Report of the President, 1955


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This report is not intended to be a narrative of accomplishment, but rather an outline of prospects and possibilities for the future. As justification for any pointed suggestions or blunt comments which it contains, I remind you that of all the occupational groups in the Society, only the ranchers wear spurs.

To have served as your President during the past year has been an honor which I deeply and sincerely appreciate. It has also been a responsibility which I have tried to carry to the best of my ability. From a personal standpoint, it has been a genuine pleasure to have been associated with a group of fine and able men who have contributed generously of their time and talent to make this a successful year. I want to express my personal gratitude to the Executive Secretary, the Editor of the Journal, the Vice President and Directors, the Local Section officers, and the Chairmen and members of the various committees. You have elected a fine group of officers for the coming year and I know they can count on your continued support.

For the past five years, first as a Director, and then as your Vice President and President, I have had a better-than-average opportunity to observe the Society’s growth and development, and also its problems, during a very critical period of its life. I firmly believe that the Society is filling a distinct need by furnishing a common meeting ground between scientific research and practical application in a field whose importance is only now being accorded the recognition which it has long deserved. Our objectives are well known—they are printed on the inside cover of every issue of the Journal. From an organizational standpoint, we still need a substantial increase in membership if we are to continue to advance toward those objectives.

We definitely need an additional thousand members to reduce unit costs, particularly of printing the Journal and the housekeeping duties of the Executive Secretary’s office. Also, we need to boost the Journal’s subscription list in order to meet the established minimum requirements maintained by national advertisers. This increase in membership would alleviate financial problems and give us the freedom to undertake worthwhile projects which are now beyond our capabilities. Although overgrazing of ranges has been the besetting sin of stockmen since Biblical times, I am sure that the Society is not overgrazing its opportunities, either in membership or in the scope of its activities.

It is my definite conviction that the future growth and development of the Society will depend principally upon the growth and development of the local Sections. Your Directors reached this conclusion back in 1953 when the policy was adopted of collecting both National and Section dues through the Executive Secretary’s office, and remitting Section dues back to the local officers. Since that time, the number of Section affiliates has nearly doubled, rancher membership has increased nearly 50 percent, and total Society membership by more than 17 percent.

Section activities in the same period increased as follows:

Meetings and tours (other than annual business meetings)
1952: 9 out of 15 Sections held one or more
1955: 12 out of 17 held two or more, and 9 held three.

Range schools, judging contests and other activities for youth
1952: 3 were reported.
1955: 10 were reported.

In 1952, 4 Sections issued one or more newsletters to their affiliates.
In 1955, newsletters were issued by 15 Sections.

The total attendance at Section meetings in 1955 was unquestionably greater than the total Society membership. Rancher interest in particular is stimulated by local activities, and ranches also offer our best opportunity for membership expansion.

If these Section activities are coordinated with a sincere, organized effort to secure members, I see no reason why the Society’s membership can not be increased by at least a thousand, assuming, of course, that each Section will do its share. There is no better
way to secure members than by personal contact, and the best way to handle a big job is to cut it into pieces that small groups can handle. A year ago, I asked the Section Chairmen to assume the responsibility of a membership drive. Each of them set a modest goal for his own Section and agreed to organize and supervise an effort to reach it. I firmly believe that this is the proper method; however, the Section officers can't do it by themselves. They need the enthusiastic support of every member.

This Ninth Annual Meeting is something of a landmark, since it is the first time that the Society has gone back to a former location for its Annual Meeting. On behalf of all of us who have joined the Society since it met here seven years ago, I offer congratulations and best wishes to our senior members.

If you will investigate the beginnings of the Society, you will find that there was considerable discussion as to whether to start an entirely new organization or to organize as a subsidiary group within one of the older professional societies. There was also a question as to membership—whether it should be limited to professional scientists and administrators or broadened to include ranchers and others.

The men who organized this Society are to be commended for their refusal to become a minority within a larger and older group. They preferred the more difficult task of starting a pioneer organization, and although many of them were scientists of considerable renown, they opened the membership of the Society to anyone interested in range management, without regard to academic qualifications. I submit to you that the present status of the Society is vindication of their judgment.

However, this is no time for relaxation or complacency—either as an organization or as individuals. Many ranchers have found that pre-war standards of production and efficiency are not adequate for this period of rising costs and declining prices. Grass is far too valuable to abuse, and too expensive for inefficient use. May I remind the professional groups with this organization that we ranchers expect you, too, to keep abreast of the times? (We are like the fellow who threatened to vote against his Congressman unless he received a particular favor which the Congressman could not grant. The Congressman reminded him of all the favors of past years, and the fellow said, "Yes, that all true, but what have you done for me lately?")

The opportunities for leadership and progress in the field of range management are as wide as the horizons. The problems of 1956 constitute a challenge to scientists, teachers, technicians, administrators and ranchers alike. I earnestly hope and sincerely believe that the Society will meet that challenge.