

TRANSACTIONS

APRIL, 1965

DIGEST OF DISCUSSION OF SUBJECTS OF GENERAL INTEREST

The Society's Spring Programs and Discussion Rules

The Society has, in recent years, had three Spring Meetings. They have been day-and-a-half or two-day meetings scheduled on a regional basis with about the same programs so that the members attending might be somewhat fewer than at the Annual Fall Meeting and, thus, a more informal meeting might result. The programs have tended to include the following, in addition to any business of the meeting:

- A. At the morning sessions:
 - 1. The presentation and discussion of papers.
 - 2. Reports by individuals on topics of current interest.
 - 3. Informal discussion before all those attending of specified subjects of general interest.
- B. At the afternoon sessions:
 - 1. Informal discussion at simultaneous sessions of topics in a particular area of interest.
 - 2. Usually a Smaller Company Forum.

Are these meetings as now organized fulfilling the needs and the desires of the members? In particular, are the so-called informal discussions both before the whole meeting and at the simultaneous sessions of value commensurate with the time allotted to them? Are the rules for conducting these discussions, as set forth on page 2 of this program, satisfactory?

New York Regional Meeting

MR. BRUCE E. SHEPHERD: Our discussion this morning deals with the format of our spring meetings. We want to find out whether the format, skill, and arrangement of our spring regional meetings are satisfactory to the membership. We would appreciate any suggestions as to ways of handling these meetings that would make them more interesting and profitable to the members. We want this discussion to be spontaneous and therefore invite anyone who has any ideas, comments, or criticisms to feel free to speak.

MR. DONALD S. GRUBBS, JR.: Since many papers deal with highly specialized topics of interest to a limited number of members, I suggest that formal papers be presented in separate simultaneous sessions where those interested in a particular paper would be able to discuss it more fully. When two or more papers are concerned with closely related topics, they could be presented and discussed in the same session. If a particular paper is felt to be of broad general interest, it might be presented and discussed at a session of the entire Society.

CHAIRMAN SHEPHERD: Mr. Grubbs has made an important and worthwhile suggestion which will help to make the meeting as interesting as possible to the people who directly participate. It seems to me that his suggestion for discussion of formal papers could also apply to informal discussions on topics of current interest.

MR. ERNEST J. MOORHEAD: The Committee on Papers is having some difficulty with its assignment these days in applying the requirement stated in the *Year Book* that every paper must be of interest to a reasonably large proportion of Society members. Papers are being offered that just don't have the necessary breadth of interest to our membership. Unquestionably this is a result of the diversified activities of our members.

Possibly there is room for a program format between the two extremes of informal discussion and formal papers. A member might prepare a paper on a subject that he has been studying. This paper might be distributed to the membership in advance of the meeting and become the subject of discussion but not be printed in full in the *Transactions*.

This procedure might also provide suitable means for disseminating and discussing papers which are on worthy and interesting subjects but whose authors have not given enough time and effort to preparation to make them reflect adequate credit upon the author and the Society when published in the *Transactions*.

CHAIRMAN SHEPHERD: It seems to me that we are trying to accomplish two things in our discussions. First, we want to make the discussions lively and interesting and at the same time we want to achieve discussions of lasting value. It is difficult to accomplish the proper balance between these two objectives. One possibility that has occurred to those of us working on the current problem is developing our informal discussion topics through the medium of a brief panel discussion at the beginning followed by audience participation.

MR. MILTON F. CHAUNER: Another suggestion would be to have the paper appear in draft form for discussion with a group of ten or fifteen

people who might have considerable supplementary information to contribute. The final paper then could be published under the author's name but with the contributing collaborators listed.

MR. ALTON P. MORTON: I want to concur with the suggestion made on the use of panel discussions in our informal sessions. I believe the subject should be presented in a way that would keep the atmosphere informal and yet develop participation and questions, particularly from the younger men.

MR. DONALD D. CODY: Based on my experience as chairman of one of yesterday's simultaneous sessions, I think it could have been improved if in addition to the lead-off speaker there had been a second discussor on each topic, carefully picked again, from a company which was known to have some difference of opinion from the opening discussor. I think this would have encouraged more people to participate in the discussion.

MR. GILBERT W. HART: I think that the thing that we are missing from our meetings is that there is no opportunity to ask questions. If it would be possible to break the groups into much smaller sessions by having maybe twelve simultaneous sessions which are more open sessions, I believe the participation would be greatly encouraged.

MR. CHRISTOPHER H. WAIN: It seems to me that there is a common thread to all the comments previously made that is related to the Society growing very large and the interest of its members becoming rather diverse. Perhaps we should experiment with spring meetings that are divided on a subject basis rather than on a geographical basis.

MR. WILMER A. JENKINS: I think we should experiment with workshop sessions. This has been tried by a number of other organizations—sometimes with a great deal of success. Also, a systematic study of techniques used by other organizations of our size should be helpful.

MR. ROBERT H. DREYER: As a newer member, I am somewhat surprised by the very formal atmosphere during the "informal" sessions. The recent HIAA Convention made very effective use of the less formal workshop technique. I was pleased at the turnout yesterday at the session for consulting actuaries. I hope the Program Committee will keep this in mind for future meetings, since we have really no more than scratched the surface so far as potential topics are concerned.

MR. PEARCE SHEPHERD: I thought maybe a few comments on the way the International Conference of Actuaries handled their problems in

1964 would be of interest. Last year in Scotland the Congress used a format something like our simultaneous sessions but on a more informal basis. They broke their groups up into manageable units and had someone lead off the discussion. Certainly one of the Society's objectives should be to get more freedom of discussion, which can only be done if the simultaneous sessions are directly aimed at accomplishing that purpose.

One other suggestion might be to select three or four people knowledgeable in a particular subject and ask them to respond to questions from the audience. One other problem that has always bothered the Program Committee is how to time the program. If we could only build into everyone of us the proper timing device, I think it would help the Program Committee tremendously.

MR. HENRY F. ROOD: One point that has not been mentioned is the use of outside speakers. On several occasions we have had some very effective speakers on economics, and I think this has added a great deal to our meetings. Perhaps we should do more with this.

MR. HOWARD H. HENNINGTON: I would like to indorse the suggestion that meetings be divided by subject matter rather than by region. This would make the matter of getting questions answered considerably easier. The other favorable aspect of this would be that the topics could be made quite restrictive and they could be explored in greater depth than is possible under the present format.

CHAIRMAN SHEPHERD: The latter part of this morning will be devoted to topics of current interest. Unfortunately, we must wait until shortly before the meeting before the decision is made of what topics are of the most interest. This, of course, makes it difficult for the membership to be informed of the subject matter to be discussed. Are there any suggestions about better ways of notifying members of what topics are going to be discussed but at the same time retain the advantages of keeping these topics on a very current basis?

MR. ROBERT E. SHALEN: You could hand out a notice at registration time.

MR. HENRY F. ROOD: Couldn't you publish a notice of these topics in one of the periodicals?

MR. PETER R. WILDE: I think the character of the Society is changing. I think a lot of fellows like me are here to learn from some of the older

more experienced men. Frankly, I have been disappointed over the last five years at the lack of real good meat from some of the larger companies. I think this goes for my company as well as others. I feel that the larger companies have a special obligation to get up and talk before the group in order to help the younger members.

MR. W. DONALD PATTERSON: I think that we should be sure that every part of the educational program for actuarial students is covered in routine fashion on the various Society programs. I also believe that each member has a responsibility to submit topics for discussion. Certainly this is more helpful to the Program Committee and would assure a selection of items for discussion that are of interest to the members. It would be helpful if we had some guidance on the various legal problems that we must be aware of in selecting topics for discussion.

MR. JOHN H. MILLER: I would like to suggest to those who participate that they distinguish between communications which can be made more effective orally and those which can be made more effective visually. In the latter case, it is more feasible to leave copies of a table or a chart at a desk rather than taking time to read off figures or to try to describe verbally that which can be more easily presented visually. I would also like to agree with the suggestion regarding the use of a combination of panel discussion and questions to the panel from the audience. I think this could provide a most interesting format.

MR. LOUIS LEVINSON: I think one of the penalties of becoming as large as we are now is the lack of informality. At several meetings in the past we have used the technique of having portable microphones in the audience so that ideas could be expressed or questions asked without the formality of walking up to the stage.

MR. MORTIMER SPIEGELMAN: The requirement that authors prepare papers in advance which have to be accepted by a committee is rather stringent. Some other associations that I am connected with have people contribute their papers to the Program Committee. If the Program Committee thinks the paper is of interest, they put it on the program, and after discussion the paper is judged whether it should be accepted for publication. This has the advantage of having the author get ideas from other people in the audience of what he might do to increase the value of the paper.

MR. WILLIAM H. CROSSON III: First, I think that there should be an opportunity to submit discussions more than two or three weeks after

the formal papers are first presented. Some discussions require a substantial amount of time for preparation, and some papers require a substantial amount of time and effort in order to be completely understood. Also, I believe the rules for discussion should permit extemporaneous discussion of a paper when that seems appropriate.

I would like to suggest that the lead-off speakers for various discussions be drawn from a broader group of our members.

MR. STANLEY L. OLDS: I think a combination of several ideas that have been discussed here today would be very appropriate. It would be helpful if we could have a panel discussion with two, three, or four participants and then provide an opportunity for some give-and-take from the floor. I also would like to see the Society prepare an advance registration list by companies.

MR. VICTOR B. GLUNTS: I am reminded that other organizations sometimes use the technique of having members in the audience write questions on cards which are delivered to the chairman of the session. After the lead-off speaker's discussion is finished, the chairman then addresses these questions to the lead-off speaker or to other people in the audience who are competent to answer them.

Denver Regional Meeting

MR. WILLIAM F. MARPLES: I would like to comment on the number of overlapping subjects which were presented in yesterday's simultaneous sessions. If something could be done to prevent this overlapping so that each of us could listen to the discussions that interest us more, it would be most helpful. I realize this is a difficult proposition but perhaps it just needs an application of Bayesian statistics.

I would also like to question why we need to produce three copies of our full remarks if only the summary is reported in the *Transactions*.

Next I would like to seek some information with regard to the topics of current interest. I hope we have an opportunity to discuss the recent reports of Presidential Committees on the social security system and on pension programs, and that the Society will address itself to these situations and make it known that, as a body, we should be consulted in this matter.

MR. BRUCE E. SHEPHERD: Thank you. First I want to comment that during the latter part of this program you will hear a report from John Miller, in which he will briefly discuss the question of whether the Society should go along with or take a position in respect to the presi-

dential report on pensions. Your comments about the nonuse of the full discussion is being noted by a representative of the editor.

MR. VICTOR B. GLUNTS: I have had the pleasure of working on the Committee on Reporting Meetings of the Society. It has the responsibility to get something into the press which is timely and of interest. I would like to thank the other members of this Committee who have been working with me for all the help that they have given. Referring to doubts raised by the previous speaker, I feel compelled to point out that one of the important reasons for turning in copies of the complete discussion is to render help to the Press Committee. The other two copies are used by the editor and the other people working behind the scenes, and I am sure that they, too, have a very good reason for this requirement. Additionally, any individual member can obtain a copy of the complete discussion by signing a request card at the registration desk; many members avail themselves of this opportunity.

MR. GARNETT E. CANNON: I would like to speak in favor of having three regional meetings in order to break the Society membership into small enough groups—at least on the West Coast—so that we can retain some of the informality that was characteristic of our meetings years ago. This certainly should be our objective.

MR. GILBERT A. HEUN: Perhaps a solution to the questions regarding submission of remarks and overlapping of topics would be to have a full text of all remarks available at the desk for the benefit of the members who cannot attend a particular session. They then could review this material and ask for a copy if they are interested.

MR. HARRY M. SARASON: The whole purpose of these meetings is to exchange information. Education broadens one. My first experience in running an actuarial meeting was as program chairman of the Actuarial Club of Los Angeles. I made the mistake of having too much material on the program. Certainly the function of a chairman is to plan ahead and to control the time. Also, if the chairman can give several especially competent members advance notice so that they will be prepared to talk on a general topic when and if spontaneous discussion lags, this, of course, simplifies the chairman's job. Those selected members must be prepared to talk *only to supplement spontaneous discussion*. I think the thing that is most needed in this organization is a broadening of our outlook in these programs. I believe we should continue some of the innovations introduced in the past. For instance the panel on cancer and smoking was very

good even though it was not strictly an actuarial topic. Other possibilities that occur to me would be panel discussions on economics, political science, or agency work. I think if we included some of the younger actuaries on our program committee we might develop some especially good programs for younger actuaries.

MR. STUART A. ROBERTSON: I would like to express appreciation to the Board for the recent trend toward Western regional spring meetings. I believe the first such meeting of the Society was held in Denver in 1951. In recent years they have been held quite regularly in San Francisco, Portland, and Los Angeles. I think these Western regional meetings are especially good and should be continued.

MR. CARL E. HERFURTH: I would like to compliment the officers and members of the Society that have conducted this meeting and have done so for other meetings in the past. They have done a fine job, and I think we can all be thankful and grateful for their efforts and for their successes.

MR. EDWARD A. GREEN: I have the feeling the informal discussions, both before the whole meeting and at the simultaneous sessions, have a high potential value to the membership but that presently this potential is not being fully realized. This may be partly due to the way the discussions are conducted and partly to the text of questions used. If the moderator were prepared to draw out discussion as our today's chairman has done rather than simply preside, it might spark more spontaneity. If there is more than one subject at a session, maybe there should be a presiding officer for the whole session but with a moderator who had specially prepared himself for the task for each subject. Perhaps the moderator, himself, could present the opening discussion. If there are other invited opening speakers, they might be asked to limit the time of their discussion and to design their discussion to pave the way for additional discussions rather than constitute an exhaustive treatise.

A corollary to this type of program might be the use of fewer questions and broader questions. When a question is broken down into subheadings of subheadings, it may become too circumscribed to stimulate the imagination of a possible discussor whether he is speaking spontaneously or from a prepared text.

MR. J. DARRISON SILLESKY: I want to talk about the way discussion groups are run. At present the chairman of an informal discussion session asks one or two opening speakers to prepare themselves to give an exhaustive discussion of the topics. For the most part this leaves the

rest of us unable to come to a meeting prepared in advance to contribute to the discussion of the topics. I would like to see a single person appointed to lead the discussion for each question. This individual then could bone up on the ins and outs of this particular topic and what is going on among the various companies. He might or might not discuss the question to start it off. He would, however, be prepared to toss out some direct questions on detail or do some needling to get discussion started and keep it rolling. If he asked anyone to be an opening speaker, it would be with instructions to try to be provocative and get the ball rolling rather than to cover the entire topic.

CHAIRMAN SHEPHERD: Thank you. Our Program Committee is seriously considering using a technique somewhat along those lines at its fall meeting. Tentatively, we have decided to use a panel of two persons plus a moderator, who would lead the discussion and could direct the type of discussion suggested.

MR. LOUIS GARFIN: We at the Actuarial Club of the Pacific States have a big advantage in that everyone comes to our meetings with the feeling that the discussion will be most informal and, in many cases, impromptu. I should also note that we have one feature which may be difficult to duplicate in the Society in that we make no record of the discussions, which leads to complete frankness.

MR. DANIEL F. MCGINN: One of the things that really impressed me at the New York meeting was while attending one of the simultaneous discussion sessions, I asked a whole string of provocative questions; the moderator said, "Thank you, very much," and the program proceeded as if no questions had been asked. I think this points up the real problem with these meetings, which is that the atmosphere is just too formal and that there isn't a willingness to develop information through the question-and-answer technique. I think one of the advantages to the meetings of the Actuarial Club of the Pacific States is that the program chairman, through his advance letters, has a pretty good idea who is coming and will be prepared to talk on each subject.

MR. ROBERT F. DAVIS: Possibly one solution to the problem Mr. McGinn describes would be to have a one- or two-sentence description of each member's primary responsibility in the *Year Book*.

MR. GEORGE H. DAVIS: It might be possible to list their area of specialty along with their name in the *Year Book*. For many years, in the

Life Insurance Association of America we have had our company membership classified according to their responsibilities, which considerably simplifies the matter of picking committee members or persons interested in a particular field.

MR. ROBERT F. DAVIS: Why would it not be possible to have the members indicate their specialties on the advance registration forms? I think this would be helpful to the chairman of a particular session.

MR. HARLOW B. STALEY: I know of one organization that keeps a listing of the topics their members are likely to be interested in. This would not necessarily tie into their job responsibility, so all argument over that problem is avoided.

MR. LAWRENCE MITCHELL: It might be possible to have the member indicate on his registration form that he is willing to talk on a certain topic. This should be of help to the program chairman.

MR. ROBERT F. DAVIS: I would like to comment on something further. You worry so much about planning. The more carefully planned the meeting, the more formal it is going to be.

MR. E. FORREST ESTES: I have had considerable personal experience in planning programs. One useful technique was to send a postcard to those members who normally attended a particular meeting and to ask them if they were willing to assist in the discussion of various areas and, if so, to indicate it on a return postcard. This preparatory work was done considerably in advance of a particular meeting and did have the advantage of having these persons who attend the meeting having responses which were well thought out and had quite a lot of meat to them.

MR. WILLIAM B. DANDY: It might be well to consider having discussions on technical nonactuarial subjects on the last afternoon of the Society meeting.

MR. NEAL A. FARMER: Since an actuary has to cover quite a bit of ground, I feel that we should have discussions on some of the nonactuarial fringe areas, such as law, accounting, and investments. I think it would be of interest to us younger members and it would be a very direct aid, especially where you "double in brass" by covering quite a wide range of responsibilities.

MR. CHANDLER L. McKELVEY: The area that Mr. Farmer suggests is an area where maybe the local clubs are ahead of the Society. The local

clubs I have been associated with build their programs almost exclusively in this area and have been successful with this concept.

MR. EUGENE H. NEUSCHWANDER: I agree that this idea of broadening our program by introducing other topics of discussion would be of considerable advantage. Anyone who follows current medical research trends becomes aware that these research workers anticipate, within the next decade, a break-through in either cancer or heart trouble or possibly both, and when this arrives, it may, almost overnight, add up to ten years to the future life expectancy of our older citizens. Consider the effect of this on the large trusteed retirement plans. Improved medical procedures also raise questions with regard to long-term disability coverage. Many disabilities which previously were short term-terminal cases are now prolonged for extended periods with some recoveries. Conversely, many disabilities which previously were long term are now cured rather quickly. How does the medical profession appraise the composite effect of this both now and projected into the future? Any discussion of this type before the Society would be most appropriate.

MR. CANNON: I believe there is one other area where we could make our meetings more generalized; that is, the topics could vary from regional meeting to regional meeting. For example, a discussion of New York Section 213 on expenses might be very interesting to the New Yorkers at the New York regional meeting but would be most uninteresting at the Denver meeting.

CHAIRMAN SHEPHERD: I would like to bring this discussion to a close by asking for a show of hands on the idea I outlined for the fall meeting in Montreal, whereby the simultaneous sessions would be led off by a moderator and a two-panel team. Do you like that idea? (A show of hands indicated that the members were generally receptive to this concept.)

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