
Executive Director's Annual Report—1979–80

In assessing the significance of the Society's activities during Fiscal Year 1979–80, the best approach is probably to view them from the standpoint of conditions as they existed essentially two years ago. In effect then, this is a biennial report.

When the National Office was established in Reston, Virginia, in June, 1978, it was faced with the following problems:

- A membership records system that was cumbersome, inaccurate, and incomplete
- Financial records that were unauditible
- A checking account balance (\$8,000) that was pathetically incapable of meeting obligations
- Excessive operating expenses
- A Journal whose production schedule was wildly unpredictable
- Non-compliance with Internal Revenue Service reporting requirements
- A continuing education program whose logistical planning was six months late
- The absence of any clear-cut goals and objectives, or a sense of the general direction to which the Society should be gravitating
- An inadequate approach to planning, budgeting, and control
- A general malaise enveloping the Board of Directors that tended to influence them to operate in a defensive mode and to be less-than-bold in their planning and decision-making

Still other problems could be cited but the ones above are sufficient to convey to you how gloomy the picture really was.

In contrast to the dark days of 1978, I am pleased to report to you that major progress has been made:

- The membership records system is now in sound condition, with still other improvements planned during the next fiscal year
- The accounting system has been completely revised
- The most recent audit report prepared by an outside public accounting firm has given the financial statements and records an unqualified clean bill of health
- The cash balances are now well in excess of \$100,000

- The current obligations are minimal and all vendors are being paid on time
- Many areas of operating expense have been reduced
- The Journal and the Newsletter are being produced more frequently, on schedule, and are generating significant profits
- The national organization has made all required IRS filings; the regions will also have made them in the near future
- A corporate sponsor program was launched and has been highly successful in obtaining donations to support the Society's professional activities
- The Continuing Education Committee has pioneered the development of a dramatic new program that will be introduced in the near future, and which has been made possible because of the corporate sponsor support
- Development of the current budget was preceded by an extensive review of goals, objectives, and programs
- The Board of Directors is operating in a more positive and mature fashion, addressing issues of substance rather than insignificant items

As I see it, in a two-year period the Society has evolved from a situation that was largely amateurish and ineffective by practically any standard one would care to apply, to an operation that is now financially and administratively sound. In short, there is a solid foundation to support whatever future course of action the Society sees as its destiny.

Against the backdrop of this happy report, however, there are other problems that require resolution. Listed in no particular order of importance, the ones that concern me the most are as follows:

- *Representation.* In my opinion there are too many regions, and there is disproportionate representation of them on the Board of Directors. Several regions with a nominal number of members have the same voting power as other regions with a significantly larger number.
- *Board of Directors Operation.* To be effective the Board should meet at least three times a year. The financial support to do this is not adequate, and

the cost is aggravated by the inordinate size of the Board.

- *Region Fiscal Responsibility.* Available evidence now clearly indicates that fiscal control in the regions is worse than was ever the case with the National Office.
- *Lack of Growth.* The number of Active members is on a plateau and has been for several years.
- *Region and Local Programs.* The quantity and quality of region professional programs varies markedly. There are also only a few chapters located in major cities, hardly sufficient to generate grass roots interest in the Society.
- *Relations With the American Board of Cardiovascular Perfusion.* As is common knowledge, the relationship with ABCP is a troubled one, and is a source of concern to AmSECT members specifically and the medical community generally; I am, however, optimistic that situation will improve in the coming months.

In contrast to the problems of the last two years, now largely eliminated, the ones facing us now are more complex and less susceptible to easy solutions. In my opinion, these are the issues that the new officers and Board members must come to terms with as the next obvious phase of overall organizational improvement.

Although I have served as your Executive Director for only two years, and hence am still very much a novice, even this brief exposure has been sufficient to persuade me that the Society has not yet formulated a clear vision of what it wants to be, or perhaps more to the point, what it wants perfusion to be. In this regard I believe I detect a variety of perceptions, many of which conflict with each other, and none of which has a large enough acceptance to represent a consensus. For example, there is one school of thought that visualizes the perfusionist as a highly skilled member of the allied health family, and accordingly their ambition is to pursue those activities that are harmonious with this self image and which will contribute to its enhancement; professional independence and relative autonomy are an integral aspect of this point of view.

A second school of thought appears to be that per-

fusionists have allowed themselves to be regarded and dealt with only as technicians, virtually tradesmen if you will, and therefore AmSECT's future direction should treat this as a reality and not extend beyond rigidly prescribed boundaries of influence and assertiveness.

A third school of thought seems to be both indifferent and disinterested in the concerns and attitudes of the other two groups. It is perhaps fair to say that they are mainly preoccupied with how to be a good perfusionist and, consistent with this thought, will be well satisfied with AmSECT if opportunities are provided to keep current with the state-of-the-art and to share experiences with colleagues.

Undoubtedly there are still other schools of thought that are subscribed to by some of our members. The important issue, however, is whether the Society, as it plans its policies and programs, is capable of responding to all divergent philosophies.

My own intuition is that a process of harmonization must occur sooner or later. It is also my belief that if it occurs it will be because some individual with outstanding leadership characteristics comes to the front to bring it about.

If I may conclude on a somber and cautionary note, I am concerned about the next ten years for AmSECT and organizations like it. We are now beginning to see the genesis of a notion that annual conferences like this may become a thing of the past. There are two factors on the horizon that may cause this to happen. The first may be the inability of industry to provide a sufficient amount of financial support because of deteriorating economic conditions. The second may be an energy shortage of such dimensions that we cannot begin to comprehend in 1980. If these developments come to pass, it is clear that the AmSECT of the future will be a different entity from that which exists today. Being able to adapt to changing circumstances means that we must have high quality planning and management.

I once heard a statement of worldly philosophy that goes something like this: "Where we're going to be tomorrow is not where we are today, but thank the Lord, where we are today is not where we were yesterday". This simple thought expresses my own idea about AmSECT's past, present, and future.