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The International Veterinary Student Association (I.V.S.A.)

by A. J. Higgins

We don't have to look very far in this world to see immense trouble and distress between peoples and races. In my own country, for example, we have the Northern Ireland situation—ever present however blind we pretend our eyes to be. This conflict is only one of a profoundly shattering list of clashes between sections of humanity. There is a trend of thought which dismisses such problems as "human nature". Such believers feel that strife will always prevail whatever attempts are made to promote international harmony. I am no philosopher but I do not hold with this belief. I strongly feel that any attempt, however small, that tries to bring about a better relationship and understanding between peoples is worthwhile. This applies to conditions within a nation and between nations.

The International Veterinary Students Association has five aims and objects:—

1. To promote international contact and co-operation between veterinary students.
2. To represent veterinary students on an international basis.
3. To promote the organisation of an international Congress of Veterinary Students.

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4. To promote the exchange of veterinary students between different countries.
5. To establish and encourage international programmes which will stimulate the interest of veterinary students in the advancement of the science art of veterinary medicine.

I consider the first of these, undoubtedly, to be the most important. The veterinary profession is a relatively small profession and I.V.S.A. is a relatively small organization, but it represents the veterinary students of between twenty-five and thirty countries throughout the world. The association has, therefore, succeeded where others have failed in bringing together representatives from otherwise diverging countries. Of course, distances are a major obstacle, but we are corresponding with, for example, your own N.C.S.C. of the A.V.M.A. and other countries such as Japan and Malaysia, who for many reasons are unable to fulfill an active role in the association. I.V.S.A. tries to offer the veterinary student in each member country an established association with many of his international colleagues.

Twice a year, I.V.S.A. brings together each member country's representatives to its Winter and Summer Congresses. The holding of two Congresses annually tends to provoke criticism that we are merely exploiting sponsors to provide a handful

of students with two holidays each year. Admittedly, I.V.S.A. Congresses are held in the unique, convivial atmosphere of professional friendship for which veterinary student get-togethers are renowned worldwide! However, in most cases, delegates to Congress are the elected representatives of their country's veterinary students. As such, I believe that an underlying hope exists amongst the delegates that, in some way, they may be helping international relations by promoting the exchange of ideas and the encouragement of mutual understanding. The Congresses are an attempt to unite member countries through full programmes of professional, academic, social and sporting activities.

Counting among its membership black and white Africa, and East and West Europe, I.V.S.A. considers itself a non-political organisation. The breakdown of the political barrier is particularly apparent in the field of student exchange, which is one of the chief functions of the Association. Last summer 142 students took advantage of the exchange system and combined a holiday with the opportunity to enlarge their professional horizons by working and watching in the veterinary field abroad. Accommodation is often provided free in the host country and certain organizations and trusts sometimes provide grants both for travel and for day-to-day expenses. I am sure that many students would welcome the establishment of a working exchange programme with the United States and I hope that as we work towards the eventual membership of the N.C.S.C. to I.V.S.A. we will be able to develop the exchange system to the advantage of the students both from current member countries and the United States.

Like so many student organizations, the I.V.S.A. since its foundation in 1951, has suffered from fluctuating fortunes in the struggle to overcome the problems of discontinuity. The establishment last year of a permanent Information Centre in Utrecht Netherland has been a major step towards overcoming this hurdle. A further aid to integration is a regular production of Newsletters for members and the publishing of an annual magazine. We have

recently heard that the Japanese Veterinary Students Association translates the Newsletter into the Japanese language for circulation to its members! However, I firmly believe that the Congresses are the primary aid to unity and so have no qualms about supporting the idea of holding two each year. Following a successful Winter Congress in the United Kingdom, the 1972 Summer Congress is to be held in Lisbon, Portugal, and we hope N.C.S.C. will be represented.

Although I.V.S.A. is primarily designed for national membership, or for individual schools where no national veterinary student association exists, membership is also to individuals—undergraduates or up to four years post-graduates. Of course, the Association is totally non-profit making and, as a student body, does constantly aim to keep the subscription low. The Secretary, Colin Ellis, in London, will be happy to answer any enquiries.

Now that the major attempt has been successfully made to organize the American veterinary students into a national body, I sincerely hope that, at last, the United States veterinary student can bring to play his appropriate role in the international veterinary student scene. At the opening ceremony of the 1972 Winter Congress at the Royal Veterinary College in London this January, Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother graciously consented to send a message to delegates. This was it:—

“As Chancellor of the University of London, it gives me great pleasure to welcome all delegates attending the 1972 Winter Congress of the International Veterinary Students Association at The Royal Veterinary College. At a time when it is most important to work for a better relationship between all peoples, I believe that international student organisations have a valuable role to play, for, by gathering together students from all over the world, they are encouraging a better sense of understanding and sympathy amongst the younger generation.”

ELIZABETH — R
Queen Mother

Perhaps, therefore, in our own small way, we might possibly be able to try and help to calm a troubled world. I hope so and I hope we can look forward to the support of our American colleagues.