

1983 Annual Meeting
San Antonio, TX.

President's Message
by Robert Fleminger

The National Council Annual Meeting is an important function serving all members. It is the one time each year when the top leadership of regional associations convene to set directions and priorities. The National Council could not maintain its representational awareness and effectiveness, were it not for the important direction which flows from the meeting. It also gives delegates from all over the country the opportunity to hear from top SSA leadership and interact with them. This year we were privileged to have Mrs. McSteen address and interact with us.

At the conclusion of the meeting, I set the following goals for the coming year:

1. We will continue to actively carry out our intramanagement communication responsibility. Our relationship with central office is good. However, over the last year, a limited number of procedures and policies were designed without giving us opportunity to comment. Two examples were the 414 procedure and the initial design of the OFO Security Guide. I think our ideas could have added to the effectiveness of the 414 procedure. Since the initial issuance of the draft Security Guide, our ideas have been sought and we believe will make the procedure more acceptable and workable. Of greater concern is OMBP's service delivery study. Our participation and ideas have not been sought on this project which could have heavy impact on the field. The National Council will seek ways to correct what we want to believe are oversights in a democratic decision making process which SSA normally practices.
2. We plan to place continuing focus on the OS job. Two resolutions, one on span of supervision and another on the promotion plan, were passed at the Annual Meeting which give a mandate to the National Council. We also have hired Dr. Miriam Erskowitz, a professional classifier, to look at the field management structure. At our September 14 meeting with central office, OFO agreed to convene an on-going OS advisory work group to meet in Baltimore. The National Council has high interest in the OS and will continue to seek environmental improvements for OS's.
3. The delivery of service and its attending field facility and management structure are of concern. We have been told we have too many facilities and we should have more flexibility to set up management and operative jobs to fit the work to be done. We have also been told that the Grace Report recommendation to reduce facilities to 500 has some validity. I have some real problems with this thinking, since the field structure built up over

the years and classification history have given us a strong and stable field organization. The SIA Standard and standard position descriptions are crucial to a healthy and workable field organization. I believe SSA already has all the flexibility needed to close or open facilities and to put offices where clients live. The National Council has no problem with OMBP's service delivery study as a study. However, we believe the study has some ominous undertones which need to be watched. We plan to monitor this study and make sure field management and historical perspectives are factored in. Jim Hodgson's letter to the editor provides further thoughts on this issue.

4. We are actively supporting SSA's current effort to simplify our procedures and policies. The Operations Committee is already working on ideas for workload simplifications and efficiencies. Mrs. McSteen has made this area one of her priorities and I believe we'll see a real solid effort over the next year to make changes to make work more efficient.
5. Merit Pay goals are still of concern. We have come a long way in Merit Pay planning. However, the Merit Pay plans still too often drive overaggressive statistical achievements, sometimes pushing processing times to unrealistic levels. We still haven't learned to properly blend maintenance levels with the Merit Pay appraisal. While good processing times are important, over-emphasis on them can send inappropriate signals. For example, we are operating with substantially less people than we had three years ago, yet our processing times get better and better. I am sure a case cannot be very well made that we could use more help in the field in the face of our achievements. The breakdown seems to be at the regional level, because central office is not, except in isolated cases, exerting pressure on regional commissioners for better numbers.
6. The National Council will place emphasis on the image of the federal employee. We will aggressively counteract any negative publicity. Currently, we are engaged in a battle of words with the Chamber of Commerce over their use of inappropriate data to support their position that federal employees are overpaid 35.9 percent. We will also support the need for manager and field office staff community involvement. We can do a lot for our image by continuing to get out and mixing in the community. The Management Stature Committee will convene a small workgroup in December and develop an "Image Handbook". The purpose of the booklet will be to publish facts and ideas you can use to help improve the public employee's image. Our relationship with PER will also help in this area and Mrs. McSteen called on us at the Annual Meeting to bring professionalism to our work.

7. A high priority will be our expanding legislative role. Through our association with the Federal Employees Coordinating Committee (FECC), the development of our grassroots writing network and continuing information sharing through Mass Media and other vehicles, I expect us to make a quantum jump in our compensation and fringe benefit advocacy role. The FECC offers an exciting opportunity to have a working lobbyist in Washington D.C. And, all your letter writing which has helped so much over the past year, will continue to be emphasized and will be a crucial part of the whole.

8. Our regional associations are strong and active. In the last year we added 400 new members, bring our total membership to 3900. The 3900 represents 76 percent of potential and is at an all time high. Five regional associations have over 80 percent membership with New England and Chicago CRDMA leading the way with respective figures of 89 and 88 percent. I have asked regional associations to continue active recruitment. I have also encouraged all associations to consider holding Annual Meetings of their own. The six that do, have excellent meetings and I believe the five that don't could benefit by such a meeting. I also have asked all associations to place emphasis on keeping you informed and drawing your ideas. Timely distribution of Mass Media and other printed material to keep you current on national and regional association news is essential. Finally, some associations already have alumni memberships. I believe we need to keep in touch with retired members so I have encouraged all associations to address this need.

This promises to be an active and interesting year. Our historical record as an active association is a good one and the coming year holds promise for many new successes.