

## Over to You

Who owns the International Journal of Leprosy? A brief and accurate answer to that question is “we do” the members of the International Leprosy Association. It may be news for some of us, that our assets consist of thousands of back numbers of the International Journal of Leprosy, many of which are unsaleable and at the beginning of 1978, a debt of \$28,921 (see financial statements 1977). The Journal is “the official organ of the International Leprosy Association”. Its purpose is “to serve as the principle, and truly international medium of publication of worthwhile articles on leprosy” (Int. J. Lepr. 1, (1933), 2).

The International Journal of Leprosy belongs to the members of the International Leprosy Association. Many sponsors support the Journal financially; the Editor and Board of Directors, the Associate Editors and the Contributing Editors, support the Journal through their time and skills. But the Journal will flourish only if its owners, the members of the ILA, really use it for the “publication of worthwhile articles on leprosy”. The editor can only publish articles he receives and if the Journal is “too scientific” or deals too often with laboratory research this could well be because quality manuscripts on field subjects have not been submitted.

The cost of the Journal in its 1st year of publication was U.S. \$5.00 and for this members received volume 1 in four issues with a total of 507 pages on rather ordinary quality paper. By 1978 the purchasing power of the dollar has fallen to approximately 1/6 of what it was in 1933 and members’ dues and subscribers’ payments then as now covered approximately 1/2 the cost of production (see 1977 financial report). A comparison of the International Journal of Leprosy with other specialist Journals of limited circulation shows that the cost of the Journal is comparable to that of our contemporaries. Journal costs cannot be reasonably compared with those of the general medical Journals which circulate in hundreds of thousands of copies whereas we print just over one thousand.

In 1934 the then editor of the International Journal of Leprosy, the late Dr. H. W. Wade, set the intended publication date of the Journal as “the end of each quarter rather than the beginning—March instead of January and so on” (Int. J. Lepr. 2 (1934) 102) and this has been the policy ever since. The process of printing the Journal takes at least 6 to 8 weeks from submission of manuscripts to the printer to publication, for it involves the preparation of 5 proofs for reading and correction. Many of the articles

submitted involve very considerable correspondence with the authors as well as peer review and the approval of the authors of final proofs. All this takes time, sometimes months. (*Int. J. Lep.* 42 (1974) 65). All articles require translated summaries and these can frequently, but not always, be undertaken while the author is reviewing the final version of his text.

However, the future of the *International Journal of Leprosy* will not be decided in terms of costs or of publication dates or of the inevitable time lag between submission of articles and publication or even by the often inordinately long postal delivery times but by the use members of the ILA make of it. Membership in the *International Leprosy Association* has never before been at as high a level as it is now and it is probably also true that more work worth reporting in the pages of the *Journal* is going on now than ever before.

The Board of Directors of the *Journal* has expressed the view that the *Journal* is of value "as forum of international publication, a medium for both binding together and expressing the opinion of the ILA, a continuing link between Congresses, and the spreading of scientific information through a *Journal* of high standards." (minutes of meeting Dec. 16, 1974). These are admirable objec-

tives and place enormous demands on the talents and versatility of the editor and his staff, but they also place demands on the members of the ILA to be active in expressing opinion and in making use of the *Journal* as an effective link between Congresses.

In a plaintive note (*Int. J. Lepr.* 2 (1934) 103) the late Dr. Wade wrote of "silent areas" of the world from which he had received few, if any, abstracts for publication. The present editor's recent (*Int. J. Lepr.* 45 (1977) 378) appeal to authors and a review of articles and letters published in the *Journal* makes it clear that "silent areas" still exist today.

Is the *Journal* worth publishing? The editor thinks so and spends more than 800 hours each year to see that it is published. (*Int. J. Lepr.* 42 (1974) 67) Sponsors evidently think so for they have contributed over \$30,000 to its funds since January 1978 alone. Do members of the ILA think so? The *Journal* will be what members of the ILA want it to be. Those of us that have the honor to be listed on the inside front cover of the *Journal* are your servants in this regard. We will do what we can but for the future of the *Journal*, "Over to You".

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