



NEWSLETTER

Operational Research Society of New Zealand (Inc.)

Registered at C.P.O., Wellington, as a magazine

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New Editors

Council is delighted to announce two energetic new EDITORS for your Newsletter. They are Mark Houliston and Susan Nicoll - who both work in the Strategic Analysis Group of the M.A.F. Economics Division.

Mark graduated BSc(Hons) in OR, from Victoria University in 1981. He is currently seconded from DSIR, and will be the Council representative.

Susan has a BTech(Hons) in Systems Maths from Massey University in 1982, and will be assisting Mark as Co-Editor.

An official vote of thanks was passed to Patrick Gargiulo at the last Council meeting on June 20. Patrick put in six years of hard work to make the Newsletter both friendly and provocative.

NZ National Contribution for IFORS Triennial Conferences

IFORS invites each member society to contribute a paper(s) to each triennial conference. IFORS has recently recommended that this paper be "the most valuable contribution in (our) country during the last three years. Both theoretical and applied papers in any OR field may be considered."

To choose the one best paper every three years is not going to be an easy task. Council decided that it should start by choosing the (one or two) best papers from each of our conferences over the next three years and then make the final choice of best paper from those and the papers published in the Journal. This will begin at this year's conference, the 1983-85 papers being considered for contribution in IFORS 1986.

Any comments on this can be aired through the Newsletter or at the AGM.

From the Editor

Hi folks. It's been a long time since you received a Newsletter. I hope you haven't forgotten how to read. As I hope to bring out the Newsletter more frequently, I am keen for contribution by as many members as possible.

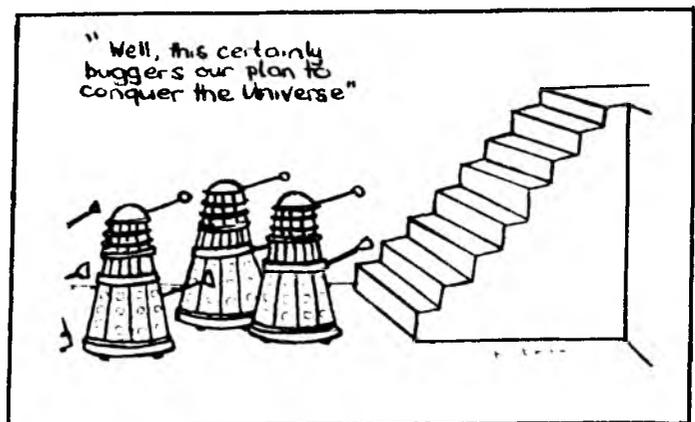
Branches: Let me know what you are doing, what meetings you are planning and what visiting speakers you are having.

Members: Please send in book, article or seminar reviews, jokes or cartoons you feel appropriate to OR in NZ today. Try this newsletter's offering for size. To start my period of Editorship on the right note we include an (abbreviated) submission from our President.

I look forward to my stint as Editor as an opportunity to enhance my own, and hopefully your, awareness of OR in NZ.

See you at Conference,

Mark Houliston, Editor
Sue Nicoll, Co-Editor



Message from the President

The worthy NEWSLETTER has suffered too long from presidential silence. This has made it both a poorer and a better publication; better perhaps in overall literary quality, but poorer certainly in containing no exhortations from "above". I can offer excuses for the silence: inability to emulate my predecessor in political or environmental awareness, or was it a feeling of frustration at local branch apathy. I would rather believe that I was awaiting the right moment and the topic which required presidential pronouncement. I have not felt the burning desire to shout slogans: "run more LPs", "keep on simulating" or "join the Markov procession!"

The right topic and moment have in fact been thrust upon me, as the accompanying article with demonstrate. At an early future date, however, I plan to write in response to the serio-comic (or was it tragic?) editorial of last year's June NEWSLETTER.

But for now to the Royal Enclosure!

The RSNZ Royal Reception

April 20 1983

Early in 1983 the Royal Society of New Zealand invited presidents of member bodies to indicate whether they wished to attend a reception for the Prince of Wales. The OR Society was one of those invited to be represented. I duly attended at the RSNZ rooms in Turnbull Street on Wednesday April 20 at 4.30 p.m. for briefing prior to the reception.

The programme was planned to be as informal as it could be within the constraints of such an august gathering. The Prince and a small entourage arrived on the dot of 5 p.m. and were welcomed by the president, Dr E.G. Bollard. First the Prince, representing the University of Wales, was given a bound set of the Royal Society's publications spanning 100 years. Second, and more important, the Prince was asked to bestow his blessing (and name: The Prince and Princess of Wales Science Awards Scheme) on a fund to be established for the purpose of sponsoring

New Zealand scientists on study tours in the national interest. Addressing the Minister, Dr Shearer, he indicated his certainty (not shared fully by those present) that the Government would provide generous financial assistance.

After signing the (new) Visitor's Book Prince Charles moved down from the dais and chatted for the remaining 40 minutes or so with the assembly in groups of 6-8. It was friendly and informal with no immediate evidence of bodyguards, police or reporters. In fact the occasion attracted very little press coverage; it had none of the mass-appeal feature, no children, no activists, no Princess.

The royal scientific chatabout reinforced one's impression of the Prince's resilience. The physical demands are not inconsiderable, but even more one must admire a remarkably well-developed ability to switch quickly from one group of experts to another and to contribute usefully to each new conversation. In our circle of eight he first sought information on the relatively unknown phrase "operational research" and then compared notes with a food scientist on the benefits of their high-fibre diets.

In retrospect the meeting had a distinct value quite apart from the hour of royal contact. Other than at major conferences such as ANZAAS this was probably one of the most representative scientific gatherings that New Zealand has seen. Most folk reading a name tag have a fairly clear mental picture (albeit often erroneous) about the job content of a soil scientist, a botanist or a dietician, if not that of a physicist or a mathematician. But "operational research" often leads (after a disclaimer about connections with surgery) to the need for an explanation which can usually spark a recognition of its potential in a wide range of application areas. This was certainly the situation on April 20, when it was not only the Prince of Wales who wanted to know the significance of our Society's title. As a realist I must confess to thinking that most such questioners will need to ask again next time. Perhaps after a second explanation they will admit to "having heard that before" and pledge to "remember next time".

Mervyn S. Rosser
President ORSNZ

Review -- RELIABILITY

Dr Tapas Sarkar, Information Science Department, VUW, spoke to a joint meeting between the Wellington branches of ORSNZ and NZ Organisation for Quality Assurance on the subject of "Product Reliability" on 21 April.

To widen our perspective and to draw us away from thinking about reliability in terms of our TVs and cars, Tapas used the Challenger space mission and earthquake risks at Clyde to illustrate the importance of the subject.

The application of Weibull and lognormal models in reliability data analysis might have been beyond some people. However, the "bathtub" reliability curve showed that many things are at their most reliable only after a settling-in period. Although age catches up with most things, some just get better with age.

Connections between reliability and manufacturing, inventing, replacement and warranties were drawn.

In the end, product reliability means customer satisfaction. The recently screened "If Japan Can - Why Can't We?" documentary brings home the point and provides salutary lessons to be learnt by NZ manufacturers and primary processors if they are to succeed in the international marketplace.

Gary Eng.

Prince and Princess of Wales Science Awards Scheme

These are to enable NZ based scientists, technologists and technicians to travel in order to carry out studies, develop expertise, promote NZ developments, to help with work of national importance, to share expertise in NZ: not for attendance at conferences or post-graduate courses. Up to 15 awards will be available per year, up to \$8000 and for up to 2 months travel and subsistence.

We will need to decide at the AGM in November, whether we (as a society) wish to contribute financially to the scheme. We welcome your comments in letters to the Editor before that date.

BROADCASTING BOX

WOGSC

6th International Congress of Cybernetics and Systems
Paris September 10-14 1984

NOAS 83

1st NOAS Seminar on OR in Forest Industry
Tampere (Finland) December 8-9 1983

ICC-84

The International Conference on Communications
Theme: "Science-Systems-Service"
Amsterdam May 14-17 1984

South-Holland Publishing Company

Our Secretary has a copy of South-Holland's latest catalogue of books and journals.

All enquiries to - Dr Vicky van den Broek-Mabin
c/- AMD, P.O. Box 1335, Wellington, DSIR.

We also hope that you will contact Council if you apply for one of these awards and tell us how you get on, so that we can see if ORSNZ members are likely to benefit from the scheme. As OR is not very well known in the Royal Society as our President mentioned in his Royal Enclosure, you will need to put your case reasonably clearly. Hopefully, Merv has opened a few minds already, and indeed OR's apparent novelty may be a strong point for "national interest" aspects of your proposal.

For further details contact Hugh Barr - don't forget to send any comments to the Editor and let Hugh know if you apply.