

MELBOURNE LEGACY

COMMENTS ON PRESIDENTIAL YEAR - 1991

It was my honour to have occupied the position of President - albeit the eldest ever to have done so - in a very significant year in Legacy's history when, in various parts of Australia, the movement began to feel the real impact of ageing Legatees and a decreasingly active work force - culminating in a decision by Clubs at the 1991 Annual Conference in Perth to set up a special Committee to examine the Code of Legacy.

Particular attention was to be given by this Committee to Clause 4 of the Code dealing with qualifications for membership to consider whether some widening of qualifying requirements was felt to be proper in the changing circumstances. With the average age of World War 11 Legatees now approximately 72 and with an insufficient number of Post World War 11 ex-servicemen coming forward to counter the losses of older Legatees through death and ill-health, the years leading up to the turn of the century will be crucial ones for the Legacy organisation. It will be most interesting to see what Legacy nationally will decide to do in the future to enable it to meet its confirmed aim of 'finishing the task'.

Meanwhile, it was very pleasing to see the Melbourne Legacy Support Group, composed mainly of former Junior Legatees, growing gradually in strength. 1991 proved very eventful. For one thing, Melbourne made a full investigation into the practicability of computerising records in the pensions and welfare areas and resolved that such a project be proceeded with. It is hoped that, later, it will be possible to extend computerisation to cover other Legacy processes with appropriate costing and efficiency benefits. This was progressive thinking.

Melbourne Legacy also examined its policy in relation to acquisition of hostel and nursing home beds for widows and decided that, in view of the capital cost involved coupled with the uncertainty of the effects of the Federal Government's aged-care policy, no additional beds would be sought in the future.

A further enterprising move was the initiation of a survey with the aim of developing a strategy concerning the future care of our handicapped dependants who are growing in number. This is a very difficult area.

Another important event was the carrying out of an extensive refurbishment programme at Legacy House. Although an expensive undertaking, the work was essential from a building maintenance point of view and in relation also to the provision of an adequate standard of accommodation for staff.

In the interests of improving the communication process, an invitation was extended to Branch Chairmen and Group Presidents to attend meetings of the Board of Management during the year and it was gratifying that many of them availed themselves of this opportunity.

A number of Presidents have drawn attention to the desirability of having a substantial degree of continuity in membership of the Board of Management from year to year. I would agree with this contention and I believe that arrangements should be so made as to facilitate not less than, say, 50% of Board members having at least two continuous years in office. There has also been a suggestion of a 2-year term for the President but I am firmly of the opinion that if the President carries out a strong programme of personal representation of Legacy during his year - as I believe should happen - one year is taxing enough.

Legacy funerals appear to have presented problems in some years. I took the view that the President should endeavour to be present at as many funerals as convenient and conduct the whole service, including delivery of eulogy, at each one attended. No real difficulties were encountered.

Only one hiccup. There was an unfortunate tendency during the year for some Legatees to address letters on various aspects of Legacy administration personally to the President. While I suppose this could be termed democratic I consider this correspondence should have been directed to the Members' Representative on the Board.

Overall, the whole year was a most satisfying and rewarding experience made possible by the loyalty of Legatees generally and strong support from a very capable Executive Officer and an enthusiastic and helpful staff.



PRESIDENT 1991