

The Report of the Council

April 15, 1969

THE TEMPO OF ACTIVITIES at the Society appears to be increasing exponentially. We have more readers, the traffic in books is growing, there are more activities for which to plan, and our business affairs seem to become more complex—all of which keeps the staff scrambling to keep up. But, this is an exciting time at the Society and we do seem to be making progress of a solid kind.

Under the chairmanship of Frank L. Harrington, the development program moves ahead. From a group of generous Worcester people and close friends and staff of the Society over a half million dollars in pledges and cash for the future support of AAS have been received. Our plans have reached the stage where soon our entire membership will be approached for support of this long-range effort to more adequately fund the work of the Society.

The Library Committee and the Committee on the Hall have discussed the probable needs of AAS for its future special arrangements. The firm of Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson and Abbott has been retained to make suggestions in this matter. An improved protection system has been installed within the building.

Several publications are coming to fruition. The alphabetically arranged, short-title listing of works reproduced in the Readex Microprint edition of Evans's *American Bibliography* is to appear in the early fall. Messrs. Shipton and Mooney have worked diligently on this project for a long time. Professor Ray Nash has at length completed his work on American

penmanship books published through the year 1850 and the Society will issue his volume in the fall. Professor d'Alté A. Welch has nearly completed revisions for the hard-cover edition of his bibliography of American children's books.

The staff remains faithful to its tasks and our gratitude to each member is unbounded. In addition to his other duties, Mr. Mooney is on the steering committee of the international consortium which is planning an edition of manuscripts of American loyalists.

At its fall meeting the Council looked our needs in the eye and approved a budget with a deficit built into it. They did so with the realization that certain problems must be met and that we must raise additional funds to pay for them. We urge you to think kindly of the Society when the inevitable and annual plea for help arrives in your mail box.

The American Antiquarian Society is now well launched on an audacious enterprise. We have entered the lists to contend for endowment, the monies for which may be controlled by individuals and organizations perhaps unsympathetic toward the motivating purposes of this Society.

The strength of AAS has lain in the devotion of its members and staff to an exalted task. That task, pursued with quiet diligence, imagination, and fervor, has been to collect and to preserve what we could of the intellectual sources of man in America. It is a task which has been undertaken cheerfully by five previous generations, for us and for our successors. That those generations have succeeded is beyond doubt, for who can contend that the Society does not hold in trust a great and unique resource of books and manuscripts? Taking seriously our chartered purpose to preserve the antiquities of our nation and to assist the researches of the future historians of our country, our predecessors have not only gathered in these scraps of paper, but have also made them available to the inquiring.

The Society has always held that study and the develop-

ment of knowledge are honorable human activities. They are central to our purpose, despite the fact that the same may not directly lead to the solving of social ills nor obtain to current cultural fashions. Humanistic scholarship creates knowledge and order, which in turn may provide wisdom, the highest of mankind's aspirations. It has been the purpose of the Society to provide the means for and a place in which contemplation may flourish. We are happy with and faithful to this work, in a world in which the nourishment of such an atmosphere becomes more difficult.

As we proceed further in our efforts to provide the necessary funds to improve our services to the scholarly community, the pressures to alter our values will greatly increase. There will be demands that we prove our 'relevancy' to the norms of the day; that we open our doors to an indiscriminating public; that we try to collect everything.

It is no accident that the Society has not before attempted to raise funds from a broad constituency, for our past leaders were reluctant or unwilling to risk the dilution of our energies and functions. Nevertheless, we believe that we must make the effort to adequately fund the Society, to carry on its present task, and prepare it for the years ahead. We are thankful for the extraordinarily generous response which has already provided ten percent of our estimated needs, but there is still a very long way to go. We know that the members of the Society, believing in the unusual values to which your Society has remained faithful, will respond with the vital assistance, both of the spirit and of material, to withstand such pressures and to move AAS into the future.

M. A. McC.

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