

President's Annual Report

I express my deep appreciation for all the help I received during my term as president from the Executive Committee, the Standing Committees, the Governing Board, and the staff of AIBS. It has been a productive year!

During the tenure of President Forest Stearns, the Executive Committee recognized that swift action was needed to get AIBS back on track. Redefining the goals and functions of AIBS was required, and some hard choices had to be made. At an Executive Committee meeting in November 1982, I presented two plans for the future of AIBS. First, I presented a list of reasons why AIBS should be disbanded as a grand experiment that had failed. I did this not only because disbanding was a reasonable course of action at that time, but also because if the Executive Committee officially rejected this plan, it would be the first step in reinforcing the Committee's desire to rebuild AIBS. The second plan, of course, was for rebuilding AIBS, and this plan was accepted.

The first phase of the rebuilding plan was to get the Standing Committees moving again, with specific charges directed toward enhancing strengths and correcting weaknesses in the programs of AIBS. This is one of the few jobs of the president of AIBS that is described in detail in the AIBS Constitution and By-laws; yet, in the past, the appointment and charge of the Standing Committees frequently was not accomplished in either a timely or complete manner.

With the resignation of our executive director, Arthur C. Gentile to accept an academic appointment some months later in 1983, he was appointed as a consultant to AIBS. An interim management team was brought in to maintain the operation of headquarters and to assist in finding a new executive director. The management consulting team of William and Ethel Dalton did an excellent job for us, and on 1 June 1983, Charles M. Chambers became our new executive director (see July/August 1983 *BioScience* 33: 422). Chambers has not only had a distinguished career in academia, but is also a competent administrator with a proven track record. To ensure that AIBS will be managed in a business-like manner, a formal performance review of the executive director will be conducted each year.

Chambers has been extremely busy in his first few months at AIBS. Both the Daltons and I provided him with extensive documentation on how services to the membership of AIBS could be improved and on the strengths and weaknesses of the operations at headquarters. For example, I found that neither the methods of keeping membership records nor the records themselves were up-to-date. We have no demographic information on our members, only names and addresses and whether members have paid their dues. We don't even have a record of when people joined AIBS. Clearly, Chambers has a lot of work to do to get AIBS headquarters up to speed in terms of space reorganization, staff utilization, and the acquisition of word and data processing equipment.

Central to any membership recruitment campaign must be the publicity on what AIBS is doing and can do for its members.

By now all members should have received a demography form to complete and return so that AIBS can develop a profile of its membership. This information is needed, not only to assist in membership retainment and recruitment, but also to locate experts quickly for various projects in the Public Responsibilities and Special Science Programs of AIBS.

Those of you who attended the annual scientific meeting this year noticed that the members of AIBS had green logos affixed to their name badges to show our appreciation for their support of AIBS. Also, there were more AIBS activities at the annual meeting than in former years. We felt that the professional activities and programs of AIBS should be more prominent at the AIBS meeting. It should be a place where we can show off some of the things we are doing for our members and for biology in general. To this end, AIBS sponsored the workshop, Computers in Bioeducation, and a workshop by the Council of Botany/Plant Science Department Chairs and Heads titled The Future of Plant Science. The Education Committee organized a seminar, The Crisis in Precollege Science

Education, and Public Responsibilities organized a panel discussion, The Federal Role In Future Biological Research and Education. A membership meeting of AIBS was scheduled, but the publicity was insufficient to draw an audience; we hope for better luck in 1984. Of course, the two traditional AIBS functions were held: the AIBS Plenary Session with the address by the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award, Karl Maramorosch, and the AIBS steak fry. Another innovation this year was to have tapes and slides of the lecture at the Plenary Session available for sale. The tape and slides of Maramorosch's talk ("Newly Recognized Plant Pathogens: Impact on Ancient and Modern Civilizations") may be obtained for \$22 by writing to AIBS headquarters. (See pictorial report on the annual meeting in the November 1983 *BioScience* 33:622.)

We have developed an AIBS poster for use as part of a membership recruitment display (with *BioScience*, *Forum*, etc.) that we plan to display at meetings of our member societies, AAAS, and elsewhere. We have not considered AIBS T-shirts yet, but who knows . . . Membership retention and recruitment will continue to be major projects for AIBS. We have already started one campaign through the heads of biology departments, and, thanks to the hard work of the Membership Committee, several other campaigns are underway or are planned.

Central to any membership recruitment campaign must be publicity on what AIBS is doing and can do for its members. Part of the dues to AIBS goes toward a direct return to its members (*BioScience* and *Forum*, etc.), but a good portion goes toward working for the general benefit of the biological sciences overall. This is another difference between the speciality scientific society and AIBS. Most of the dues in a speciality society directly benefit the members, whereas, a major role of AIBS is to work toward benefiting biology in general, thereby benefiting its members, although indirectly. The major structured efforts in this regard have been through the Public Responsibilities and Special Science Programs, but we are launching new efforts in the area of education.

Even if we quickly reorganized AIBS, employ the best executive director, and

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have the best-organized headquarters of any association in the world, it does not mean that the drive to improve the service that AIBS performs for its members and for biology in general is over, rather it is *just the beginning!*

The long-range planning for AIBS must come from its elected and appointed officials. In practical terms, however, this really means that the president must take a *very active* leadership position. "The President shall be the chief executive officer of the Institute, provide scientific leadership for the Institute, and supervise the conduct of the affairs of the Institute" (AIBS Bylaws). If the president does nothing, then AIBS will not progress. Obviously, a good executive director will try to prevent a president from doing nothing. "The Executive Director shall be the chief administrative officer of the Institute, and shall supervise or carry out policies and directives of the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors" (AIBS Bylaws).

An important goal, obviously, is to have AIBS managed in a businesslike manner, but how do we insure continued effective elected leadership in AIBS? As do most scientific societies, AIBS holds scientific meetings and publishes a magazine and a newsletter, but if that were all that AIBS did there would be no compelling reason for AIBS to exist. AIBS speaks for all disciplines of biology. It must work for improving the education of teachers and students in all disciplines of biology, ensure that funding for research is adequate, and ensure that political decisions that have an impact on matters biological are made using the best scientific information available. AIBS must be both the watchdog for biology and an innovator. To be less is to fail in our responsibilities to our members.

The strength of an organization depends initially on the quality of its nomination process. The most famous scientists in the world may not necessarily make the best officers. The Nominating Committee must inform the nominees of the full extent of their duties if elected and determine whether they will pledge to spend the time that is necessary to perform these duties in a timely and efficient manner. It is preferable to select nominees with track records of proven accomplishments within AIBS. Therefore, it is essential that younger scientists be constantly introduced to the governance of AIBS through election as members-at-large to the Council, and as appointees to committees. The people

who do well in these positions are the prime candidates for nominations to the Board of Directors and, ultimately, as officers.

AIBS does not need people who accept appointments or win elections and attend meetings without ever reading the agendas or doing their homework between meetings. AIBS is too important to harbor that kind of person. There have been far too many people of this kind involved in the governing of AIBS over many years of observation. Peer pressure should get these people to resign. If they will not resign after friendly suggestions in private, then more open pressure should be brought to bear. The international fame of a person should not be a deterrent to applying peer pressure for the benefit of AIBS and its important programs. Only with an effective peer pressure system can AIBS accomplish its goals of serving its members and biology in general in an effective manner year after year, without the repeated lows that have plagued AIBS over the years.

Although this year started rather ominously, it has ended very optimistically and with a high degree of productivity. The Standing Committees have provided excellent advice to the Executive Committee for the coming year, the financial position of AIBS is no longer in the red, but we do need more members, and the projected improvements at headquarters should soon be visible to all members.

What is most exciting, however, is that we have developed a long-range plan to change the future course of AIBS (see p. 0000). This is being published in *BioScience* so that everyone can see our plans and can check to see that we are on target. In addition, the AIBS Constitution and Bylaws have been completely rewritten to more equitably balance the responsibilities for governing AIBS between the individual members and the member societies of AIBS. This new constitution was approved by the Board of Governors on 18 November 1983.

We are working for a greater involvement of the membership in the governance and functions of AIBS. AIBS cannot be ignored by its members if it is to be effective. I encourage you to get involved with AIBS and work hard. AIBS can do even more for biology in the future, with everyone doing his and her share.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve AIBS.

—Kendric C. Smith
AIBS President (1982–1983)