



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article from:

The Actuary

March 1980 – Volume 14, No. 3

The Actuary

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Published monthly (except July and August) by the SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES,
 208 S. LaSalle St., Chicago, Illinois, 60604, Julius Vogel, President, Myles M. Gray,
 Secretary, L. Blake Fewster, Treasurer, Robert E. Hunstad, Director of Publications.

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EDITORIAL

INCUBATION

IN authorizing its National Commission on Social Security, whose final report is due in January 1981, the U.S. Congress imposed precise requirements designed to keep the Commission members' shoulders to the wheel.

Meetings had to be held in every calendar month—no hibernation permitted. Three reports were demanded: the first within four months reciting how the Commission planned to proceed; the second within one year explaining how they were getting along; the final report no later than the end of their second year.

Ought our Board of Governors to impose similar discipline on Society Special Committees, specially those entrusted with matters upon whose prompt resolution the reputation of our profession hinges? We aren't sure about the requirement for a meeting every calendar month (this may sometimes result in sparse attendance), but setting dates by which the committee must either say something worthwhile or turn the job over to somebody else seems worth trying.

Alternatively, the typical committee sorely needs a gadfly among its members (preferably its chairman) who makes it his or her business to keep asking when decisions on the thorny questions will be reached. That same member can render additional signal service by ruthlessly blue-pencilling drafts of the report that aim to tell the world how hard the committee worked.

Years ago one of the Society's great humorists, Morton A. Laird (1911-1973), composed a ditty relevant to these questions. It goes to the tune of W. S. Gilbert's "Titwillow", and was kindly furnished for this space by W. James Preble, F.S.A.:

Your thought is a good one, we'll study it well,
 In Committee, Committee, Committee.
 And on every aspect will thoughtfully dwell,
 In Committee, Committee, Committee.
 If you wistfully ask why you've had no reply
 To the question you raised back in early July,
 In due course you will get an evasive reply,
 From Committee, Committee, Committee.

E.J.M.

LETTERS

FSA — ASA = 0

Sir:
 Gerald Fryer (January issue) correctly presumes that the shortest time between ASA and FSA is zero. This feat was recently done by Walter Siegel who passed Part 5 last.

Alfred Raws III

* * * *

Another First Lady

Sir:
 I could not help but be reminded of another notable "first", namely the first mother-daughter combination. This rarity occurred way back in 1949 when Marjorie Van Eenam Butcher, A.S.A. followed in the footsteps of her mother Weltha Van Eenam who was admitted in 1924.

Benjamin J. Bock

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Flesch Viewed By A Regulator

Sir:
 It is sad that some criticisms of the Flesch requirement have been pejorative. A vast majority of policyholders don't read their policy until they think they have a claim, and there are grounds for believing that its hard to understand, and legal language has discouraged them from doing so. The legislature had to provide an arbitrary test as a minimum readability standard.

Nothing should prevent insurance companies from experimenting with different ideas. A multiple-choice questionnaire testing the buyer's understanding of the policy might be sent with it. Just as banks give token prizes to those who make certain deposits, token prizes might be offered to policyholders who respond, and to those who respond accurately. The lapse and claim experience might be studied according to non-respondents, respondents and accurate respondents; each agent's sales might be similarly analyzed.

The point is that insurance companies can do a lot to improve policy understandability. The Flesch requirement should spur such experimentation.

Dinkar Koppikar

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