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### PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

The Constitutional changes affecting the definition of the Association's National Branches, and the introduction of a new category of "Affiliated Organization", were among the most important developments that took place during the recent Washington Conference.

When IASA was formed in 1969, our founding fathers wrote into the original Constitution "Members of the Association in any country may be constituted a National Branch of the Association with the approval of the Executive Board." This minimal statement provided the very bare basis for their establishment and development until 1983. Under the original arrangements all the branches, in theory at least, were formally integrated within the international body and nominally subordinate to it. This situation, it should be said, was not to the taste of all the branches and occasional tensions arose in consequence. Before 1983 the Constitutional arrangements which existed for the government of IASA did not, however, allow any alternative relationship between national groups and the international body.

Today, as a result of amendments that were carried by a large majority at the Washington General Assembly, we have a new arrangement. It is still possible to become or remain a National Branch but now there also exists the opportunity to affiliate, as opposed to integrate, with IASA. The nature of this choice is well described in the preamble to the amendments which Rolf Schuurisma prepared on the Executive Board's behalf: "Applicants should provide a statement about their wishes as regards the character of their relationship with IASA. A wish for a close relationship points to a National. . . Branch. A wish for a loose relationship and a firm priority of national needs may point to an Affiliated Organization." Thus, for the first time, the established National Branches of IASA can decide for themselves what kind of relationship they want to have with the International Association and other sound archive groups that have never been a branch of IASA (and may never wish to be) have an alternative arrangement which they can consider. These changes will certainly make IASA a more flexible organization; they may also provide a means for the Association to represent and serve the international community of sound archives even more comprehensively than it does at the moment.

Although extremely Important in their own right, these developments are also interesting in that they illustrate the way in which an Association like IASA has to adapt and evolve to take into account the changing character or needs of its membership. To national bodies or special interest groups it may sometimes seem that the International Association is unaware of or unresponsive to their legitimate parochial needs and, given the time that it does take for the Association to implement change, their impatience is perfectly understandable. However, bearing in mind that the first National Branch was not formed until 1976 and that, by 1983, only six existed it is not really surprising that it has taken us this time to make clearer and more detailed provisions for them. Clearly branches needed first to exist for a few years, to develop their activities, to evaluate their own needs and to give them expression before the Association could see how to adapt its structure so as best to meet needs that varied and to some extent conflicted.

Adaptations and changes within the Association can be therefore achieved when needs are clearly identified and expressed. The democratization of our election procedures, to allow any member of IASA to stand for a place on the Executive Board (about which I wrote in my column in the last issue of the BULLETIN) is one such example. Another is the wish among members to take this process farther, by introducing a postal ballot for elections, which was expressed at the Budapest conference in 1981, carried by the General Assembly in Washington in 1983 and will be employed for our elections in 1984.

It seems to me that our Association is not unresponsive to need, but that it does have difficulty in reading the collective mind. There is, in other words, a communication problem caused by the fact that

IASA is an international association, that it meets rarely and that its interests are widespread and disparate. It often is hard to tell when an individual criticism represents a collective wish and, without greater and more regular feedback from our members, it is hard to see how this situation can be improved.

Certainly there are problems, the scale and nature of which the Association needs to be able better to monitor. For our French colleagues there is the problem of language in an organization where English has become the predominant means of communication. Is the solution, as was suggested in a recent issue of Sonores, the formation of a Mediterranean grouping of sound archives and-- if so — how then is the principle of internationalism to be maintained let alone developed? For those working in archives of spoken word recordings there is the danger of their professional interests being submerged because a large proportion of our members are mainly concerned with music. Would the needs of these two groups be better met in isolation from each other or can IASA's structure be adapted so as satisfactorily to meet them, or both? Does there continue to be more benefit than restriction for our members by sustaining our traditional relationship with IAML? Certainly our two associations, meeting together at joint conferences, have to make compromises that would not arise if we met separately. There also is the problem of special interest groups. Archive technicians, for example, who feel an understandable need for a greater number of more technically concentrated and sophisticated seminars than can easily be accommodated within an umbrella organization like IASA. Similarly, radio archivists, commercial records librarians and other specialized types of sound archives would prefer greater opportunities to discuss their particular problems.

This list could be greatly expanded, but the point should be clear. The range of interests within IASA is extensive and if the Association cannot effectively monitor and meet significant needs then it is vulnerable to internal conflicts or to splintering into smaller groups. In the after-glow of the highly successful Washington conference I have no serious fears of these developments occurring in the short term. However, I am certain that tensions and new needs will surface in the future. The Association's capacity to evolve and adapt so as to meet them lies at the heart of our prospects for future successful development.

Perhaps by using the columns of the PHONOGRAPHIC BULLETIN the needs, wishes, suggestions, criticisms or complaints of our members can be aired and the feedback I have suggested as presently lacking be regularly provided.

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