

# 17. Under the Wings of Council

*The philosophy of an organization determines its continuance . . . objectives and ideals are far more of a yardstick than management proficiency.*

HARRIS P. MOSHER, QUOTED BY  
WILLIAM P. WHERRY, 1941

*Criticism and suggestions for betterment are earnestly desired.*

ACADEMY Bulletin, 1939

**T**HE SIZE AND SCOPE of Academy government began to change with addition of a management component. At first there seemed no need to include the secretary-managers in business considerations of the Council. The Academy's single secretary had attended Council meetings as record keeper but was never a member and had no vote.

Dr Wherry, too, attended Council meetings to deliver a state-of-the-Academy report and in 1930 was made an ex officio member. Two years later the entire Secretarial Board was included in an ex officio capacity. By the end of the thirties, the second and third vice-presidents were being invited to sit in on Council meetings out of courtesy.

Secord Large, who by the time of his retirement had served 27 continuous years on the Council, questioned such nonchalant Council additions. "Do you not think Council is getting a wee bit top heavy," he wrote William Wherry. "Too many cooks spoil the broth! If they keep on adding to it, Council meetings will have to be held in a much larger room."<sup>1</sup> Dr

Wherry allowed that he thought it was a "very pertinent question," but suggested that since most of the real work was done in committees, he thought inclusion of all officers "a rather nice gesture in the maintenance of a cooperative morale."<sup>2</sup>

**E**stablished seven years after the Academy was founded, the Council was first described as a Board of Trustees "to consider all matters pertaining to the welfare of the Academy."<sup>3</sup> Specifically, it was the nominating committee for officers and Fellowships, the investigating committee for charges against members, and the arbitrator of controversies among members. No complete definition of the Council's responsibilities appeared in the constitution until 1943.<sup>4(p114)</sup>

The original Council was a small group and how it functioned is unclear since there are no surviving Council minutes—if indeed any were taken—prior to 1919. Much business appears to have been decided on the floor of business meetings which were held in the morning preceding the scientific sessions. Members participated freely in suggesting Academy action

or involvement and appointment of committees, and the vote was taken directly.

During the 1920s the Council divided itself into committees on finance, research, applications, nominations, and place of meeting, which describe the routine business matters to which it attended yearly. A Council Judicial Committee was added in 1930, and the following year Council committees were reorganized and pruned to four: Executive, Research and Finance, Judicial, and General Activities. The last committee, plus inclusion of the secretaries, reflected a quite definite trend during the 1930s toward bringing major activities in which the Academy was involved under closer scrutiny of Council.

The secretaries, with the exception of Dr Wherry, did not serve on Council committees and appear to have voted only on items related to the educational program. Their influence, however, grew strong and would remain so, in part because they handled the Academy's educational output and in part because they were, along with Secord Large, the only men to serve on Council for many years running, by virtue of their usually long-held secretarial positions.

The more explicit centralization of Academy affairs under the Council, necessitated by Academy growth, meant more business was transacted by the Council and then presented to the membership for a vote. The difference from the early days when members participated directly in conducting business was largely one of form and not substance. The Council's opinion had always determined action on any important issue, and if there was the slightest doubt about the suitability of a proposal, it was referred to the Council for consideration.

Academy officers and members alike recognized the inherent danger, and potential for manipulation, of business meetings at which proposals could, of necessity, receive only perfunctory analysis and were voted on by the

relatively small percentage of the total membership present. Members seemed quite eager to prevent hasty, ill-considered action by handing over special issues to the Council for deliberation. Frequently, the Council appointed investigating committees and generally accepted their verdict.

By degrees it became customary to have new business presented first to Council, which could then report out its opinion at the business meeting. Most especially was this true after 1925 when the morning business sessions—which could and often did drag on to invade program time—were eliminated in favor of one evening business session. The evening meeting was probably less well attended and lent itself to a more terse and structured transaction of business.

The "Council-first" policy for submission of new business became ingrained. It was not until much later that some members who introduced proposals without going through Council pointed out the fine line of difference between protecting and preempting the rights of members.

**R**evised bylaws adopted in 1943 and a revised constitution approved a year later made the secretaries and the second and third vice-presidents full-fledged members of Council (Fig 45 through 47). The now 19 Council members were divided into an Executive, Research and Finance Committee (with a Subcommittee on Research and Finance), an Activities Committee, a Judicial Committee, the Board of Councillors, the Board of Secretaries, and the Program Committee.

The Council was for the first time described as the "governing body," with responsibility for supervising all activities and their management. The executive secretary-treasurer, rather than the president, was named the chief executive officer, a change that probably only formally documented what had actually occurred in practice.

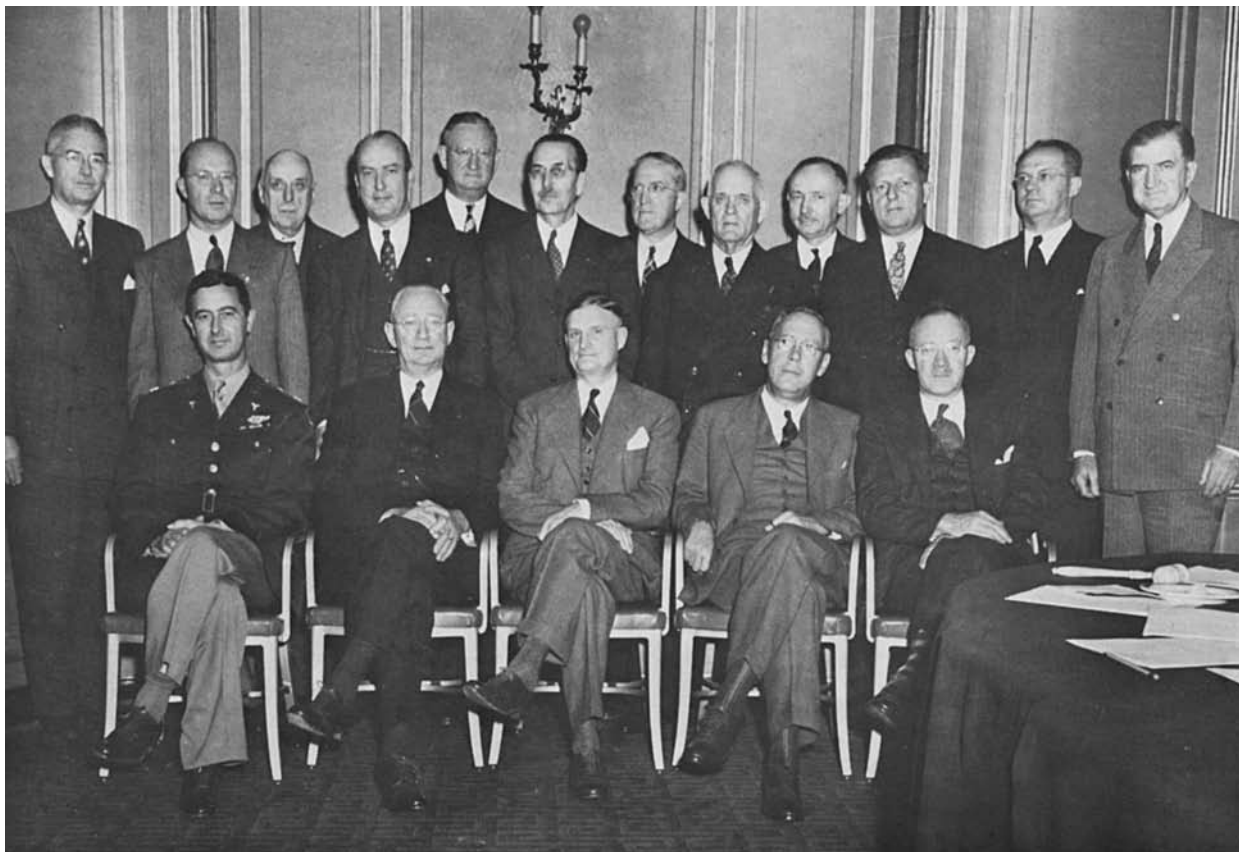


Fig 45.—Expanded Council which served two years, 1945 and 1946, after war precluded 1945 meeting. Standing, left to right: O. E. Van Alyea, Algernon Reese, Ralph I. Lloyd, Derrick T. Vail, William Benedict, Erling Hansen, Lawrence T. Post, Carl H. McCaskey, C. D. Blassingame, Dean Lierle, A. D. Ruedemann, James M. Robb. Seated, left to right: Brittain F. Payne, W. H. Johnston, Gordon B. New, Alan C. Woods, Edmund B. Spaeth. Missing are Harry Gradle and James A. Babbitt.

Academy leaders were always mindful that the society represented two specialties and always conscientious about ensuring equal representation in functions, officers, and government. This balancing act was scarcely mentioned, never written into law, and meticulously performed year after year. It was a matter of diplomacy and proper service to members long before there was a hint of sectionalism or concern with a balance of power.

For the Council it was carried out within reason. Determinations on Council membership were based primarily on the prevailing concept of what the Council was to do and be and what officers were required (Table 11). Only rarely did each specialty have an equal number of voting members. This was largely an unintentional result of the system for balancing

officers that evolved shortly after the Academy was founded.

The system hinged on yearly alternation of the presidency between the specialties and continued right down the line of officers. The president and second vice-president were from one specialty and the first and third vice-presidents from the other. From 1903 through 1926, the secretary was an ophthalmologist and the treasurer an otolaryngologist.

From 1903 through 1912, the specialty represented by the president had a majority of one on the Council. This was cancelled by addition of the first vice-president in 1913, which gave each specialty an equal number of Council members. Inclusion of the treasurer in 1916 meant the otolaryngologists had a standing majority of one.



Fig 46.—Council at work during 1951 meeting. Clockwise from left: Dean Lierle, A. D. Ruedemann, Conrad Berens, Erling Hansen, C. Stewart Nash, John H. Dunnington, Algernon Reese, J. Mackenzie Brown, Carl McCaskey, Derrick Vail, William Benedict, Mrs Mildred Ledgerwood, James Robb, Fletcher D. Woodward, Howard House, Lawrence Boies, Francis E. LeJeune, Archie D. McCannel.

It was the addition of a president-elect in 1925, coupled with the increase of past presidents from two to three, which weighted the Council so that a sitting president never had a specialty majority. Council composition became more disproportionate for a sitting president if the executive secretary-treasurer was from the other specialty.

For many years, the situation was never called into question. However, in 1976 the ophthalmologists pointed out that in odd years they were represented by only eight of the 19 Council members. To more equally balance its membership, the Council went back to the officer group and voted to make the first and third vice-president from the same specialty as

the president and the second vice-president and president-elect from the other specialty.<sup>5</sup>

**A**s the Academy grew in stature, the Council received many requests for Academy support, intervention, or decision on everything from local physician disputes to national politics. These were answered with the statement that such matters were outside the jurisdiction and purpose of the Academy. Through resolutions, endorsements, and recommendations, usually formulated by the Council for a membership vote, the Academy expressed an opinion on specific medical matters and broad issues affecting medicine. Past that, no action was taken.



Fig 47.—Council 1956. Top row, left to right: A. D. Ruedemann, Lawrence Boies, Kenneth Roper, Daniel Snyder, W. J. McNally, S. Rodman Irvine. Middle row, left to right: Sam E. Roberts, Harold H. Joy, Erling Hansen, William Benedict, Dean Lierle, Frederick C. Cordes. Seated, left to right: Walter Atkinson, M. Hayward Post, A. C. Furstenberg, Henry L. Williams, Walter H. Theobald, Algernon Reese.

With education as the society's goal, and with the operative principle that policies would be applied and programs initiated in equal measure for both specialties, few Council decisions connoted advantage or disadvantage to

either specialty in particular. As a group the Council never ceded much elbowroom to partisan sentiments, and the overriding thought was always what would be of value to the Academy.

TABLE 11  
COMPOSITION OF ACADEMY COUNCIL  
1903 THROUGH 1977

COUNCIL MEMBERS	PROGRESSIVE CHANGES IN MAKE-UP OF COUNCIL (YR EFFECTIVE)						
	1903	1907	1913	1916	1925	1930	1944-1977*
<i>Academy</i>							
President (Chairman)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Past Presidents	2	2	2	2	3	3	3
Active Fellows (Councillors)	2	4	4	4	3	4	4
First Vice-President			X	X	X	X	X
Treasurer (Comptroller 1931-1943)				X	X	X	
President-Elect					X	X	X
Second Vice-President							X
Third Vice-President							X
<i>Board of Secretaries</i> (Ex officio members of Council since 1932):							
Executive Secretary-Treasurer							X
Secretary for Ophthalmology							X
Secretary for Otolaryngology							X
Secretary for Instruction in Ophthalmology							X
Secretary for Instruction in Otolaryngology							X
Secretary for Home Study							X
Secretary for Public Relations							X

\*When the Academy incorporated, Oct 5, 1977, a Board of Directors replaced the Council. The Board of Directors included all constituents of the former Academy Council (1944-1977) plus the executive vice-president of the Division of Ophthalmology and the Division of Otolaryngology (these two officers were to alternate yearly in serving as executive secretary-treasurer of the Academy), the editor from each division, and two members-at-large from each division.