

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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Somebody Must Do Something!

The trouble with our Spring meetings with the Federation is that there are too many 10-minute papers. On Tuesday, last April 10, there were 27 simultaneous 10-minute paper sessions. Four were intersociety, six physiology, eight biochemistry, and nine from the remaining societies. Enough meeting rooms to hold all these sessions can be found only in Atlantic City or Chicago, and even there the rooms are unsatisfactory ones scattered all along the Boardwalk or throughout the Loop. In a few years there will be no place that can hold us. The Federation must reserve hotel space years ahead, and to deal with the problem of ever-increasing numbers of sessions it is planning to lengthen the meetings. There will be six scientific session days in 1962 and 1963, seven in 1964 and 1965, and for 1967 a two-week period has been reserved. In such long meetings the physiologists and pharmacologists, societies with overlapping interests, may meet together at the beginning of the period while biochemists and nutritionists meet at the end. In between, the programs attracting members from all societies may be scheduled.

Our Society must decide now to make a change in its Spring meeting program, or it will find itself in an intolerable position seven or eight years from now. In a year or two we will have lost the ability to make a sensible, evolutionary change. One solution, of course, is to stop meeting with the Federation. Members have never seriously debated this, and I doubt they would accept it. To many of us, participation in the Federation is our major line of communication with related scientific disciplines. The survey of attendance made at the last Federation meeting showed that there is a really significant amount of crossing-over between societies. Physiologists, some of them at least, do go to sessions of other societies, and members of other societies do come to our sessions. The intersociety sessions have been successful, and many members favor a completely integrated program. It is true that there are topics in physiology which do not appear to have much interest for other societies. Last April, I attended one large session on hemodynamics in which the only foreigner was a lone immunologist, and sessions on smooth muscle were almost as pure. On the other hand, we had a very lively session on liver which was good because all societies were about equally represented. It would be provincial to cut ourselves off from our sister societies because some part of physiology at the moment seems to be self-contained or to have its connections outside the Federation. If our members belonging to these temporarily encysted groups do not want to meet with the Federation, they can improve our Fall meetings by saving their strictly physiological papers for them.

Many members want more symposia and discussion programs in place of 10-minute papers. Symposia do not arise spontaneously; they

are generated by persons or groups with ideas and drive. We have had many good symposia, and the growing trend toward intersociety sessions has given us new ones. A notable example is the gastroenterology programs of the last two years, programs organized by pathologists, which have attracted large audiences from all societies. If we form sections of our Society, each of the sections could prepare one or more programs of invited or specially grouped papers at each meeting. This would put the responsibility for excellence directly on the group concerned. More participation in preparing the program and more widely diffused responsibility for its quality might even reduce the number and volume of complaints.

Members value their right to give a 10-minute paper, but it seems to me the time has come when they must choose between that right and eventual collapse of our Spring meetings. After all, the Fall meetings will remain open. At the Spring meetings there are many sound, important and well-presented papers (yours and mine) but we all know that many should be burked. Voluntary paper-control has not worked, and selection after submission of abstracts is both impracticable and unacceptable. Will the Society accept a drastic, general limitation of the right to give a 10-minute paper at the Spring meeting? Can we keep the number of physiology 10-minute papers under 250? If the biochemists would do likewise and if the other societies had a similar total among them, we would have only seven or eight simultaneous sessions of 10-minute papers in five days. Then we would have the room, time and energy to profit from the other advantages of being federated. Can we agree that a member may give a 10-minute paper only every third year? To abolish the frantic beating of the backwoods which occurs every December will we rule that no member may introduce a 10-minute paper of which he is not an author? If we enacted such rules we would all be forced to reconsider the function of the 10-minute paper, and in addition to reducing their number we might improve their quality.