

On the State of the Society

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WE HAVE COME TO A TIME when we should make some appraisal of our situation . . . The American Name Society is still in what might be called a frontier stage. The land lies before us almost untouched. Natural resources are stupendous; opportunities, limitless. On the other hand, man-power is scanty, and, as with most frontier societies, we are cramped for lack of capital.

Our annual meetings, held in conjunction with the Modern Language Association, are well attended, and excellent papers have been presented. *Names* continues successfully into its fifth year and remains the only journal of its kind in the Americas.

In the near future we must be concerned with three lines of advance.

1. We need a continuing flow of good, and better, articles for *Names*. So far, most of the publication has been on place names, with a fair amount on personal names. In the future an even greater opportunity seems to lie along certain other lines. We may hope that we shall have more articles in that almost untouched field of study — the history of titles and of fictional names. Brand names, also, call for investigation while the people who have originated them are still alive. I mention this matter of articles first, since I consider it of first importance. No matter what else happens, we cannot publish a good journal without good articles to fill it. As President, I hope that all members will feel a responsibility in this respect during the current year.

2. We need more members, both as active scholars and as readers and critics. The areas from which they may be drawn are populous. Most of our present members have some academic connection, and they are most commonly connected with departments of the languages, including English. Our second most numerous group consists of geographers. Even from the languages and geography, however, we have not obtained nearly all the possible members.

In addition, new members should be sought in other fields. Historians have an interest, and so also have anthropologists, especially since we are concerned with the field of Indian names. A very numerous group consists of those who are members of the departments of the languages but are interested primarily in literature, and thus able to contribute to the study of titles and fictional names.

There is great possibility also for recruitment from the general public. Many of these can be contributors as well as readers.

The chief problem is that people simply do not know that the Society and *Names* even exist. In three states we have no members at all. In five states we have only one library member and no personal member. The opportunity is ample! Perhaps we should apply the old technique: "Every member get a member!" Within the last few months one active worker has recruited six new members.

3. To date, the Society has paid its bills promptly. The loss of our university subsidy has been approximately offset by growth and economies. The balance, however, is too close for safety. We need a larger current income, and also a reserve. Otherwise, the end of any year may see the officers forced to discontinue publication. The lapse of *Names* for what might be only a temporary stringency would be particularly regrettable.

A sizeable increase in the number of members would solve the problem of current expenses. We should also have a sum of a few thousand dollars to insure the future. Perhaps a part of this can be raised by contributions. So far, however, our best means of raising money has been by the shift of members from regular to sustaining basis, by the addition of twenty (tax-free) dollars to their present fee. (If you wish to join these ranks, send the check to our treasurer or to me.)

Articles, members, finances — I hope that during the year we shall see progress. *Names* has made too good a start to be allowed to lapse. I shall be happy to receive any suggestions as to how our goals may be the better attained. It is important that a large number of individual members should participate.