board of Government implement the Budget Committee recommendation that each technical group be requested to provide at least one good quality paper each year.

The BSCES *News* should be expanded to include more news of members and

firms. Readers and organizations should be encouraged to submit appropriate items, and affirmative action should be taken to solicit such material. The editorial board for the *News*, consisting at present of the Secretary as editor, assisted by the Executive Director and Administrative Secretary, should be expanded to provide sufficient personnel to handle this expanded scope.

Luncheon Meetings

There has been discussion of the desirability of scheduling occasional luncheon meetings to address topics of interest to the general membership. It is recommended that such a program be implemented.

Implementation of Manual 55

The Employment Conditions Committee has made a start on this important assignment, but a great amount of work is yet to be accomplished. Appropriate action should be taken to expedite progress on this task.

Computer Technical Group

It has been suggested that it is no longer appropriate or useful to have a separate technical group to deal with this subject, which is an integral part of every engineering discipline. The small meeting attendance that this Group has been experiencing is probably a reflection of the fact that many engineers with special interest in computing may also be concerned with one of the fields covered by our six other Technical Groups. I recommend that the Board of Government evaluate the desirability of terminating the Computer Group.

Conclusion

In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the Society officers, to the members of the Board of Government, to all committee chairmen and committee members, and to the many others whose fine work made this another successful year for the Society and whose cooperation and support helped me enormously to carry out my duties as President.

And, especially, I want to thank our Executive Director, Charlotte Dalrymple, and our Administrative Secretary, Susan Albert, for their invaluable guidance and advice and for efficiently carrying out the many tasks in the daily functioning of the Society.