

As A Matter Of Opinion

How APS Spends Your Money

This first of six columns during my year as President touches on a question dear to our hearts. What does the American Physiological Society do with our membership dues?

A regular member of APS pays \$80 annually — a sum that has not been increased for over eight years and should be taken as evidence of fiscally responsible management. We do not, as do some societies, require you to purchase one of our journals, although you do receive *The Physiologist* (our newsletter), *Advances in Physiology Education*, and *News in Physiological Science (NIPS)* — the last partly subsidized by income from our publications program. In fact, since publication is still a mildly profitable business, Society members receive additional benefits, which include increased funds for our programs. Publications deserves a column of its own, which it will get later this year.

I am limiting this discussion to your dues and what we financial wizards call “the Society business cost center or Society General Fund.” In 1989, our income from dues by regular and corresponding (overseas) members was \$408,000 to which \$54,500 was added from other membership categories. We also received money from abstract fees, voluntary contributions (pathetic), corporate membership, and a small net income from the Spring FASEB Meeting. Our total General Fund income (not including publications) was \$609,000.

Our expenses however, were \$670,000, leaving a deficit of \$61,000 (roughly \$12/regular member). The deficit was covered by income from our reserve funds. Council does not mind incurring small deficits as long as the money is spent on physiological objectives that our members understand and approve. Unlike the national government, however, we cannot print money, nor can we sustain large continuing deficits.

How were your dues allocated? They sustain the activities centered in our home office in Bethesda, Maryland. That's where all Society business, in-

cluding Membership Services, Meeting and Program Planning, Public Affairs, Education, Publications, and Subscriptions are located. These activities are the life blood of our Society, and are demanded by our members. Some of the expense categories are office space rent, phones, printing and mailing, computer facilities, insurance, program development, and staff salaries. Our Executive Director Martin Frank and his senior associates, Jim Liakos (Business Manager) and Brenda Rauner (Publications Manager) keep all our central business activities coordinated, put into effect decisions made by Council, and solicit supporting funds from industry and members to sustain our Program Endowment Fund, various awards and prizes.

The Membership Services Department keeps track of your status and assists your Section to operate. We see that you get timely notices of meetings and special programs, receive your Section newsletters, career information, *The Physiologist*, *NIPS*, and *Advances in Physiology Education*. We process your abstracts and help to plan programs.

In Public Affairs, we work unceasingly on your behalf for improved federal science funding, for continued availability of animals for research, and on various ethical, political, or religious issues that may affect the physiological sciences. We recently distributed a brochure, “How to be Heard on the Hill,” and have conducted informational workshops at our scientific meetings. The public affairs aspect of Society activity has mushroomed in the last decade in our effort to give your the tools to counter various anti-science forces. This will continue to be an important use of your dues.

We have recently begun to expand our efforts in science education which, I believe, will be a critical area requiring our effective input during the decade. We already administer three programs to assist minority and graduate students to attend our annual meetings. Last year, we began a summer program

for high school science teachers, which is engendering great enthusiasm. There is an increasing demand for scientifically literate workers and for knowledgeable citizens who we expect will continue to willingly foot the bill for scientific research, Council believes our allocation of \$50,000 is reasonable, in fact, modest. I believe no Society gives better service for membership dues than the APS.

I belong to two small societies, which serve some of the special needs of my research. But they cannot replace the larger functions of APS. These specialty societies, while at the forefront of research, are ill-equipped to speak for physiological sciences overall. In fact, I believe it makes better sense to bring these societies into a continuing relationship with APS or FASEB from which they may derive some of the benefits our members receive.

Neither I nor other members of Council are seers, but we realize some financial problems lie ahead. As a result of massive federal training and research support in the 1950s and 60s membership in APS skyrocketed. Now we are coming into a prolonged period of maturity during which our total membership will not increase rapidly because retirements and death will balance recruitment of new members. We cannot expect to achieve budget growth through new member dues. Neither can we expect to increase net income from publications because the competition for library journal funds and shelf space is fierce. Costs will continue to rise and must be paid, and dues may have to be increased unless APS members indicate they prefer reduced meeting quality, fewer membership services, and reduced outlay for public affairs and education.

The American Physiological Society is one of America's oldest scientific bodies and is the senior founding member of FASEB. It is our duty and in our long-term interest to actively support all that APS does on our behalf.

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