

1986 COMMENTS

As each President adds his contribution to this growing record of the Presidential experience, it becomes each year less likely that there will be a totally original contribution. Nevertheless, each year is different, particularly in the changing emphasis on individual components of the experience. I found the record an invaluable guide in preparing for a full and enjoyable year, and would commend it to future Presidents.

The comments which follow are observations based on my own year, which I trust will be helpful. There have been observations in the past on the need for fostering the Groups, and for stressing the unity of Melbourne Legacy, both in its Groups and Branches. My own observation was that Groups appear to be in good shape; their methods may not always be Melbourne Central's methods, but their commitment and enthusiasm are very good. It was my impression, however, (and I hope I am wrong) that a proportion of the Legatees in the suburban Branches often lacked that same interest and commitment. Perhaps a programme of more frequent attention to Branches by attendance of President's Deputy or Vice-Presidents might be valuable in maintaining a Legacy outlook. The combined meeting of Groups and Branches, planned in 1986 and held early in 1987, should help - but the attendance of Branch Legatees was a little disappointing.

The President's duties at Legatee's funerals has been mentioned by my predecessors, and the special problems have been referred to. The concept of having the address delivered by a Legatee who was close to the deceased and his family is attractive. However I found on two occasions that the family wished the President to give the address, and would have regarded any other course as discourteous - and of course the family's feelings must be paramount.

Comradeship is vital to Legacy, but attendance at Legacy's formal and comradeship functions is slowly declining, due to age, the problems of travel, and the cost of such functions. Most Legatees are now retired, and incomes do not always keep pace with inflation. Functions can be more modest without detracting from their dignity. Some Groups and Branches have moved in this direction with good results. I believe we should encourage such moves, with the aim of involving Legatees beyond the ranks of the regular participants.

On a similar theme, I think that Legatee Carter's comments in 1978 regarding "horses for courses" are even more relevant today. As we age, all Legatees have a differing perception of

their ability to continue contributing to our work. If we do not find flexible ways of using the skills available to us, Legacy will lose in numbers and in invaluable experience.

Past Presidents speak of their presidential year as a rewarding and heart-warming experience. This may sound like a cliché, but it is far from that. The warm and unstinting support of Legatees and staff, and a realisation of the esteem with which Legacy is regarded in the community, make one's presidential year a unique experience, an honour and a privilege.

My congratulations and good wishes to those who follow.

R. G. Richards

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