

## EDITORIAL APOLOGIA

THE first eight volumes of *J.S.S.* which are completed with this number form a rich soil for the student of recent actuarial history. From the first number (1911), where it is stated that 'the aim of the Society is not only to assist its members to prepare for the Examinations of the parent Institute, but also to equip them with the practical knowledge which is so essential to the Actuary of to-day' to the Report for the 1945-46 session, where a deliberate extension of the range of subjects for discussion is justified on the ground that 'matters affecting Students in their preparation for the examinations were now adequately covered in all respects by the Actuarial Tuition Service', there is a whole record of gradual change toward making the Society perform the functions of an extra-curricular University. Our intention is not to review this history but is far more modest. It is to show how, and explain why, editorial policy has changed with the publication of a volume every session instead of every five or six years. The following analysis of the pages of *J.S.S.* is a first step in this direction:

### *Analysis of J.S.S. pages\**

	Number of volume, sessions covered, and ordinary meetings held							
	I five 68	II five 48	III six 60	IV five 55	V five 38	VI two 16	VII one 6	VIII one 9
Reports of ordinary meetings (no. of meetings in parentheses)	162 (20)	231 (19)	296 (25)	212 (16)	123 (9)	89 (6)	46 (2)	82 (5)
Contributions	52	55	6	49	48	65	171	125
Reviews	—	1	—	—	—	19	20	12
Correspondence	3	—	—	—	—	6	11	4
Notes and Queries	—	—	—	—	—	11	9	2
Annual reports, accounts, lists of members, etc.	70†	34	45	61	55	2	4	10
Editorials	8	6	—	—	—	—	—	2
	295	327	347	322	226	192	261	237

\* Other than index and contents pages.

† Includes 18 pages of suggested courses of reading for the examinations.

The significant feature of the last three volumes is that reports of sessional meetings—and although the number of meetings per session has decreased, between 40 and 50 pages of such reports are still published each year—form a diminishing proportion of the published material in the *Journal*. The bulk of our pages is nowadays occupied by original contributions, reviews and notes and queries, sometimes contributed by authorities outside this Society, but the greater proportion deriving from our own members some of whom were unqualified professionally when their articles reached the present Editor.

Although, as befits their character, sessional meetings of the Society continue to relate to practical actuarial matters, the original contributions published in this *Journal* are preponderantly mathematical. This must be disappointing to that large proportion of our 830 members who look to this periodical for relatively light reading on professional subjects. With due diffidence we would remind such readers that much of the practical progress in actuarial technique, for example in valuation methods, in analysis of surplus, in forecasting mortality, etc., has been based on ideas that are best expressed mathematically; that an ever-rising standard of mathematics is required of all science students to-day; and that it is only in the mathematical field that the younger, inexperienced actuary can be expected to make a contribution.

In fact, we think it is one of the most important functions of this *Journal* to encourage and facilitate the publication of articles and notes written by members with no previous publication to their credit. Even though the results may not appeal to our numerous 'practical' members, we believe that the wiser among them will agree that such articles contribute to the future of the profession. We remark that scientific advances must come from the few and those few should be encouraged not only by their seniors whose standards are high but by their peers who should be more ready to recognize and assist in overcoming the difficulties of a first publication. Who but the editor of *J.S.S.* should be expected to undertake the wholesale mutilation, correction and revision of an article from a partly qualified man who has the germ of an idea without the experience to develop it or write it up in a form acceptable to a circle of informed readers!

Whilst, therefore, we accept the criticism that there has been a 'high-brow drift' of the Society, we have not been able to bring ourselves to reject an original contribution just because the advance it makes lies in the mathematics of actuarial science and is of interest only to a small minority of our membership. If the result of the contraction in *J.S.S.* which is inevitable in view of the cost of paper and printing in relation to the available funds, is such that notes, many of them making but a single contribution to the accumulated mass of actuarial knowledge, will never see publication we believe that the Society and the Institute itself will one day have this for regret. The present Editor may have pursued a policy of solicitation and encouragement of authors which has strained the resources of the Society but we claim that the interest in research thus cultivated among some of our members cannot fail to be of eventual advantage to our profession.

We cannot end this tenure of office without thanking our many friends who have so kindly contributed their time and knowledge to ensure that material published in this *Journal* should be neither incorrect nor unoriginal. Among these we owe a very special debt to Dr S. Vajda whose instinctive appreciation of valid contributions to actuarial mathematics has relieved the present Editor of much responsibility.