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Editor . . .

E. J. MOORHEAD

Correspondence should be addressed:

The Actuary

Associate Fditors . .

MICHAEL B. McGUINNESS JOSEPH W. S. YAU

В

Bermuda Run, Advance, N.C. 27006—0780 Tel: (919) 998-5335

DEBORAH ADLER POPPEL

Competition Editor . . CHARLES G. GROESCHELL

Editor Emeritus . . . Andrew C. Webster

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EDITORIAL

THINKING INTERNATIONALLY

The total number of actuaries—casualty, life and pension—in North America last year was 9,229 (see our June 1981 issue, page 7). By now we must have passed the 10,000 mark; about 8,500 of us are in the United States, 1,500 in Canada.

The world is shrinking in actuarial affairs these days, just as it is in all other respects. But—how lively an interest do actuaries in North America take in actuarial activities elsewhere on the globe? Do we keep ourselves informed on how others are dealing with the problems and opportunities that are common to us all?

The size of our membership in the International Actuarial Association (IAA), the body that arranges a Congress in every calendar year exactly divisible by four, qualifies as one measure of the interest that we take in international affairs within our profession. The figures look like this:

•	Total Number of Actuaries	IAA Members	IAA Members per 100
Canada	1,500	314	21
U.S.A.	8,500	606	7

Since the total IAA membership from all countries at the latest published count was 3,851, it may be observed that of each 100 members in all countries, 8 are in Canada, 16 in the United States.

For some reason on which we can only speculate, support of the International Actuarial Association is proportionately three times as great in Canada as it is in the United States. It seems fair to suppose that there are some actuaries in the southern half of the North American continent who might be persuaded to take the modest leap into international actuarialdom by joining the Association; there may be more in the northern half also.

Enquiries would, we are sure, be welcomed by the two actuaries who take care of enrolling Association members—John C. Angle in New York, Michael Rosenfelder in Toronto. Their addresses are in the Society Yearbook.

THE PREYING MANTIS

by Bertie Ramsbottom

Of all the businesses, by far, Consultancy's the most bizarre. For, to the penetrating eye, There's no apparent reason why, With no more assets than a pen, This group of personable men Can sell to clients more than twice The same ridiculous advice, Or find, in such a rich profusion, Problems to fit their own solution.

The strategy that they pursue— To give advice instead of do-Keeps their fingers on the pulses Without recourse to stomach ulcers, And brings them monetary gain, Without a modicum of pain. The wretched object of their quest, Reduced to cardiac arrest, Is left alone to implement The asinine report they've sent. Meanwhile the analysts have gone Back to client number one, Who desperately needs their aid To tidy up the mess they made. And on and on-ad infinitum The masochistic clients invite 'em. Until the merciful reliever Invokes the company receiver.

No one really seems to know The rate at which consultants grow, By some amoeba-like division? Or chemo-biologic fission? They clone themselves without an end Along their exponential trend.

The paradox is each adviser, If he makes his client wiser, Inadvertently destroys
The basis of his future joys. So does anybody know
Where latter-day consultants go?

Ed. Note: This first appeared in the Financial Times (U.K.), April 11, 1981; on this continent, in Harvard Business Review, September/October 1982. We reprint by kind permission of the author, Ralph Windle, and the Financial Times, Credit for bringing it to our attentigoes to David S. Williams, F.S.A.

Bertie Ramsbottom's collected "Boardroom Ballads" are being published in Britain now, and soon on this continent, we hope.

E.J.M.