

CURRENT AND FUTURE PROGRESS OF THE RANGE SOCIETY

Presidential Address—Third Annual Meeting
American Society of Range Management
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FELLOW members of the American Society of Range Management—and friends. It is with a great deal of pleasure that I welcome you to the third annual meeting of our organization.

The constitution of our Society provides that the President shall deliver an address at the annual meeting. This provision was made to insure that you would be fully appraised of all matters affecting your organization during the year. Only with this knowledge will you be in a position to further extend the influence of your Society, and aid and guide your officers in the management of its affairs. The primary purpose of my remarks here this morning is thus twofold,—to report to you on important developments during the year just past—and to call to your attention some of the problems now confronting the Society and on which it needs to formulate policy or take action.

A year ago your Council set out to expand and strengthen the Society and to build even stronger the foundations laid by its founders and first officers. This was clearly a necessity if we were to carry on the affairs of the Society and continue to publish a creditable Journal.

I am very happy to report to you that material progress has been made toward this end.

Along with the other progress we have made during the past year, the Society has attained increased recognition in na-

tional affairs. The Society has joined the Natural Resources Council of America. At the invitation of the American Society of Animal Production, we held a joint meeting with them at Pullman, Washington in June. The Secretary-General of the United Nations extended an invitation to us to send a representative to the world-wide meeting of conservationists at Lake Success, August 17 to September 6. The Pan American Union asked us to recommend a member to an important conservation award Board that agency has established. These are but some of the examples of the enlarging horizons of your Society.

The Society has added nearly seven hundred members to its rolls, barely falling short of attaining twice the 753 members we had a year earlier. I think we can take considerable satisfaction in this. I feel that we can be gratified also over the two groups of our members who are among those showing the largest percentage of increase. These are STUDENTS, who are just starting their careers in range work; and RANCHERS, whose experience furnishes the final test of the soundness of the facts developed by the science of our profession.

Where do we go from here? Experience this past year has demonstrated that many people are sufficiently interested in grazing land problems and in the objectives of our Society to join our organi-

zation. Do we want to hold our Society to its present size, or do we want 2,000, 4,000 or 10,000 members? The decision is up to us.

We should recognize that there are disadvantages that all large organizations must face. Chief among them is the fact that as they grow in size, the interests of their members tend to diverge. Beyond a certain size, our Society might find itself unable to take a position on many questions because of the divergent interests and viewpoints of its members.

On the other hand, divergent viewpoints are likely to provoke thought and discussion, and thereby lead to progress. They might stimulate the Society to attempt to meet a greater variety of problems, and consequently enable it to grow in responsibility and influence. Moreover, an increased membership would permit more frequent issues of the Journal, provide the financial resources to allow us to sponsor certain worthwhile projects, and enlarge the influence of the Society in public affairs.

We need to decide how large an organization we want. Of even greater importance, we need to plan how best we can maintain the interest of the members, increase their participation in Society affairs, and meet their needs. This is the real challenge.

The financial position of your Society has been materially improved. Our "cash on hand" has grown from \$2,841 on January 1, 1949 to \$6,578 on January 1, 1950. This is largely, of course, a result of the material increase in membership. It is due partly, however, to the fact that all officers, but especially the Editor and Treasurer have served with out pay and have given so freely of their time in the discharge of the increasingly burdensome duties of their offices. The Editor has available the services of the Editorial Board to relieve him of many of the

chores of his position. Moreover, considerable honor and recognition comes to the Editor from having his name on the masthead of the Journal. With the present size of our membership, it is, however, too much to expect that the many hours of work required to maintain the necessary records, to send out the repeated dues notices, and to receive and properly account for all funds, can continue to be furnished gratis. The Society should be prepared to make a reasonable payment for the services received from its National Treasurer and at its meeting yesterday, the Council approved a provision for such a payment in the 1950 budget.

A year ago the finance committee recommended, and the Society approved, the granting of "Life Memberships" to members upon an advance payment of One Hundred Dollars. Thirteen members of the Society have taken advantage of this provision, thus providing a special reserve fund of \$1300. It is the intent of the Council that this fund shall not be used for current operations of the Society, or of the Journal. The Council, however, has approved the recommendation that the annual income from this reserve may be used for special purposes. This might take the form of an award to the author of the best article in the Journal, during a given year. It might be awarded as a prize to a graduate student for outstanding research, or used for other projects that in the opinion of the Council will advance the objectives of the Society. Recommendations for the use of the income from this reserve might well emanate from the Local Sections after consideration by their members.

Six additional Local Sections were organized in 1949 and their constitution and by-laws have been approved by the Council. These sections have elected officers, held meetings of their own, and have

developed programs which will help bind us more closely together and further extend our influence. Two others are in the process of organization, and when approved, will increase to nine the number of Local Sections.

The Local Sections are important segments of our organization. They are frequently closer to actual problems confronting our members than are your national officers. The Local Sections, moreover, offer an effective means of marshalling the judgement of a large number of members on matters affecting the Society. Means should be sought for making use of that judgement in the formation of Society policy and the direction of its affairs.

The Council held two meetings during the course of the year—the first immediately following the last annual meeting of the Society, and the second just preceding this meeting. In addition, we “met” through the United States mails on nine different occasions to consider problems concerned with the management of the Society. Some of the matters considered required immediate action which the Council took, pending the time when they could receive more general consideration by the membership of the Society. I shall mention some of these here that you may be prepared to discuss them later in our business meeting, should this appear desirable.

Our constitution provides that “the Council may annually assign, from the funds of the Society, to each Local Section, a sum varying in proportion to its needs not to exceed one dollar for each member belonging to that section”. This provision, which is permissive and not mandatory, has been interpreted in a number of ways by the Local Sections. One requested that it be reimbursed for certain expenses incurred in connection with its organization. Another encouraged

the formation of a Local Section by informing members that the full amount of one dollar might be expected from the Society’s national treasury for use in carrying on the affairs of the Section. Other Local Sections made no such requests but met their own expenses.

The Council adopted the policy of discouraging such requests. There were several reasons for this action. First, it was considered important to avoid any expenditures that might lead to an increase in our present annual dues. Moreover, it was necessary to avoid adding to the duties of the already overworked Treasurer. Some Sections appeared willing and able to finance their own operations and the Council felt that all should be treated alike. In addition, the Council was anxious to build up a financial reserve which would permit an early increase over the present number of four issues of the Journal per year. The Council now has proposed that the constitution be amended to eliminate the provision quoted above, in the meantime adhering to its policy of discouraging requests for such financial aid. This matter needs to be considered by the membership.

You are aware, from a statement in one of the recent issues of the Journal, that your Society is now a corporation, having been duly incorporated under the laws of the State of Wyoming. With two exceptions, the proposed Articles of Incorporation contain the identical provisions of our old constitution and by-laws. One exception concerns the name of the governing body of the Society. Under Wyoming law, the governing body of a corporation is required to be known as a “Board of Directors”, and this term will supplant the title of our present Council. The other change concerns the manner in which the Articles of Incorporation may be amended. Our old constitution required the submission of proposed

amendments to all members, and approval of two-thirds of those voting. Our old by-laws, on the other hand, could be amended by a two-thirds vote of those in attendance at an annual meeting of the Society—or could be referred to the entire membership with a majority vote only required for approval. The Council recommends the adoption of the Articles of Incorporation with the more strict amendment provisions of the old constitution. This will require approval of the membership.

During the past year, the Society, through the Council, has taken no action on important issues of the day, although it is recognized that many of these concern the welfare of the Nation's grazing lands and therefore are of direct interest to us as an organization. It is felt that such issues should first be thoroughly considered in the meetings of our Local Sections and the position of the Society determined by the combined weight of their judgement. When this action has been taken, the Society should not hesitate to make its influence on such issues felt.

In summary, we need (1) constantly to seek means by which we can measure up to the responsibilities we have been granted and continually look for ways in which we can extend our influence and attain the objectives laid down by our founders; (2) we need to determine how large an organization we want and plan how best we can meet the desires and need of all our members; (3) we should take the necessary action to formally ap-

prove our Articles of Incorporation; (4) we need to develop recommendations for the use of the income from our Life Membership "reserve"; (5) we need to give further consideration to the matter of financial relationships between the National Society and the Local Sections, and adopt a plan that will be equitable to all members; (6) we need to increase the number of Local Sections and devise ways in which they may participate in the formation of Society policy and in the direction of Society affairs; and (7) crystallize our opinion on important public issues affecting the welfare of the Nation's grazing resources and become prepared to bring the influence of the Society to bear on such problems.

In closing, I want to express my personal appreciation, and with your permission, the thanks of the Society, to the considerable number of members who worked so hard in its interests during the past year. These included forty-four members and Chairmen of the twelve regularly appointed committees, the seventeen State Sub-Committee Chairmen of the Membership Committee in the western states, the Editor and Editorial Board, my fellow officers, and especially the Council. These groups totaled over seventy members and I know there were many others who held no office but worked equally as hard. Their accomplishments have been substantial. With this kind of interest and support, we need have no fears for the future of the American Society of Range Management.