

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (1988)

In this brief comment on the Society's activities during 1988, I should like to mention several accomplishments, one trauma, some news items and draw attention to a couple of outstanding problem areas. Scientifically speaking, our annual meeting, held in Canberra as part of the wider Australian Societies for Experimental Biology (ASEB) meeting, marked a fine start to the year. The standard of communications was excellent in both the platform and poster presentation areas and, as indicated by "overflow" attendances, the level of interest in our invited overseas and Australian speakers was very high indeed. I should like here, on behalf of the Society, to express appreciation to all concerned with the success of this meeting: speakers, authors of posters, participants generally and, especially, all committee and other helpers who worked so hard on the planning and actual running of the meeting.

At the 4th International Congress of Cell Biology, held in Montreal last August, our Society was represented by a number of Australian and New Zealand members. During the Congress there was an organisational meeting which formally set up the Asia and Pacific Organisation for Cell Biology (APOCB) in which ANZSCB is a founding member. I am pleased to announce that Dr Hiroto Naora was elected APOCB Vice President. The first APOCB meeting will be held in Shanghai in November (3-7) 1990 and the second in Sydney in 1994, good news which should, however, be tempered by the thought that a successful outcome will entail members in considerable organisational and financial effort. At Montreal ANZSCB was also represented at the meeting of the International Federation for Cell Biology (IFCB). Here it was decided that the next International Congress will be held, in July 1992, in Madrid. Here, let me remind members to consider the Journal of the IFCB, "Cell Biology International Reports" as suitable for rapid publication of their significant short papers.

Turning to the trauma, despite its scientific success, I have to report that our annual meeting ran at a financial loss to the extent of some \$4000. This had not been expected because we had a written (as well as verbal) assurance from ASEB that, providing the joint commercial exhibition was financially successful, ASEB would transfer to ANZSCB \$6000 ("or something close to it") from that source. Now, in spite of its eventual success (the exhibition cleared \$34,000) ASEB has, notwithstanding numerous appeals, persistently refused to transfer more than \$2000 of the promised \$6000, ultimately on the grounds that their letter of agreement was not legally binding. I am informing our membership on this matter so that future committees will be aware that in any subsequent dealings it may be unwise to assume that moral obligations (not backed by legal documentation) will be honoured.

On a happier note, it is a pleasure to announce that, through the efforts of our Past President, Keith Dixon, there are now more than 6 firms which have become Corporate Members and to acknowledge that, thanks to the support of Cynthia Jensen, Clive Trotman and their New Zealand colleagues, \$2,422 was recently transferred to the Australian account. Notwithstanding this financial boost, the Society is in need of greater membership assistance with respect both to membership numbers and to the regular payment of dues. I therefore appeal to each member to recruit at least one additional member during 1989 (talk to your friends!) and to ensure that their own dues payment is up to date.

Turning to government science policy, in May I received a letter from Professor Adrienne Clarke, Chairman, Biological Sciences Interim Committee of the ARC, requesting that we suggest specific areas of biological research for consideration as "National Research Priorities". Following committee discussions I responded that since a proper understanding of cell structure and function was essential for progress in most areas of biology, "Cell Biology" in its broadest context should be established as a National Research Priority. Further, that since Australia's well-earned reputation in biology was founded on basic rather than applied research, the present situation (well founded on peer review and considerations of scientific excellence) would not be improved by diverting funds toward narrow mission-oriented "priority" areas because that would undoubtedly disrupt existing soundly based research programs and be nationally counter productive. Since the aims of FASTS are, in general, consistent with this view, the Society has continued to support FASTS, the per capita levy of which has recently risen from \$2.50 to \$3.50 p.a.

In conclusion I should like to put on record the fact that my work as President has been greatly facilitated by the help of very many people, both within and outside the Society. Although I cannot here detail everyone, I should make special mention of the consistently strong support I have had from our Past President, Keith Dixon, from our current Secretary, Eldon Ball, and from our Treasurer, Hiroto Naora. My sincere thanks to all!

Ian Buckley
Canberra, February, 1989