

☆ EDITORIAL ☆

Report of the Retiring President, International Society for General Semantics: 1947-1948

IN THE PAST twelve months we became the International Society for General Semantics, we signed up 560 new active members, we prepared to recognize the formation of eight new chapters, we distributed five issues of *ETC.* and four of QUOTE_n, we adopted four books for distribution by the Semantics Book Club, we sent out 12,000 Information Bulletins, we doubled the office space and added one more full-time and one part-time employee, and we paid the Institute of General Semantics the \$941.50 which had been due it since November, 1946 under our agreement on the division of membership dues.

It is good to be able to record such details. But there are others not so happy.

We stopped the free distribution of *ETC.* to some 400 people on the membership list because they had not paid dues for at least one full year. That these people did not find it possible to continue membership was a source of regret. Printing costs were considerably higher than ever before. The lecture series held in Chicago, though admirably attended and handsomely organized by Rex Wickland, Dorothy Hooker, and Mr. and Mrs. George A. Taylor, netted less than had been expected. The total number of books purchased by members was 550, a figure which did not seem sufficient considering the importance of continuous study by those interested in the means of proper evaluation. A budget of \$15,000 had been

projected at the start of the year, but the recapitulation shows an expenditure of approximately \$17,000.

Withal we maintained the dues at their old level. The increase in operating costs was offset, for the most part, by the new members. Our financial situation is not good, but there are no creditors hounding the Secretary-Treasurer. We are, for all practical purposes, above the subsistence level. *ETC.* is not far behind publication schedule. We begin to know what it costs to keep our books in shape and we have a start on the definition of our operational needs. There are, at this writing, few budgetary problems that could not be solved by the addition of 500 paying members.

What could we do if we knew the security that might come from meeting the demands of increased printing costs, etc.? There are many things that the Governing Board wanted to do. Some we did get underway. We have already provided for the setting up of free sets of *ETC.* for chapter libraries and for free gift subscriptions with certain memberships. This should be augmented by annotated reading lists, reprints of selected materials, visiting lecturers and a yearly convention. There are other ways by which our central office might motivate the study of general semantics. But they cannot be undertaken so long as the Board must continuously battle the budget. We have consolidated and organized the operation of the central

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office. The work of Edward MacNeal, our Executive Secretary, and Carol Kessler, his assistant, has been generous and productive and without stint. They have been able to put our business on a working basis. The contribution of Karl Hauch, the Secretary-Treasurer, to this functioning cannot be overestimated.

If this administration has learned anything it is this: there is a tremendous backlog of interest in our membership in what we do. Only rarely has the mail shown impatience and disappointment in what was done or left undone. We are grateful for that fine understanding. Nevertheless, it is still true that some more tangible demonstration would be welcome. When individual members and chapters can find a way of getting new members or contributing financially to the support of whatever services are required, the inter-relatedness of the efforts would certainly bear non-additive fruits. We need the work of 500 people rather than 10 to move as widely as we would wish. An Advisory Committee, composed of Victor Rubin, George and Jean Taylor and Rex Wick-

land met with the Board and contributed in many ways. Is it not possible that Smith₁ in Faroff, Missouri, has much, too, that we ought to know about? This, then, is a report to you of a need and an invitation to participation.

A very real handicap was the fact that some members of the Board who live far from Chicago could attend so few sessions. I wish here to note my appreciation to Dr. Russell Meyers and Professors Wendell Johnson, Francis Chisholm and Elwood Murray, who, at no small expense, found it possible to get to Chicago as often as they did.

The International Society for General Semantics is now in its seventh year, ready for the enlargement of its functions and the deepening of its efforts to 'disseminate widely the extensional methodology.' An organization like this holds vast promise in this kind of a world. The new administration has, I am sure, a conception of both the task and the means whereby it is to be achieved.

IRVING J. LEE
President, 1947-48

The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is comprehensible.

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