

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

by PAUL F. BIKLE, SSA President

It has not been the policy of the Soaring Society, nor is it my intention, to devote space in *Soaring* to the business and administrative matters of the Society. This is as it should be for we, as individuals, are not concerned with promoting the Society for the sake of the Society. Rather, we have a Soaring Society to actively promote soaring in the United States and to represent our soaring interests in contacts with government agencies in this country, with the Federation Aeronautique Internationale, and with soaring people in other countries. Perhaps most important, we look to the Society for the publication in *Soaring* magazine of information and interesting stories on soaring flights, construction of sailplanes, club activities, and results of meetings and contests.

Once each year, however, it is worth the time and space to consider your business and mine in conducting the affairs of the Society. The bulk of the work of the Society is performed by our Executive Secretary and his small, paid staff. A great deal of Society work is also performed by the Officers of the Society and by the various working committees under the direction of committee chairmen appointed by the President. Functions and duties of these committees were covered in detail in the October, 1961, *Soaring*.

The Officers are Directors who have been elected by the other Directors for a one-year period to carry on the business of the Society between meetings of the Board of Directors. The Board is composed of 26 Directors, 20 of whom are regional representatives elected by the members in the 12 regions within the United States. Two meetings of the Board are normally held each year, one a two-day meeting held at the end of January, and the second, a one-day meeting immediately before or after the National Soaring Championships each summer. The next meeting will be in Phoenix, Arizona, on the 27th and 28th of January, 1962.

All of this works in a kind of circle with the members electing the Directors, the Directors electing Officers, the Officers working with the

Executive Secretary and appointing committee chairmen who enlist the help of the members in getting the work done. Of course, there are all kinds of across-the-circle activities with everyone free to communicate directly with anyone else.

Normally, each Director will hold a regional membership meeting before the SSA Board of Directors' meetings. This year the meetings should take place in December so that each Director may submit items of concern to his region for inclusion in the agenda for the Phoenix meeting. You who are members should make it a point to attend these meetings, discuss matters that interest you with your Regional Director, and let him know what you would like to see in the way of improvements; if you think things are going pretty well, tell him that, also. If you can't make the meeting, write a letter.

As background material for the meetings and discussions, I will try briefly to outline the activities of the Society during the past year and some of the plans for next year. The year 1962 will be the 30th anniversary of the SSA. It will also be the fifth year in our transition from an operation based entirely on volunteer help to one with a small, professional staff to ensure continuity of effort, publication of *Soaring* on a monthly basis, and a growing list of services to the membership.

This transition has been possible only because of substantial financial aid from the Chichester duPont Foundation from 1957 to 1960. During this period, voting membership increased at a phenomenal rate from about 750 in 1956 to more than 2300 at the end of 1960. *Soaring* circulation increased to over 3500 each month.

In 1961, the Society was faced with the problem of bringing operating expenses in line with its income, which is derived primarily from membership dues. Reduction of operating expenses to the level of anticipated income for 1961 would have required drastic cuts in services, such as cutting back the publication of *Soaring* to only six times a year. Instead, the Directors approved an

approach which involved only a limited curtailment of services, a greater dependence on SSA working committees and a renewed effort to increase membership at a rate which would achieve a balanced operating deficit in 1961 of about half that experienced in 1960, with an even smaller deficit expected in 1962. Sufficient reserves existed in the general funds to carry this level of effort through 1962.

Although 1961 is not quite over, indications are that both income and expenses will be slightly over those estimated for the year's activity; however the deficit will not be as great as that approved by the Board last January. Income from new memberships did not come up to the hoped-for level but this was more than offset by additional income from sales and advertising. Even so, the number of voting memberships will approach 2750 by the end of the year and the monthly circulation of *Soaring* will have exceeded 4400. It appears that the financial plan adopted by the Directors to complete the transition started in 1957 by the end of 1962 is a feasible one. It calls for retaining the present level of operation through 1962 and depends on continued membership increases, although at a reduced rate, to attain a balanced budget by 1963.

Everything considered, 1961 has been a good year. Growth in membership has been accompanied by increased soaring activity. Nearly 400 C pins and over 90 Silver badges have been earned in the past 12 months. The increase in soaring is predominately at the grass roots level. Interest in records, contests and Diamond badges is being eclipsed by more flying by the newer members. Much of this healthy soaring activity results from the greatly increased business experienced by the commercial operators in the past year. More new sailplanes have been registered than ever before. The National Contest was one of the best ever held, largely due to the hard work of the Kansas Soaring Association. Competing pilots demonstrated the highest average level of competitive soaring that has ever been assembled at a U.S. National Contest.

Also in 1961, your Directors voted to submit to the F.A.I. a bid for the 1963 World Championships. It appears that this bid is being considered favorably by the F.A.I. with a final decision expected early in De-

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