President's Report

This is the first year of operation of the Control Systems Society under the new organization approved by the members last year, and, so far, administration of the Society is running smoothly. Our administrative reorganization has induced an attitude of self-evaluation and change among the membership, and I would like to report to you how this attitude is manifesting itself and some of the changes that have been discussed and are to be discussed during the year.

First, after three years of rather considerable deficits, 1983 was a financial success in that we achieved a surplus of $55,600. Our net worth as of January 1, 1984, was $115,600, which is still considerably below the level recommended by IEEE, but it appears that we have been able to determine where our major problems were and to correct them. A surplus of $60,000 is anticipated this year, but as indicated by past experience, there is considerable variance in this estimate.

As we again reach a more solvent position, we can increase our benefits to members in various ways. The most immediate could be a reduction in dues from the current $15.00.

In this regard, a suggestion to decouple the Transactions from the dues has been under study by a committee chaired by Bill Perkins. The suggestion was to include the magazine in the reduced annual dues and make the Transactions optional at an additional cost. The reasoning behind this suggestion is that the Transactions has become almost irrelevant to a large number of our members, whereas the magazine contains material of considerable interest. At the present time, the Transactions is widely regarded as the premier journal of control systems research, and its large circulation of around 11,000 copies per issue is felt to be vital in continuing to attract manuscripts from the best authors. Therefore, there is a considerable reluctance to do anything that will jeopardize the status of the Transactions at this time.

Likewise, due to the page cuts in the magazine during the past two years in order to control our deficit, the magazine has not yet reached the level where it could be considered our primary publication. Hopefully this will change in the coming years, and upgrading the magazine will receive high priority in future budgets.

The recommendation of Bill Perkins’ committee was to continue our present policy for the time being and charge our Long-Range Planning Committee to continue this study and report to the Board of Governors (BOG) its conclusions.

Another development concerning the Transactions review procedure has been discussed by the BOG, and a committee chaired by Mike Athans has been formed to study our present operation. From time to time, it becomes apparent that the Transactions Editorial Board (TEB) may be overly conservative in the way new and controversial topics are handled. It is felt that this is a result of the committee structure of the TEB and that perhaps a less confining structure should be developed. In this way, a more liberal review procedure may be possible, resulting in a more dynamic Transactions. This study has just gotten underway, and there is no speculation as to what the committee’s recommendations will be.

Two new items should be brought to your attention. The Society has responded to its international membership in tentatively agreeing to hold the 1986 Conference on Decision and Control (CDC) in Athens, Greece. This represents a considerable departure from our standard procedure of holding the CDC each year in the South, Southwest, and California on a rotating basis. This conference is a major source of income for the Society, and the effect of having an overseas meeting is unknown. If this turns out to be successful, then it is likely that we will continue to have the CDC outside of North America on a periodic basis.

The second item of interest to report is that the BOG agreed that the Society should assume financial responsibility for the 1996 IFAC Congress. We have informed IFAC of our intentions and are working closely with the American Automatic Control Council (A2C2) to develop our formal proposal to IFAC. Although the IFAC Congress is not quite twice as large as our annual CDC, there is a major financial commitment to raise a large amount of “up-front” money, and this will be a new activity for our Society. We will need help from all our membership, and I encourage each of you to be available to help in the organization of this Congress. We have only 12 years to get ready.

J. Boyd Pearson
President