Frank D. Naylor: A Journey in Psychology

In 1973 I was privileged to share an office at the University of Sussex with Mary Nixon. In the previous year Mary had completed her term as 7th President of the Society (1971-72). About June, 1974 – after we had both returned to Australia – she invited me to lunch at a Carlton restaurant. At that pleasurable engagement she indicated that I “should think seriously about becoming the next General Secretary of the APS”, and that she would seek my views on the matter after I had given it due thought. I was flattered that a colleague whom I held in high esteem would think that I was worthy of such responsibilities. These were the initial steps in a long journey with the Society, and with me. I learned so much about the governance of complex organisations and the delicacies of interpersonal relations, and I created many fine friendships within and beyond the APS.

The office of General Secretary was an appointment by the Council of the Society, unlike the other office-bearers who were formally elected by the membership. I was mentored in the role by Elaine Muir, the administrative officer who ran the central office, and George Owens, who was then President-Elect. Their help and patience was beyond estimation. Ron King, the prior holder of the office, had created exemplary standards of performance, and I was aware that I had much to live up to.

That was just the beginning. In 1976 my old friend Paul Power, who was my contemporary at that time as Executive Officer, departed for an extended time overseas. For the ensuing four years I was Executive Officer of the Society, and Elaine Muir became General Secretary. The Society was growing rapidly and the work loads of office-bearers were increasing as a consequence. George Owens, the 12th president, had established the President’s Select Committee to review and make recommendations to the Council on the future structure of governance in the Society, and that baton was picked up by Peter Sheehan in his ensuing presidency. Much work was done in codifying and clarifying the available options for change, but in the end the Council decided that it was not an opportune time for major changes. That work was not wasted however, as the future revealed.

The work of the Executive Officer at that time (1976 onwards) increased as the requirements of the membership and the growth of the Society became more complex. Many problems requiring creative responses led to inevitable positive learning opportunities that, for me, generalised beyond the APS. For example, I am certain that my APS experiences laid a most positive foundation for exercising my responsibilities as Chair of my university department.

My contributions to the APS continued over many years as a member of committees and working parties, including Chair of the Membership Committee and of the Course Development and Accreditation Committee. I was the 27th President (1991-1992), and by that time it was manifest that the Society’s governance structures and procedures were not adequate to its dynamic complexity. The Council established the Constitution Review Committee which brought its recommendations to the membership at the Gold Coast conference in 1993. I was pleased to move the proposals for changes in governance that were overwhelmingly accepted by the membership, and which set the future direction of
the Society. The aspirations of the President’s Select Committee some fifteen years past were ultimately realised.

More recently I have been Chair of the Society’s Ethics Appeals Committee.

I am most grateful for the opportunities, learning experiences and responsibilities provided me by the Society.

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