

The AIBS: Crisis in Retrospect, and the Outlook

Kenneth V. Thimann and Robert W. Krauss

The presentation of a balanced budget for 1966 (with a small surplus) to the recent meeting of the Governing Board of the American Institute of Biological Sciences points up the dramatic progress made by the Institute since the days of its crisis in 1962. As many readers will recall (see 1), at the end of that year AIBS underwent a serious financial upheaval. Auditors of granting agencies converged on the office (at one time more auditors were there than in their home offices), but it quickly became clear that there had been no misappropriation of funds. The biological fraternity held a series of meetings under the patient and stimulating presidency of James Ebert; as a first result of these meetings, the AIBS's largest program, the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study, was transferred to the care of the University of Colorado, where it was already physically located.

The next step was to plan a thorough reorganization and refinancing. It was evident that the old dollar-a-head contribution from the membership of the supporting societies was totally inadequate if the organization was to stand on its own feet financially. The replanning was begun in May 1963, at a Governing Board meeting held in Washington, D.C., and was gradually completed during the rest of that year. Two kinds of AIBS membership were instituted: (i) biological societies, the constituent society making a small contribution roughly proportional to its own membership, and (ii) individual members, the individual paying \$10 a year and receiving the Institute's journal (the former *A.I.B.S. Bulletin*, subsequently renamed *BioScience*).

Most of the societies that had been affiliated with the old AIBS rejoined under the new regime; others followed soon after, and there are now 43 constituent societies with an aggregate membership of over 60,000. A number of these societies have made voluntary contributions to AIBS over

and above their membership fees. At the Board meeting of 4 and 5 March 1966, 37 of these societies were represented, and representatives of several others, not affiliated, attended as observers.

The individual membership built up more slowly, but by 1964 the figure had topped 11,000, and it now stands at 13,300. It is expected to come close to 14,000 this year. This solid indication of interest and support on the part of individuals posed an interesting problem of representation on the Governing Board. The time-honored "No taxation without representation" found a modern echo, and, as a result, a new class of Board membership was instituted, supplementing the traditional representation of each constituent society. The Board now has a member-at-large for every 1000 individual AIBS members. They are elected by mail ballot, from a list proposed by a nominating committee and additional names put forward by any 25 members. They serve for 3 years. At present there are 13 of them, and they are a most valuable addition to the Board.

Even before the reorganization took place, some publishing and manufacturing firms had been offering the Institute modest support. This arrangement has been formalized through establishment of a third membership class—industrial membership, at \$400 a year. There are now 27 industrial members.

Table 1. AIBS 1966 operating budget.

<i>Estimated income</i>	
Dues	\$163,070
Advertising	89,000
Convention registration and exhibits	92,200
Overhead recovery	80,000
Miscellaneous	40,984
Total estimated income	\$465,254
<i>Estimated expense</i>	
Personnel cost	\$204,544
Rent	36,495
Printing	80,940
Supporting services	115,778
Debt payments	26,680
Total estimated expenses	\$464,437
Difference	\$ 817

Dr. Thimann is past president of the American Institute of Biological Sciences, Washington, D.C.; Dr. Krauss is secretary-treasurer.

The balanced budget referred to above is summarized in Table 1. The advertising income is from *BioScience*, which will shortly have a new scientific editor, David Prescott of the University of Colorado. The *Quarterly Review of Biology*, whose future was somewhat uncertain, has been taken over by the State University of New York, Stony Brook. The disagreements with the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health have now been settled, and the initial claims of these granting agencies have been considerably modified. Final settlement with NIH was achieved with repayment of approximately \$30,000. The obligation to NSF is to be discharged by a series of annual payments (see Table 1 for this year's payment). Settlement with the Department of Defense actually involves over \$70,000 due AIBS from the government. This amount represents the difference between the provisional and the final amounts for overhead on contracts for the period 1963–65. The agreements with the nondefense federal agencies were achieved during the 1964 presidency of Paul Kramer. AIBS's general manager Charles Ossola has established a satisfactory working relationship with federal business-management personnel.

It is probable that the crisis and its overcoming have been a healthy experience for the biological fraternity. The broader representation on the Board, coupled with the fact that the executive committee (itself now more broadly based) now meets four or more times a year and the Governing Board meets twice a year, has given the nation's biologists much closer and more direct participation in Institute affairs than they had had previously. The AIBS office, reorganized under the directorship of John R. Olive, has legal counsel continually available, and this, together with the improved relationships with fiscal officers of the granting agencies, ensures that the near-disaster of 1962 cannot occur again. Changes have been made in the journal *BioScience*, as mentioned above. AIBS's many activities in support of biology and biologists are steadily increasing and diversifying. Among these activities, its program for emeritus biologists, the Bio-Instrumentation Advisory Council, and the Placement Service are worthy of note. AIBS is asking all biologists to join, and to make AIBS the nation's "voice of biology."

Reference

1. D. S. Greenberg, *Science* 139, 317 (1963).