



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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 articles, criticisms, and discussions in this publication.

EDITORIAL

AMONG our readers we are reasonably sure that there are some who would wish that editorials might well leave the year 1859 to take care of itself and might more properly discuss current events. Such a minority deserves consideration and here are our current comments.

A newspaper report headed "Humor is Just a Mathematical Plot to One Scientist" caught our attention maybe because it suggested the reverse, that mathematics is just a humorous plot to anybody (excepting perhaps the examinees for the early parts of the actuarial examinations).

Further reading revealed that there is a mathematical concept called "Catastrophe Theory" which, according to a simplified example, is such that a mathematician might regard a joke as a catastrophe and we wonder how this theory might apply to actuarial science which has the reputation of being mathematical. There are many actuarial jokes which could well be described as catastrophic in the opinion of the audience and there are some actuarial catastrophies, e.g. the results of the group accident and health experience, which are no joke. Maybe the scientist who recently discussed this theory and who has written a book "Mathematics and Humor" will therein help the actuaries to see the lighter side. "Laughter holding both his sides" is not a daily concomitant of actuarial practice in any field. On the other hand some of our practices might be enough to make a cat laugh. The subject of humor in actuarial work deserves further investigation which we will recommend to the Committee on Research when the book mentioned above has been published—the newspaper article was interesting but an inadequate basis for further discussion at present.

A second item, which also came from a newspaper article, was headed "Carter Orders Agencies to Cut Out the Jargon." This Executive Order deserves the active support of all scribes be they writing books, articles, papers or even letters to the Editor of *The Actuary*. There are many currently published guides to the writing of clear English. Sometimes we get the impression that some readers may be in the position of the student who, after the English professor had stated at his initial lecture: "There are two words which I trust will never appear in your essays. One is 'swell' and the other is 'lousy,'" innocently asked the professor "Please sir, what are the words?" This editor will not on this occasion, at least, list the several over-used words which today appear in all forms of print. One slight mention might be allowed: *Scenario* which suggests that the proceedings are to be in blank verse supported by much sword play. What is wrong with "outline" or "synopsis"?

Some of the states have been trying to get policies written in simplified language. We do not know to what extent they have been successful but the trend is to be encouraged despite the obvious difficulties with the legal requirements of standard provisions and the need to have wording which all states will approve.

The final current item is of greater importance—the joint meeting of the Casualty Actuarial Society and the Society of Actuaries. The differences in the examination requirements should not obscure our common interests. More than ever in these days of consumerism and publicity, the insurance business needs to be recognized as a unit of risk-taking companies providing indemnity against losses for all the hazards that our economic society is now exposed to.

We welcome our brothers (and sisters) from the casualty field.

A.C.W.

POSITION AVAILABLE: CHIEF ACTUARY OF SOCIAL SECURITY

A. Haeworth Robertson has announced his resignation as Chief Actuary of the Social Security Administration as of March 1978. Accordingly, the Social Security Administration is seeking a highly qualified actuary to assume the position of Chief Actuary as soon as possible. Duties and responsibilities of this position include:

1. Supervision and direction of the Office of the Actuary, Social Security Administration, with a current staff of sixty-five including five F.S.A.'s, thirteen A.S.A.'s and twenty-eight student actuaries.
2. Planning and direction of preparation of actuarial cost estimates for the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance program and any proposed amendments thereto.
3. Service as consultant to the Commissioner of Social Security and the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare on all actuarial matters concerning the operation of the OASDI program.

Further information concerning position, with a salary of \$47,500, may be obtained by contacting:

DONALD FAY
 Executive Manpower Management Officer
 Office of Human Resources, SSA
 Room 734 Altmeyer Building
 6401 Security Boulevard
 Baltimore, Maryland 21235
 Telephone No. 301-594-6810

Call For Papers

13th Annual Actuarial Research Conference On

New Methods and Applications of Life Contingency Mathematics

The conference will be open to cover all new and novel methods and applications of life contingencies, but special emphasis will be placed on treatment of q_x as a random variable. The conference will be held August 31, September 1 and 2, 1978 at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. All interested persons are invited to attend and further to submit short abstracts and/or outlines, if they so desire. All those accepted by April 30, 1978 will appear in program announcement. Those desiring further information should write Richard W. Ziock, Chairman, Committee on Research; Department of Statistics, Maclean Hall, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52242. □