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## President's Address

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## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

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### DR. LARRY G. STEWART

I would like to take this opportunity to comment briefly on the priorities I see for P.R.W.A.D. for the immediate future. Since 1966, when P.R.W.A.D. came into being in St. Louis with an initial membership of less than 200, we have grown steadily in membership and in the services provided to the profession and others outside our profession. Our membership growth from 1966 to today represents a growth rate of 500%. This is something we can be proud of, but we must continue this growth if we are to continue to keep pace with the demands being made upon us.

In 1966, as now, your Officers and Executive Board members have served without compensation. This is as it should be. However, in 1966, our benefits to the membership consisted of the then new *Journal of Rehabilitation of the Deaf*, a sense of professional — “togetherness”, and our biennial conferences. Thus, we had little “business overhead,” and it was possible for us to operate exclusively through membership dues.

In recent years, with the growth of our membership and the emergence of a higher level of professionalism in our field, it has been necessary for P.R.W.A.D. to establish a national office and employ an Executive Secretary. This expansion permitted us to increase the services P.R.W.A.D. offers its members. Some of these services are tangible, such as the *Deafness Annual*, and the improved *Journal of Rehabilitation of the Deaf*, our *Newsletter*, and the distribution of many current publications made available to us by other agencies and institutions. Other benefits have been intangible, such as representation at decision-making conferences and meetings that have had a direct effect on our work, encouragement of manpower expansion, and research-oriented activities.

The growth of P.R.W.A.D. has been a healthy and beneficial contribution to the expansion and improvement of rehabilitation services for deaf people. At the same time, there have been “growing pains.” Our financial base has been unsteady. We have depended heavily upon Federal funds for the publication of the *Deafness Annual*, and without this funding we could not continue our home office activities at the current level. While we do have adequate funds for this year, and have every reason to expect adequate funds for next year, we must face the fact that until our membership reaches approximately 2,000 we will be unable to operate our home office effectively independent of Federal funds.

This current year our annual budget amounts to approximately \$86,000. We have projected a budget of \$121,000 for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 1974. We can project steady growth in coming years, so you can readily see that the financial affairs of P.R.W.A.D. have assumed major proportions.

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Our organization's By-Laws were quite adequate and viable for the early years of our existence. At that time our affairs were relatively easy to manage, and there was not a major need for checks and balances. Today, however, with our increasing membership and the increasing complexities of our activities, our current By-Laws are inadequate for effective operations.

In 1966, when we were a small organization, it was enough that our identity was generally "rehabilitation workers with the deaf." As we have grown, however, various interest groups have come together for their own purposes. Unfortunately, it has been only during our conferences that these groups have been able to get together and interact effectively. Between conferences, lack of organization and funding have prevented what could have been beneficial communication and activities.

Over the years, the number of members of P.R.W.A.D. in each state has grown. Because of conditions in each state, many P.R.W.A.D. members in individual states have seen the need to come together into an organization. The State of Ohio was the first to organize a state chapter of P.R.W.A.D., and from all accounts the Ohio Chapter of the P.R.W.A.D. has been highly successful in its activities. Yet, we lack guidelines to assist other states in forming their own chapters.

In 1966, comparatively little concern was evident concerning the need for standards of training or ways of evaluating facilities that serve deaf people. Today, with the large numbers of workers with the deaf and the large variety of facilities that serve the deaf, this void in standards is being keenly felt.

Finally, in recent years there has been expressed dissatisfaction with the name of our organization. We have called ourselves a "professional workers" organization, but our membership qualifications do not reflect this. We have before us, then, the question of our own identity.

With this background, I want to share with you the priorities that I see for P.R.W.A.D. for the immediate future. Bear in mind that I am speaking for myself, as your elected President, and that my views do not represent the official views of the Executive Board or the P.R.W.A.D.

First, we must re-write our By-Laws in order to create the kind of structure and guidelines that we need to accommodate our present and future membership and their needs. I shall shortly appoint a committee to accomplish this, and the new By-Laws will be presented to you at the Sixth Biennial Conference.

Second, we must expand our membership in order to generate a financial base that will make it possible for us to operate independently. Admirable gains have been made in our membership in past years, but we cannot rest on our laurels. Without this increase, and in the event our Federal funds are terminated, we risk losing ground that may take years to regain. If each one of you could recruit but just one new member we can easily reach our goal.

Third, we need to increase our membership dues to at least \$25 per year, or possibly \$50 per year. While this suggestion may shock some of you, it is a fact that P.R.W.A.D. now provides, for \$15 per year, the kinds of publications and services that many other professional organizations provide for dues ranging from \$50 to \$80 per year.

Fourth, we need to look to you, the membership, to take the lead in establishing sections or divisions within P.R.W.A.D. that will permit you to communicate and interact between conferences. While your Executive Board can provide encouragement and guidelines for sections, it must depend upon you to create and strengthen your individual sections. The same holds true of State Chapters. We have appointed a Committee on State Chapters to provide you with guidelines, and we expect to have these guidelines for you in the near future.

Fifth, I urge you to strive for, even fight for, professional standards and standards for facilities that serve deaf people. We have committees currently

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examining the issues involved in both of these areas, but the final responsibility for approving and implementing these standards rests with the membership. Thus, I look to you for strong participation in our Business Meetings on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, when these issues will be discussed.

Finally, concerning our identity, it is a fact that our membership has expanded to include many individuals who are not directly involved with the rehabilitation of deaf people. It is possible that the name of our organization no longer reflects the make up or the stated aims of the organization. Only you, the membership, can decide who you are and what the name of the organization shall be. My own perception is that we remain basically an organization of professional rehabilitation workers with the adult deaf. I believe that our present structure, and most certainly the new structure to come from future By-Laws, can and will accommodate members who do not work directly with the rehabilitation of adult deaf people. Thus, I see no need to change the name of our organization. I am proud of the name, Professional Rehabilitation Workers With the Adult Deaf, and I thank you for the opportunity.