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EDITORIAL

The start of a new year is the natural time to become introspective, to pause, sit-back, reflect, and take stock. Since Acting Editors with fresh ideas had full responsibility for the last two issues of the old year, January is an especially appropriate time for *The Actuary* to raise two related questions: What is the editor's job? How can he do it better?

Perhaps we start an answer to the first question by clearing away the chaff. The editor does *not* wield a blue-pencil, nor does he spend much time with re-writing, proof-reading, make-up, or typography. The editor has responsibility as to each of these matters, and he does some small part of each; but his small but experienced staff handles most details, while the editor directs his energies elsewhere.

The primary concern is the *collection* of a wide range of quality editorial material, and the appropriate *selection* therefrom. The selection task becomes easy when there is sufficient good material — hence the real challenge lies in collection. We need articles, features, announcements, and letters that readers find informative, useful, interesting, and enjoyable. We need solid or heavy material, and light. We need problems, jokes, puzzles. We need controversy (though not too much). We need the past, the present, and the future.

Sometimes collection involves no more than finding items already written, and the gaining of publication rights. More often initiative is required. Planting the seed, encouraging its growth, and reaping the harvest, all through the work of others, is often what collection means.

As in other journalistic endeavor, the key is the "source" — the individual who has something worthwhile to say, and the willingness to put it into writing. Creating or cultivating productive sources must be the editor's main objective. He needs sources in all of several areas of actuarial interest, and he needs sources with differing points of view.

Deborah and Stuart have already shown us one way to improve. We can broaden our perspective by tapping non-actuarial sources. Deborah's issue carried articles by an agent and an underwriter, whose views of the actuarial profession are from the outside. Stuart's December issue has an interesting reprint from *Forbes*. It takes imagination and foresight to bring such view-points to our attention.

Looking at our recent past may give us some perspective. Have we had too many items from too few sources? Do we give too much emphasis to certain topics? Do we hear too little (or too much) from any sub-group?

We now ask for our readers' suggestions. What sources have we overlooked? What stories have not yet been written? What new ideas need exploration? In short, how can we do it better?

C.L.T.

MATHEMATICAL OLYMPIAD

The September and October issues of this newsletter included stories on an international contest for high school mathematics students. One problem of the six that all contestants were asked to solve was presented as a part of the September article, while another was posed in October. We suggested that at least some actuaries might enjoy trying their own hand at solving these problems. There has now been time enough that we have some replies.

The only solution to the September number theory problem so far received comes from David DuBois. While he shows his mathematical skills by developing a fine answer within the allotted time, David gets lower grades as a forecaster. In a post-script he states that "I wouldn't be surprised if you get over a 100 of these proofs." How far off can one be?

The October plane geometry problem was considerably easier, at least for the contestants, and presumably for actuaries. Mark Fowler, Graham Lord, Seymour Rubenstein and Paulette Tino have, by late November, sent in 100% solutions. Three of these involve geometry only, while two use trigonometry as well. For those perplexed by reference to five solutions from four actuaries, we explain that one solver presented one solution of each type.

In a reply of a different type, Manuel Gelles asked for more information. He wants the scores of all of the 30 countries competing, in order to rise to the challenge of explaining why communist countries took five of the first six places. *The Actuary* has the information, but with the countries designated by only a two-letter code, not entirely obvious to North American readers.

AT	77	GR	69
AU	117	HU	168
BE	60	IL	81
BG	165	MA	60
BR	83	MN	62
CA	105	NL	72
CO	54	NO	34
CS	105	PL	101
CU	74	RO	201
DD	136	SE	65
DE	139	SU	140
DZ	36	TR	54
FI	25	US	180
FR	126	VN	144
GB	121	YU	68

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