

Chapter 9

1977–1981

President: R.G. Naquet

During this term the Federation was under the able leadership of Robert Naquet (Fig. 9.1). In this term the other Executive Committee members were Past-President William Cobb, Secretary Robert Ellingson, Treasurer Max Dondey, Member-at-Large Johann Kugler, EMG Commission Chairman John Desmedt, and Editor-in-Chief Mary A.B. Brazier.

It has always been regarded as desirable that Member Societies should be autonomous but in some cases it has been necessary to accept as members sections of larger societies, of neurology or physiology for example. The change in status of the Polish Society, recounted in the last chapter, which was completed in July 1979, was therefore welcome. In contrast, the Indian society had long been a problem to the Executive Committee, with which it communicated on rare occasions and to which it very seldom paid dues; after personal contact with some EEG and EMG workers in India it was arranged to dissolve the old society and form a section of the Neurological Society of India, which was finally admitted to membership in February 1980. At the same time the Peruvian Society of EEG and Clinical Neurophysiology was also admitted.

The invitation of the Swedish Society to hold the Sixth International Congress of EMG in Stockholm in June 1979 was accepted. The President deputed J.E. Desmedt, the Chairman of the EMG Commission, to represent him as chairman of the organizing committee; the Convener was K.E. Hagbarth, the Secretary Anders Persson, and the Treasurer

Ingemar Petersén. Over 600 people attended and the congress was reckoned to be a great success.

When it was learned that the neurologists had settled on Japan for the congress in 1981 the invitation of the Japanese Society was immediately accepted. A preliminary planning meeting was organized for September 1978 in conjunction with a scientific meeting in Vancouver, a convenient half-way point between Japan and Europe. It was also possible to arrange a nearly complete meeting of the Executive Committee at the same time. Subsequently the President and other Federation members of the Organizing Committee made a number of visits to Kyoto; the “Final Report” by the host society very truly says “the relationship among members of the two groups was marked by respect, reliability and cooperation which led to the successful conduct of the congress”.

Despite continued inflation and an expenditure considerably above the budget estimate, the Federation was able to give much increased financial support to the Congress, in part resulting from the skill of the Treasurer in managing the funds and in part from the sustained profitability of the Journal. A total of US \$65,000 was made available to the Japanese organizers, all of which was subsequently repaid; although the scale of this “loan” was larger than ever before it should be noted that it followed an established pattern; no congress has in fact made a loss, but the Federation’s grant forms an insurance against a possible loss which an individual society could not accept.



Fig. 9.1. Robert Naquet, IFSECN President 1977–1981.

The Federation also expended about US \$120,000 on travel grants to invited speakers and to young scientists (selected by their own societies). This seems to be an important way of assuring the success of a congress, particularly when travel is the major item of personal expense.

Not long before the Congress a proposal was received from the Dutch Society that the title of the Federation should be changed because “it is too long for daily use and gives EEG an unrealistic priority”. The suggestion had of course been made before and been rejected but this time it received a quite favourable reception from some members of the Executive Committee, though it was argued that the title of the EEG Journal could not be changed and it was not acceptable that they should be greatly different. A favoured new title was “Federation of Clinical and Experimental Neurophysiology”, which certainly got nearer the truth of the matter, though no one recalled Jasper’s stricture of years before, that you cannot federate a science. The proposal, in outline, was put to the Council, which rejected it; it will probably occur again.

At the last General Assembly it had been suggested that membership of the Executive Committee should be limited to one per society, to give a more equitable spread. The Committee had a good deal of sympathy for this idea but could find no practical way in which it could be implemented without possible injustice and the Rules Committee was of the same opinion, though the delegate for Uruguay wrote a dissenting report.

During the election of the President it became apparent to the Chairman of the Nomination Committee that a tie-vote was possible and he realized that such a situation was not envisaged by the Statutes; he began to enquire among his colleagues as to what to do but was spared the embarrassing situation since, at the closing date, the voting was 20–19. However, the same thing happened again in the voting for Secretary and this time it was a tie, 19–19. The chairman handed the problem to the President who decided to resolve it by a vote of the Executive Committee; it should be noted that this would not have been a practical solution of the earlier dilemma since both candidates then were members of the Committee. To resolve the problem if it should arise again the Rules Committee proposed, and the General Assembly accepted, a change in the Statutes to allow the President a casting vote in the case of any tie. Curiously, this device had been included in the first modification of the Statutes of 1961 but omitted from the next version of 1965, presumably because there were those who objected, as there were at the present time, to anyone having two votes.

The next term’s Executive Committee as finally constituted was as follows: President R.J. Ellingson, Past President R. Naquet, Secretary M.D. Low of Vancouver, Treasurer M. Dondey, Chairman EMG Commission J.E. Desmedt, Editor-in-Chief M.A.B. Brazier and Member-at-Large C.A. Tassinari of Bologna.

Despite the financial success of the Fiscal Period the cautious Treasurer proposed an increase in dues (there had been none for 8 years) to \$40 per decade and this was accepted by the General Assembly.

1. The Tenth International Congress, Kyoto

The Japanese appointed a very large local organizing committee of some 150 members; this did not appear to impair efficiency as might have been expected, perhaps because the basic organization was done by a highly professional company. Certainly the conduct of the Congress and all the complex arrangements associated with it

left nothing to be desired. The Congress was held from September 13 to 18 in the Kyoto International Congress Hall, a most imaginative new concrete building on the outskirts of the city, in congenially landscaped surroundings. The distance from the Congress hotels was no drawback thanks to an effective shuttle service of buses. The Congress was held under the joint Presidency of N. Yoshii and K. Suhara; the Convener was Y. Shimazono, the Secretary M. Ebe and the Treasurer H. Shimazu.

Following the success of the poster presentations in Amsterdam it was decided, particularly because it was expected that language problems would be greater than usual, that all free communications should be presented as posters; incidentally, this was the first congress, except for the original London meeting, at which no simultaneous translation was provided; it had become more and more restricted over the years because of the high cost and relatively small benefit. Exactly 600 communications were offered though only 523 were actually presented, rather more than half from the host country.

Similarly, slightly more than half of the total attendance of 1550 was from Japan, a remarkable number. The total of active participants from the rest of the world was 556 which, considering the distances and expenses involved, was a very satisfactory result.

The scale which the congresses had now reached may be judged from the fact that the total cost of this one was 182 million yen; even when divided by approximately 200 to give the dollar equivalent this is still a large sum. Its provision was very different from that of recent congresses; in millions of yen the registration fees provided 59, business and other organizations contributed 101 and the members of the Japanese Society most generously donated 22 (US \$110,000). The commercial exhibition, on which other congresses have relied heavily, did not contribute. The Japanese government remitted substantial taxes which would otherwise have been due.

To most of the visitors the cultural background of the Congress was entirely new and there could be no better place than Kyoto in which to experience it; our hosts went to great trouble to give and to explain to us some of its features. The entertainments provided were rightly Japanese with, no doubt, enormous concessions to Western ignorance and taste. About 1500 people attended the buffet dinner, during which two large barrels of sake were broached in the traditional, if unpracticed, manner (Fig. 9.2). The visitors had some difficulty in drinking it tidily from the square wooden boxes provided.

2. The EEG Journal

Because of tax concessions Elsevier had set up a branch at Shannon in Eire and in October 1977 the production of the Journal was moved there; naturally the move caused some confusion and delays but these appeared to be coming under control when, at Christmas time, both the general manager of the office and Mr. Cullen, in charge of the Journal, were killed in a car crash. This tragedy caused further problems which were only sorted out when the Journal was brought back to Amsterdam some months later.

This contributed to an increasing publication delay because of the build-up of papers in stock. On these occasions it is always the Society Proceedings which are blamed for taking space at the expense of original papers. They had, in fact, been increasing slightly in volume despite the reduction to 200 words per abstract of a few years before. Various solutions were mooted, including publication of separate Proceedings numbers from time to time, which would have been very expensive. Finally two proposals were accepted:

- (1) to reduce the number of words to 150/abstract, which would save nearly 25%
- (2) to charge the actual cost of extra pages, about US \$20/abstract, to non-member societies, whose abstracts took up about 20% of the Proceedings. This proposal would affect mainly the four American regional societies

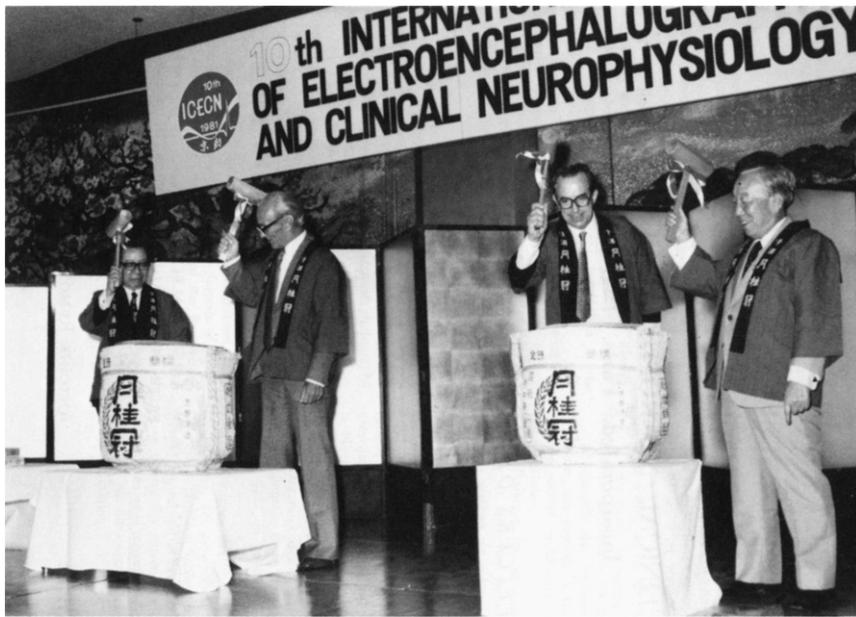


Fig. 9.2. The opening of the banquet of the Kyoto Congress, 1981. Japanese colleagues teach William Cobb and Max Dondey the art of broaching of the “sake” barrels.

and was strongly resisted by the American editor (i.e. the Editor-in-Chief).

For the time being, therefore, it was agreed to implement only the reduction in the number of words, from January 1979, returning to the forgotten and unworkable limit of 30 years earlier. This decision evoked a strong protest from Peter Gloor, the president of the American EEG Society, on the grounds that 150 words were insufficient to present an adequate outline of any complex investigation; as this was the view of nearly half the members of the Editorial Board (it had been a majority decision) the question was reopened. At this time more pages became available in the Journal and the proponents of the shorter abstract were induced to agree to the status quo.

For some time alarm signals had been coming from the Brain Information Service, which had freely provided the Index to Current Literature for the past 11 years. Its grant had been severely cut and it could only continue the Index with financial support from the Federation; this would

have been on a scale that was thought to be greater than was justifiable and so, regrettably, the Index came to an end with the close of 1978, after nearly 30 years in one form or another. It was the pages freed by this demise which removed the pressure to shorten the Proceedings.

The first number of 1979 completed 30 years of the Journal's existence and to mark the occasion the February number came out, for the once only, in a pale green cover and contained a brief history of the Journal by Brazier and Cobb entitled *Thirty years*.

At about the same time the pressures of his university post became too much for Pierre Buser and he had to resign as European editor after six distinguished years. His replacement was quickly found in Hans van Duijn, who had collaborated with Cobb in editing the Proceedings of the Amsterdam congress as *Supplement 34, Contemporary Clinical Neurophysiology* (1978). In addition to his natural talent he had the potentially great advantage of working in Amsterdam, close to the office of Elsevier.

Sales of the Handbook had been going on steadily, both of the complete volumes and of individual parts; stocks of some of the latter were nearing exhaustion and also some of these had been written as early as 1970 and were out of date. It was decided that, while a complete rewriting was impossible and unnecessary, selected parts which were unsatisfactory should be replaced by new teams of authors. This project is going on slowly, and at the time of writing nothing has been published.

Throughout the period the excess of Journal stock, and hence the publication delay, gave constant cause for anxiety; there was never the possibility to recover from the disaster of the transfer to Shannon and the supply of new papers continued to increase despite a high

rejection rate, often near to 50%. Elsevier finally offered to produce an extra volume at their own risk, as they had done for extra issues in 1964; that is, billing the subscribers retrospectively. Accordingly, the first volume of 1980 was normal while the next six numbers were twice the usual size, forming two normal volumes (49 and 50). This reduced the publication delay to under 6 months, where it has remained, and was not a financial failure as some had feared. Nor did it appear to have serious effect on the subscription list, which had already fallen somewhat from its peak of 3400. The worldwide reduction in university and library budgets caused large reductions in some Journal circulations but ours has been held at 1–2% per year, with a total hovering around 2900.