

MESSAGE FROM DR. J. H. STRUTHERS

Chairman of the Federal Council of the Medical Association of South Africa

Once again we stand at the threshold of a New Year. As always, this is an invitation to review the past and consider the future. The present Federal Council, which honoured me by electing me as its Chairman, is now in its third and last year of office. It has been a privilege to be so closely associated with the organization and work of our Association, but, during this period, certain weaknesses have revealed themselves in the organization and these I should like to review.

The Federal Council, which consists of 61 members elected triennially, itself elects an Executive Committee of 10 members, some half a dozen other Standing Committees and occasionally *ad hoc* committees. None of these committees have any real authority and all their deliberations and recommendations are subject to modification and review by the full Council, in matters of detail as well as in matters of principle. This means that the Agenda of Federal Council has become so extensive as to cause permanent chronic congestion. The first three-day meeting of this Federal Council in Durban during September 1957 covered three sessions each day lasting from 9 a.m. until after 11 p.m. This pattern has continued at each biannual meeting and, at the East London meeting in October 1959, there were two evening sessions lasting up to 11.45 p.m. I am sure no medical man in giving a medical opinion would approve of such conditions of work. Under such stress conditions,

BOODSKAP VAN DR. J. H. STRUTHERS

Voorsitter van die Federale Raad van die Mediese Vereniging van Suid-Afrika

Ons staan weer op die drempel van 'n Nuwe Jaar. Soos gewoonlik is dit 'n geleentheid om terug te kyk na die verlede en oor die toekoms te dink. Die huidige Federale Raad, wat my die onderskeiding aangedoen het om my as sy Voor-sitter te verkies, staan nou in sy derde en laaste jaar van werksaamhede. Dit was waarlik 'n voorreg om so nou verbonde te wees aan die organisasie en die werk van ons Vereniging. Gedurende hierdie periode het sekere tekort-kominge in ons organisasie egter op die voorgrond getree en ek wil graag hieraan aandag gee.

Die Federale Raad wat uit 61 lede bestaan en driejaarliks gekies word, kies sy eie Uitvoerende Komitee van 10 lede, asook 'n halfdosyn ander Vaste Komitees sowel as *ad hoc* komitees by geleentheid. Geeneen van hierdie komitees het volmag nie en al hulle oorwegings en aanbevelings is onderhewig aan verandering en heroorweging deur die hele Raad—dit geld vir beginselsake sowel as vir onder-geskikte punte. Die gevolg hiervan is dat die Agenda van die Federale Raad so lywig geword het dat die toestand van permanente chroniese opeenhoping ontstaan. Die eerste byeenkoms van hierdie Federale Raad in Durban in September 1957 het drie dae lank geduur met drie sessies op elke dag wat van 9 vm. tot 11 nm. geduur het. Hierdie patroon is by elke twee-jaarlikse byeenkoms herhaal en, gedurende die byeenkoms in Oktober 1959 te Oos-Londen, was daar twee aandessies wat tot 11.45 nm. geduur het.

work, deliberations and decisions must suffer, and this, I believe, could explain some of the more unwise decisions of the Council. Taking everything into account, however, I still consider that the Federal Council has acquitted itself very well and I should like to thank its members very much for their forbearance, humour, charity and kindness to myself as their Chairman, despite many trying moments.

I feel that the Executive Committee deserves a special word of praise for its most excellent and unstinted service to the Association. It has, for example, met six times this year in four different centres, and by going in deputation on behalf of the Council or receiving deputations similarly, and by doing the spade work in preparation for the Council's debates, it has greatly assisted the Council in the despatch of its business. Its members, who are active practitioners, have given their services at considerable personal sacrifice and financial loss.

Further, I consider that more authority should be given to the Executive Committee and the Standing Committees in order that they might efficiently carry out the work of the Association within, of course, the framework of the policies and opinions of the Council. I also believe that the number of Standing Committees might be increased with advantage. In explanation of this I would say that the Federal Council has had such congested Agendas and has had to devote so much time to the discussion of the problems of the private practitioner, especially in connection with contract practice and insurance practice generally, that opportunities for discussion and debate on new developments and matters of public importance have rarely been possible.

I believe that the creation of three new standing committees of the Council would be most valuable to the Association, and would suggest:

1. A General Practitioners Standing Committee.
2. A Specialists Standing Committee.
3. A Full-time Medical Officers Standing Committee.

Committees (1) and (2) would combine to form the Central Committee for Contract Practice.

Committee (3) would initiate steps to develop the interests of the various sub-sections, e.g. the Medical Officers of Health Group, the full-time Hospital and Universities Officers' Group, the Hospital Administrators and the Medical Civil Service, etc. Every member of the Association would then feel that there was a standing committee looking after his particular interests. Furthermore, one of the Medical Secretaries of the Association would act as secretary of each of these standing committees and this would really bring the machinery of the Association to the Groups.

During the past two years, the Federal Council, owing to the initiative of its Executive Committee, has done some good work in streamlining and improving the By-laws and Standing Orders of the Council. The suggestions which I have made here could also be put into effect by further changes and amendments in these By-laws. I should like to commend these suggestions for consideration, both by the present Council and also by the new Federal Council which will be elected later in the New Year.

Ek is oortuig daarvan dat geen geneesheer, as hy 'n mediese mening sou moes uitspreek, hierdie werksomstandighede sou goedkeur nie. Onder sulke drukte moet die werk en beraadslagings en besluite daaronder ly en ek dink dat dit die verklaring is vir sommige van die onverstandige besluite van die Raad. As ons egter alles in aanmerking neem, dink ek tog nog dat die Federale Raad hom goed van sy taak gekwyt het en ek wil graag die lede van die Raad vir hulle verdraagsaamheid, humor, welwillendheid en vriendelikheid teenoor my as Voorsitter, bedank—ten spyte van baie moeilike oomblikke.

Ek voel dat die Uitvoerende Komitee 'n spesiale woordjie van lof verdien vir sy uitstekende en toegewide diens aan die Vereniging. Die Komitee het byvoorbeeld ses keer gedurende hierdie jaar op vier verskillende plekke ontmoet en deur deputasies te ontvang of as deputasies te dien ten behoeve van die Raad, en ook deur voorlopige werk te doen ten opsigte van die voorbereiding van debatte van die Raad, het dit die Raad baie gehelp by die uitvoer van sy pligte. Die lede van die Uitvoerende Komitee wat almal in die praktyk staan, het hulle dienste gelewer op die grondslag van aansienlike persoonlike opoffering en geldelike las.

Ek voel dat 'n groter mate van outoriteit aan die Uitvoerende Komitee en die vaste komitees gegee moet word sodat hulle met groter doeltreffendheid die werk van die Vereniging kan doen binne die raamwerk van die beleid en menings van die Raad. Ek voel ook dat die aantal vaste komitees tot voordeel van almal vergroot sou kon word. Om my standpunt te verduidelik wil ek aantoon dat die Agendas van die Federale Raad so vol was en dat so baie aandag gegee is aan bespreking van die probleme van private praktisyne, veral ten opsigte van kontrakpraktyk en versekering in die algemeen, dat daar min geleentheid was om nuwe ontwikkelings en sake van algemene belang te bespreek.

Ek dink dat die stigting van drie nuwe komitees van die Raad baie vir die Vereniging sou kon beteken en ek wil die volgende aanbeveel:

1. 'n Vaste Komitee vir Algemene praktisyne.
2. 'n Vaste Komitee vir Spesialiste.
3. 'n Vaste Komitee vir Voltydse Mediese Beamptes.

Die Sentrale Komitee in verband met Kontrakpraktyk sou uit komitees 1 en 2 kon bestaan.

Komitee 3 sou die leiding kon neem betreffende sake van die verskillende sub-groepe, byvoorbeeld die Groep vir Mediese Gesondheidsbeamptes, die Groep vir Voltydse Mediese Beamptes van Hospitale en Universiteite, die Hospitaaladministrateurs, en die Mediese lede van die Staatsdiens, ens. Elke lid van die Vereniging sou dan kon voel dat daar 'n vaste komitee is wat sy eie belange op die hart dra. Verder, een van die Mediese Sekretarisse van die Vereniging sou kon optree as sekretaris van elkeen van hierdie vaste komitees en dit sou dit dan moontlik maak om die masjinerie van die Vereniging vir die Groepe beskikbaar te stel.

Gedurende die afgelope twee jaar het die Federale Raad op aandrang van sy Uitvoerende Komitee goeie werk gedoen wat betref die vereenvoudiging en verbetering van die Verordeninge en die Reglemente van Orde van die Raad. Die voorstelle wat ek hier genoem het sou ook kon ingelyf word by verdere veranderinge en amendemente van die Verordeninge. Ek wil hierdie aanbevelings graag vir ooreweging voorlê vir die huidige Raad sowel as vir die nuwe Federale Raad wat later in die Nuwe Jaar gekies sal word.

In addition to the splendid and loyal work done by Federal Council, I should like to express our thanks to the Medical Secretaries who have given us excellent service during this past year. We hope that Dr. Marchand will settle happily in Pretoria. Our Editor has developed some very welcome new features in the *Journal* despite the rather rigid control of printed matter which had to be imposed throughout the year because of the financial state of the Association. To all our members I extend my best wishes for a very happy and prosperous New Year.

By die goeie en getroue werk wat die Federale Raad gedoen het wil ek ook graag die Mediese Sekretarisse bedank wat uitstekende dienste vir ons gelewer het gedurende die afgelope jaar. Ons hoop dat dr. Marchand gou sal tuis wees in Pretoria. Ons Redakteur het nuwe ontwikkelings in die *Tydskrif* ingelei ten spyte van 'n streng beheer oor die hoeveelheid stof wat gedurende die jaar gepubliseer is omrede van die finansiële toestand van die Vereniging. Aan al ons lede wil ek graag 'n gelukkige en voorspoedige Nuwe Jaar toewens.