

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

My address deals with administration, no doubt a dull-sounding subject but an ever-present and vexing one to Council.

In its report to the membership in May 1969, the Review Committee stated that 'there always comes a time in the growth of every organization staffed by honorary officers when the volunteer system breaks down, due to the sheer volume of work'. It is no reflection on previous officers that that stage has been reached. The answer lay in streamlining procedures and obtaining the services of a clerk-typist who could handle routine work and thus free Councillors to deal with matters of policy and planning.

Since the Review Committee report was accepted at the Extraordinary General Meeting on 21 June 1969, it has been possible to keep on top of the work-load, extremely heavy in a widespread organization that relies on correspondence to keep in touch with its representatives and membership.

But we still do not have paid clerical assistance. The Union has been fortunate so far in having officers dedicated to their work. The Treasurer uses his own office staff for two to three hours daily on Union affairs. The Secretary devotes most evenings and weekends to his duties and ornithology is simply a word to him, no longer a field activity. The register of members and printing of envelopes are now being handled by Mrs F. Vasey assisted by her husband and we are fortunate that there are others willing to carry out duties delegated to them.

Because the work-load is too much for a Secretary in full-time employment, I type and despatch all my own correspondence, simply making corrections as I go along through lack of time to make adequate drafts. As an indication of the volume of work, from the time I took office in May 1972 until the end of the year, and excluding mail which I answered during a twelve-week holiday, I sent out 400 letters, many of which extended to three or four pages.

Obviously this position cannot continue because there will not be a continuing flow of members willing and able to undertake the burdens associated with office in the Union.

The reason for the lack of paid staff is simply lack of finance. Had the XVI International Ornithological Congress not been arranged for Australia in 1974, then the Finance Advisory Committee would have solved this problem by now. As it is, their energy is concentrated in that direction for the present.

All this may seem defeatist and pessimistic, but I do not believe that the position is without hope. We have approached the Federal Government to claim tax deductibility both for donations and for subscriptions because we believe this to be our due as a scientific society. We have also approached the Victorian Government for assistance for the headquarters of the Union and perhaps

later we may approach other State governments. We believe that we can be of assistance to both State and Federal governments when projects are being planned involving the avifauna, but for greater efficiency the necessary, but routine, work of the Union should be taken from the shoulders of its officers.

Though most fields of science are now pursued by professionals only, ornithology has always been traditionally the discipline where professional and amateur can meet on equal terms. Both have much to offer but only an efficiently run organization can provide this mutual benefit.

This then is the position. Either we can continue as we are, wearing out our officers; producing a slim EMU and rejecting overseas material dealing with the Australasian region; and trying to carry out Field Investigation Committee projects on the cheap. Or we can take our rightful place and lead Australasian ornithology; publishing all relevant material without delay; providing sound and well-presented information leading to conservation; and expanding the Field Investigation Committee projects without constant exhortations to keep expenses to a minimum.

I believe I speak wholeheartedly for my colleagues in Melbourne when I say that if any group of members interstate is willing to form a quorum of five capable of carrying on the duties of Council, then we would happily encourage them to do so. In the past it has been stated that headquarters of the Union must be in Melbourne because the H. L. White bequest would be lost if the Council moved interstate. This is not so. The bequest provided for a meeting place in Melbourne. There is no reason why this should not remain as it is at present, also continuing to house the library. Should it be considered desirable to move the headquarters entirely from Melbourne, then we may lose the bequest and income therefrom, approximately \$120 per year.

You will see by the balance sheet that we are just able to get by on the subscriptions and the income from our trust funds. I believe those who are seriously interested in ornithology will benefit by membership of the Union and encouragement by individual members for them to do so will thus benefit the Union. Building up our trust funds by bequests and donations will ensure an expanding and continuing income, particularly if we are granted tax deductibility. Thus we should be able to overcome our financial problems.

I believe we need to stimulate an awareness of the capabilities of the Union, producing sound scientific knowledge on which good popular writing may be based. I hope we are proud to belong to the Union as it is now. I hope that in the future we shall be even more proud of its achievements.

Pauline Reilly,  
President.