



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article from:

The Actuary

October 1989 – Volume 23, No. 9



The Newsletter of the
Society of Actuaries

VOL. 23 NO. 9
OCTOBER 1989

THE Actuary

Public interface vital to profession

by Allan D. Affleck

When I first became a member of the Society of Actuaries, I used to enjoy hearing, or reading, the Secretary's summary of the "non-routine" business transacted by the Board. In those days I wondered how one determined what was "routine" and what was "nonroutine." Somehow even the "nonroutine" often seemed pretty "routine!" With the benefit of more than a few years in the profession, I have come to understand that it takes an issue of substantial importance for our membership to view it as other than routine, even though our Board might define it otherwise.

I want to say a little bit about an issue that many members may label routine but that is of real importance to all of us. The issue is public interface and, related to that, the role of the Society of Actuaries in supporting the Academy and the recommendations of the Task Force on Strengthening the Profession.

For the moment I am focusing on the situation in the United States, since the Canadian Institute has already developed a significant public interface role in Canada.

Public interface is probably the most important activity the profession undertakes. Why do I say this?

- To be recognized and to be successful as a profession, we must serve our publics.
- In order to stay relevant we must serve our members.

Both these steps require the profession to interact with our various publics to a considerable extent.

In the long run, serving the public will lead to a strong actuarial

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Nankai actuarial program suspended by prodemocracy movement

by Harry Panjer

The SOA-sponsored actuarial program at Nankai University in Tianjin, China, has been temporarily suspended as a result of the effective shutdown of Chinese universities during the prodemocracy demonstrations in May 1989. The program, which began in September 1987, was staffed by volunteer university professors from North America. The first three instructors were Dr. Kailin Tuan of Temple University, Dr. Eric Seah of the University of Manitoba and Dr. Beda Chan of the University of Toronto. I was teaching the fourth course, Actuarial Mathematics, at the time of the demonstrations.

When I arrived in China on May 7, I was aware that student demonstrations and a student strike had followed the death of former Chairman Hu Yaobang on April 15. Student representatives were not

allowed to attend the funeral of Hu, considered a hero by students. On May 6, the press reported that students had agreed to return to classes on May 8, my scheduled date to begin teaching.

My class of 17 men and one woman had studied English extensively and had developed fairly good listening skills although their spoken English was weak. All had undergraduate degrees in mathematics and had come from seven different Chinese provinces to study in the Department of Finance at Nankai for a master's degree with a specialization in insurance and actuarial science.

The first week of classes went quite normally. However, on May 14, Mikhail Gorbachev arrived in China. The students in Beijing had already organized to hold a prodemocracy

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VOLUME 23, NO. 9
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The Actuary is published monthly (except July and August) by the SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES, 475 North Martingale Road, Suite 800, Schaumburg, IL 60173-2226. Ian M. Rolland, President; Anthony T. Spano, Secretary; Michael J. Cowell, Treasurer; David A. Jeggel, Director of Publications. Nonmember subscriptions: students, \$5.50; others, \$6.50. Send subscriptions to: Society of Actuaries, P.O. Box 95668, Chicago, IL 60694.

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Nankai cont'd

demonstration in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. By May 16, the demonstrating students, fearing a government crackdown after Gorbachev's May 18 departure, called for reinforcements from students and citizens all around China. The classes at Nankai and at most other Chinese universities stopped on May 16. Prodemocracy demonstrations started on campus and spread rapidly around the city and all around China. By May 18, students and workers in the city of Tianjin marched in the largest demonstrations outside of Beijing in the history of the People's Republic of China.

Many students from Nankai went to Beijing on a seven-hour overnight bicycle trip. Since I had no classes and a spirit of adventure, I also went to Beijing (but by train!) with a Canadian colleague from York University who was teaching in an MBA program under the auspices of the Canadian International Development Agency. The evening of May 18 marked the pinnacle of the Tiananmen Square demonstrations. There were between 1 and 3 million people on the square, along with hundreds of trucks carrying chanting students and hundreds of motorcycles roaring around the city carrying flags emblazoned with various prodemocracy slogans. Yet the city was completely peaceful; no guns were visible, and all activity on the square was orderly.

The students were making a number of what would be considered in the West to be modest demands. They were demanding a freer press, more dialogue between the people and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, and an end to corruption among party officials.

I stayed in Beijing for four days, either sightseeing or observing the demonstrations on Tiananmen Square. By May 19, many workers in Beijing had gone on strike in support of the student movement. In spite of this, the city was completely orderly, except that no busses were running due to striking drivers. On May 20, we heard from striking taxi drivers that all roads into Beijing had been blocked by citizens trying to stop the People's Liberation Army. We were determined to see the Great Wall, which would require a drive through the outskirts of the city. After a number of attempts, we finally found a non-striking taxi driver who was willing

to take us on the 25-mile trip to the Great Wall.

On our trip, we were stopped both by the army, which was preventing vehicles from entering Beijing, and by civilians who were preventing the army from coming to the city. We were allowed to pass through each roadblock and to visit the Great Wall at the same location that Gorbachev had visited only three days earlier. On our return to Beijing, we were stopped only once by soldiers because our driver used some minor roads to avoid the main roadblocks. In both the city and the square, we discovered that things were much quieter and peaceful than on the previous day. Ironically, this was the day that martial law was declared as a result of the "chaos" caused by the "rioters," "antirevolutionaries" and supporters of "bourgeois liberalism." However, on the next day, May 21, the mood became somber as a result of the martial law declaration, and most students left the square. In the following few days, the number of demonstrators on Tiananmen Square again increased as the movement regained strength and commitment.

I talked to many students in both Beijing and Tianjin. They were completely committed to the student movement and determined to demonstrate until the government made at least some conciliatory gesture. By May 28, we had heard that the moderates were being purged from the Central Committee and that the hardliners were gaining control of the decision-making process. This marked a change of approach of the Central Committee to the student movement. Fear of an imminent crackdown spread quickly.

I was very touched by the generosity and friendship of my students at Nankai. We spent many hours discussing politics, as well as taking bicycle trips together around Tianjin. More than 50 students attended a class dance in my honor. The students exhibited a real enthusiasm toward life in spite of very difficult personal circumstances. Students receive financial support of about \$12 per month, barely enough to buy very basic meals in the university cafeterias. Dormitory rooms are often crammed with six students in bunk beds with laundry hanging between the beds. Many students receive additional money from their

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Harry Panjer watches protesters from the steps of the Great Hall of the People at Tiananmen Square.

Nankai cont'd

parents to buy clothing and other basics. On my departure, students prepared and presented me with a Chinese scroll painting with a personal inscription as well as a number of other small gifts.

Nankai University provided accommodation and eating facilities that were outstanding by Chinese standards. The food was so good that I gained more than 10 pounds and outgrew some of my clothes during the first week of my visit! Feeling guilty about the relative wealth of the West, I gave away anything that I had (temporarily) outgrown. Perhaps a future instructor will recognize me cycling around the streets of Nankai University!

I was disappointed to leave China on May 29. Not only had my teaching program been interrupted, but it was a very exciting time to be in China. I didn't want to leave in the middle of what felt very much like the beginning of a revolution. The massacre that occurred on June 3 and 4, a few days after my departure, had a profound effect on me. I found the students to be utterly patriotic to both China and to the communist system but committed to improving China for all its citizens. The actions of the government went far beyond the bounds of humanity. A few days later I heard through the Chinese press coming from Hong Kong that 400-500 students from Nankai University had been killed at Tiananmen Square. It will be some time before this estimate

can be verified. I understand that the universities have been deserted as students have returned to their home cities out of a fear for their safety.

Nankai University, which has a student population of about 10,000, is a national university drawing some of the best students from all of China. About half of the students in my class were destined to end up working for the People's Insurance Company of China (PICC). The rest were going back to other universities to teach insurance and actuarial science. The PICC, a sponsor of our program, cancelled all my meetings with them because of the demonstrations.

As a result of the turmoil in China, it has been decided to suspend the program for one year and reevaluate it in early 1990. I was so personally outraged by the killings on Tiananmen Square that I am determined to do nothing that will support the present regime in China. However, I recognize that my service in China is largely for the benefit of the individual students. These students were eager to have the program continue. Given the uncertainty of the situation in mid-June and the long lead time required to organize individual professor's schedules, it was clearly impossible to continue the program on the original schedule. I strongly hope that our program can be continued and that we can assist in developing an actuarial profession in China.

Harry Panjer, a member of the SOA Board of Governors, is a Professor at the University of Waterloo.

Election results

Daphne D. Bartlett has been elected President-Elect of the Society for 1989-90.

She is Executive Vice President at Celtic Life Insurance Company. A member of the Board of Governors from 1976-79, she served as SOA Vice President from 1979-81.



Daphne Bartlett

Chosen as Vice Presidents were Phyllis A. Doran, Curtis E. Huntington and Michael R. Winn.

Doran, a Consulting Actuary with Milliman & Robertson, Inc., served on the Board of Governors from 1986-89. Huntington is Corporate Actuary with New England Mutual Life Insurance Company. Winn is Vice President and Consulting Actuary with Lewis & Ellis, Inc. Huntington and Winn also were members of the Society Board from 1986-89.

Anthony T. Spano was reelected Secretary. Spano, an Actuary with the American Council of Life Insurance, was SOA Director of Publications from 1984-87 and began in his position as Secretary in 1987.

Reelected as Treasurer was Michael J. Cowell, Vice President and Corporate Actuary with UNUM Life Insurance Company.

Winning spots on the Board of Governors were H. David Allen, Howard J. Bolnick, William Carroll, James A. Curtis, Daniel F. McGinn and Diane Wallace. Allen is Vice President and Chief Financial Officer with the Canadian Division of Manufacturers Life Insurance Company; Bolnick is President of Celtic Life Insurance Company; Carroll is an Actuary with the American Council of Life Insurance; Curtis is Chairman and Chief Executive Officer with Milliman & Robertson; McGinn is President and Chief Actuary with DM&C Consultants, Inc.; and Wallace is Senior Vice President with Atrium Corporation.