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GRASS ROOTS FUTURES

Moderator: A. ANTHONY AUTIN, JR.

Summary Report

This informal, after-regular-hours session was conducted by the Chairman of the Council for the Futurism Section as part of the Section's efforts to:

1. Identify current and future issues which will impact on the actuarial profession and that of the environment in which the actuaries and their clients work and
2. Give focus to the emerging plans of the Section as it attempts to serve the needs and desires of its members.

Input was spirited and plentiful from the 60 persons who attended the session following an initial set of stage-opening remarks by the council chairman describing the perspective of typical futurists and the existing activities planned for the section. While no attempt was made during the session to obtain a consensus for specific suggestions, the following subjects received broad support.

The Role of The Actuary

This topic was actively under discussion at the larger Society level and was considered to be clearly in the arena covered by futurism. There was interest in some contribution by the Section to the current Society discussions but also a sense that the recent formation of the Section may not make this practical. Whether or not this is the case, the section is seen as a body which should strive to broaden the perspective of the actuary about their role(s).

Futurism Skills

A strong support was expressed for actions by the Section which would assist members in learning about techniques used by futurists. Among the areas mentioned were scenarios, delphi, cross-impact analysis, extrapolation and projections. These could be presented at continuing education seminars, workshops, local actuarial meetings and as papers for the transactions. Because of the relative newness of futurism to actuaries, this may involve outside speakers or writers.

Futurism Perspectives

There was recognition given to the unique set of perspectives which futurists bring to their tasks. These include a systems view, an appreciation of increasing interrelationships, an openness to possible discontinuities and alternative futures and experience in dealing with qualitative changes.

Involvement of Section Members

The Council was seeking section members interested in working on projects and assignments in the near-term future. While most section members indicated a concern over their effectiveness on such work (due to lack of background in futurism) it was pointed out that the members of the Council and others could supply the leadership and guidance for such participation.