president's page

The organization and you

This is a turbulent period in our nation's history. Feelings of distrust for established authority and of individual helplessness in coping with the powerful forces which shape our society are among the factors contributing to the present unrest. As an outgrowth of these feelings, we are witnessing a variety of movements aimed at encouraging more direct citizen involvement in the political process. Although these movements often generate conflict, their long term effect will almost certainly be beneficial, for they provide the means of infusing new energies and new ideas into our national life.

Just as citizen involvement is a source of strength to the nation, so the active participation of the individual member in the affairs of the American Meteorological Society is essential to its long term health and effectiveness. Today more than ever there is the need for participation. This is a period when science and technology are becoming increasingly involved in matters of social concern. In the formulation of public policy the widest possible spectrum of opinion should be heard.

What must the individual member do to have an impact in the affairs of the Society? I would suggest that there are three steps he must take. First, he must know the workings of the organization. Second, he must be informed of the issues confronting it. Third, he must choose the mode of participation suited to his interests and become actively involved. What does the Society provide to assist the individual in his quest for a more active role in its affairs? Let us consider this question point-by-point.

First, to aid him in becoming familiar with its operations, the Society publishes annually this Organization Issue. Here he will find the governing rules—the Constitution and By-Laws—and the current organizational structure and procedures. He will find listed the commission, boards, and committees which carry on the activities of the Society and the members of these bodies. He will find reference to the policy statements of the AMS and information on programs, such as the Certification Program for Consulting Meteorologists and the Seal of Approval Program for Radio and Television Weathercasting. The Organization Issue serves as a valuable starting point for effective involvement in Society affairs.

Second, to keep him informed of the important issues which confront it, the Society provides a number of features in its BULLETIN: meteorological articles which relate to matters of general interest or public concern; statements prepared by the scientific and tech-

nological committees, by the Committee on Public Policy, or by the Boards and Commissions; minutes of the meetings of the Council; and the Correspondence and Letters to Editor sections.

Third, the Society provides numerous ways for the member to become active and to make his voice heard. It operates working committees which look after scientific and technological matters and prepare policy statements in these areas. It arranges sessions and panel discussions at meetings and conferences on subjects of current interest. It sponsors local chapters which offer means of becoming involved with atmospheric and environmental problems at the local level. Through the Letters to Editor section of the BULLETIN, it provides a forum for individual views on subjects related to the atmospheric and environmental sciences. And last, but not least, it confers the voting privilege through which the member is able to select those who will represent his interests on the Council.

From the foregoing it is evident that the Society provides numerous mechanisms for effective member participation. A final question that may be asked is: Are these mechanisms working as well as they might? In general, I believe they are, but I would like to call attention to two areas in which I think that improvement is possible. The first concerns the Council, our policy making body. As the Society has grown larger and more complex, it has been necessary, in the interests of efficient management, to entrust the responsibility for overseeing its continuing business to an Executive Committee composed of an inner core of the Council. This Committee meets with sufficient regularity to keep informed of the main issues facing the Society and to offer steady guidance. The full Council on the other hand now meets only twice yearly and much of its time at these meetings must be spent in becoming familiar with the issues and in approving or disapproving the many routine matters that have accumulated since the previous meeting. Little time is left for innovative thinking or formulation of broad policy. Yet as the directly elected representatives of the members, the Councilors should exert an active leadership role. It has been recognized for some time that measures are needed to increase the effectiveness of the Council. Ways must be found to bring this about.

Another area where I see the opportunity for improved member participation is through more effective use of the Letters to Editor section of the BULLETIN. This feature was inaugurated in the December 1969 issue as

a means of obtaining unsolicited comments from the members of the Society concerning problems of interest to the atmospheric sciences. I had always supposed that it would serve the same purpose for the atmospheric and related environmental sciences that the popular Letters section of *Science* serves for the scientific community at large. But the feature has attracted little use despite the many important public issues which face our science—such issues as air quality, weather modification, funding priorities and the like. Although it may

be unwise for the Society as a whole to take positions on social and political issues, there is no reason why individual members cannot make their views known if it is done in a responsible manner.

I hope our society will always be afforded the invigoration that comes from an active and concerned membership. This article is entitled "The Organization and You." Perhaps it would have been better to call it: "The Organization *is* You."

RICHARD J. REED, *President*