

## CHAPTER NINE

### GETTING TOGETHER

THE first Rotary club began with a meeting; and the regular weekly meeting is a requirement for every Rotary club in the world; for it is the club meeting that provides the environment for "the development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service".

No meeting in Rotary is more important than the weekly meeting of the Rotary club. No matter what we might be told by enthusiastic governors about the importance of the district conference or the international convention, from either or both of which one may regularly absent oneself with impunity, it is the club meeting that remains paramount. Absent yourself from that more often than is permitted by the rules and you're out; dishonourably discharged.

There are other meetings of importance, of course; and some of them are discussed in this chapter; but the pre-eminence of the Rotary club meeting should be kept firmly in mind.

In this chapter, the experienced, knowledgeable Rotarian is not being addressed so much as the Rotary recruit, or the potential Rotarian, or even those family members of a Rotarian who wonder what on earth goes on at these meetings of which Father appears to be a compulsive attender. The experienced Rotarian is welcome to read it, too; not in the hope and expectation of learning something so much as in the certainty of experiencing smug satisfaction on discovering those factual errors of which the writer is probably guilty, if happily unaware.

#### CLUBS

The first Rotary meeting ever held on this vast continent was the organisation meeting of the Rotary Club of Melbourne at Scott's Hotel at 1 p.m. on Thursday, April 21, 1921. A preliminary meeting had been held two weeks earlier at which an organising committee had been appointed, but that informal gathering does not qualify. The first regular meeting was held on Wednesday, April 27, also at Scott's Hotel, the Wednesday having been chosen to suit the convenience of the president, Professor Osborne. It was the only day on which he was free of university commitments during lunch hour.

Weekly meetings of Rotary clubs follow a broadly similar format throughout the world (with a few minor differences apparent in different regions). The members meet for luncheon, dinner or, quite often in recent years, breakfast; gathering for fellowship 15 to 30 minutes before the scheduled time. The club president usually, but in a few clubs a "chairman for the day" or the sergeant-at-arms, presides. Breakfast and luncheon meetings are usually strictly of one hour's duration. Most dinner meetings are more relaxed, lasting one and a half to two hours. Grace is said or sung in most Australian clubs, though this is by no means a universal practice.

The meal is served as the meeting begins, visiting Rotarians and guests of members are introduced; and, especially in luncheon clubs, while the victuals are consumed reports from directors and announcements from the president and secretary are given. Each of the directors (club, vocational, community, international and youth service) is called upon to report on progress of projects or any activities of the committees within that directorate.

Again in Australian clubs, the sergeant-at-arms is usually called upon to extract fines from members for real or imagined misdemeanours, an occasion for sparkling or laboured wit depending on the personality of the incumbent. Next the guest speaker is introduced; and after his address to members and question time (in all limited to 25 minutes at luncheons but sometimes from 40 minutes to an hour at evening meetings) a vote of thanks is proposed and the meeting is closed.

It is obvious to anyone attending a Rotary club meeting that the work of the club is not done at its weekly meetings; which are occasions for fellowship, exchange of information and education.

The real business of the club is transacted at monthly meetings of the board of directors; and the projects, programs and activities of the club are planned at committee meetings; and because, in most clubs, every member of the club is a member of one or more committees, everyone is involved in the decision-making and the work - especially the work. Committees meet at the discretion of their chairmen or members.

From time to time the club holds a club assembly, a meeting of the club board and all committee chairmen; but as this includes a

majority of members, most club assemblies are attended by all members. Club assemblies are planning meetings at which any or all of the proposed projects and programs are discussed in detail and plans made for the implementation of decisions. In recent years many clubs have preferred the term "club forum" to imply that it is open to all members.

To promote fellowship in the very large clubs, in which it is not so easy to cultivate the intimate friendships that are so characteristic of smaller suburban and country clubs, the membership may be divided into "district groups", as they are called in Melbourne, or "teams" in Sydney, of 15 or so members who meet monthly at the homes of members. The format of the team or group meetings is left to the members. In his 1971 *Story of Rotary in Australia*, Harold Hunt recalled: "There once was a Chairman of District Groups who furnished each Group Captain with a list of serious topics for discussion and report. He was replaced the next year. In (my) experience . . . such suggestions are not received with the respect they deserve, and after brushing them aside in a rather irresponsible way the Group settles down to informal yarning. But this is not devoid of enjoyment or even instruction seeing that topics are opened up by men with a wide range of knowledge." and "Perth has the same idea as Melbourne about informality . . . (and) records general agreement that their success has been due in no small way to complete freedom of operation."

#### DISTRICTS

##### Conference

The Rotary district has one formal meeting a year to which all members of all constituent clubs (and their families) are invited. This is the district conference, usually but not necessarily held over a week-end from Friday to Sunday afternoon. Traditionally it is a mixture of information, inspiration and entertainment in the form of addresses on Rotary topics or on subjects of general interest, introduction of and talks by visiting Rotary Foundation scholars and group study exchange teams and Rotary exchange students and/or those from the district who have completed their overseas studies; presentations on chosen Rotary activities, the

district governor's report, an address by the R.I. president's personal representative (a senior Rotarian such as a past district governor or past director of Rotary International, chosen by the president); a business session for debate of proposals from clubs for submission to the next council on legislation, or district "house-keeping" resolutions; workshops on chosen topics and reports back to plenary sessions; a banquet with entertainment and a good deal of fellowship. At the concluding plenary session the president's representative gives an evaluation of the conference (almost always in glowing terms) and the euphoria is allowed to dissipate as members go on their way rejoicing.

World-wide, the average attendance at district conferences is between five and six percent. In Australia it ranges from 20 to 35 percent of Rotarians, most of whom are accompanied by spouses (or partners, as it now seems politically correct to call them, causing some speculation when a Rotarian actually introduces a business partner).

#### Assembly

A smaller but more significant district gathering is the district assembly: a short (sometimes one day but more often a week-end) training course for incoming club officers. Held before the beginning of the new Rotary year (July 1), it takes the form of addresses by senior Rotarians, and so-called study groups (actually classes) for incoming presidents, vice presidents, secretaries, directors of club, vocational, community, international and youth service from every club in the district. Sometimes The Rotary Foundation chairman or the treasurer may be included.

The incoming district governor (often assisted by the incumbent governor) presides at the presidents' group. Other groups are led by Rotarians with special experience in the area of service or administration being covered.

An extension of this, of quite recent vintage, is an extra training day for incoming presidents known as the Presidents Elect Training Seminar (PETS).

#### Committees and Institutes

District governors, either at the direction of the board of R.I. or at their own discretion, sometimes convene one-day institutes for club chairmen of, for example, The Rotary Foundation, or public relations or youth exchange or membership development, at which the leaders of that particular activity from all clubs in the district are invited to exchange ideas.

District committees, in common with club committees, meet as necessary. Those charged with arranging a particular activity, such as the RYLA or Rypen seminar or the Youth Exchange briefing or the selection of a Group Study Exchange team, meet regularly to plan the activity. Those whose function is advisory will not necessarily meet at all (unless they are arranging a one-day institute) after the initial meeting for the year at which they agree on the nature of the advice they will give if called upon by club committees for help.

#### Colleges or councils of governors

Some governors call periodical meetings of all the past officers of R.I. in their districts. Some of these are formal meetings at which there are resolutions recorded. More often they are informal gatherings at which the incumbent governor seeks the advice of his predecessors. Some groups of past officers are called councils or advisory councils or committees or colleges of governors. Others remain nameless.

#### Presidents' meetings

In some of the geographically smaller districts centred on capital cities it is possible for the club presidents to meet regularly with their district governor to exchange ideas and discuss common problems. The value of such gatherings (apart from fellowship) is for others to assess. If they are as effective in promoting the service and efficiency of clubs as is claimed for them by some former governors, then metropolitan clubs must show better performance than those in vast districts covering many thousands of square kilometres; but they don't.

At an Australian Rotary Institute in the 1970s the problem of communicating effectively with clubs was being discussed. One

incumbent governor got to his feet. "I don't see the problem," he said in wide-eyed innocence and with portentous pomposity. "Surely these are matters that can be sorted out at your monthly presidents' meetings." (QED!) Poor fellow. He was only trying to be helpful and did not expect to be howled down.

#### REGIONS or ZONES

A gathering beyond district level is the occasional regional conference, convened, for no obvious reason, by the board of Rotary International within a defined area that does not necessarily coincide with Rotary's regional boundaries. It is held, officially, "for the purpose of developing and promoting acquaintance and understanding and providing a forum for the exchange of ideas". It is conducted on the lines of a large district conference (with a minimum attendance of 2,000) or a small international convention, with guest speakers, sometimes workshop sessions and always a major "entertainment feature".

Regional conferences are, or were, occasions for fellowship and are reputed to advance international understanding by facilitating friendly discussion and social intercourse between people of many different cultures. Pacific regional conferences were held in various locations, including Honolulu in 1926, Sydney 1930, Manila 1935, Sydney 1956, Melbourne 1981 and Adelaide in 1986. It was announced in early 1996 that regional conferences were to be discontinued.

Apart from in R.I.B.I. (Rotary in Great Britain and Ireland), unique in having a territorial administration and therefore the opportunity and the administrative machinery to convene regular meetings and conferences officially, the only other annual meeting beyond district but below international level is the zone or regional institute, which was devised in Australia in 1955 and adopted internationally in the 1960s.

#### THE AUSTRALIAN ROTARY INSTITUTE

The precursor to what has become known as "The Institute" was an annual conference of incoming, incumbent and past officers of Rotary International which began as a meeting of 31 past district

governors in Melbourne in 1955. It was arranged by Alex Sellars of Albury at the request of his fellow-governors to discuss matters of common interest and concern, including problems associated with "re-districting", a classification outline using Australian terminology, representation on the R.I. board, a central distribution point for Rotary literature, a co-ordinated effort to establish closer understanding with Asia, Indonesia and the Philippines, and ways to better utilise the experience and knowledge of past governors.

Sir Angus Mitchell, past president of Rotary International, who had been prevailed upon to preside, was at pains to point out that the conference could have no official standing and that its resolutions, if any, could be regarded as no more than recommendations.

Participants felt that the conference was of sufficient value to arrange a similar gathering the following year in conjunction with the Pacific Regional Conference in Sydney, on which occasion they invited New Zealand colleagues to join them. The 38 past officers present (a list of whom might be seen as a Rotary Who's Who for 1956 and included such luminaries as Angus Mitchell, Ollie Oberg, Doug Stewart and Steve O'Halloran from Australia and Harold Thomas and Charles Taylor from New Zealand) again found value in the gathering but there was no decision to hold a further conference.

It was not until 1959 that the third conference was held in Canberra with only two governors and 14 past governors present (there were 50 apologies). The arrangements had been made by District 282 (9820) Governor Len Trigg of Frankston, and famous Canberra Rotarian Dr Bert Dickson who had been governor of the 30th District in 1951-52. Despite the poor attendance, however (which was attributed to unexpected organisational problems resulting in the invitations reaching their addressees only a few days before the conference), it was resolved that a further meeting be held in 1961 at which a permanent organisation would be established. And it so transpired. At the 1961 conference 33 attended and approved the basic machinery for convening an annual conference. Brian Maguire of the Rotary Club of Leeton, New South Wales and a past governor of the 30th District (9700), who had played a

leading role in the organisation of this and earlier conferences, was elected hon. secretary/convener and simple guidelines were agreed upon. It was re-emphasised that the conference had no official status and any resolutions could be no more than recommendations to clubs through incumbent governors or to the board of Rotary International.

In the next four years, the conference was held annually, convened by Brian Maguire, with a growing attendance each year.

By 1965 attendance at the annual conference by all governors and governors nominee was taken for granted; and the numbers were enhanced by at least twice as many past officers. New Zealand began to hold similar conferences every second year.

Deliberations of the conference by now had become of some consequence and had impressed the R.I. board to such an extent that the president of Rotary International (Dr C.P.H. Teenstra of The Netherlands) decided to attend so that he could assess the value of the conference. The result was the granting of "official" status as Regional Rotary Institutes and the encouragement of other regions (or zones within regions) to convene similar meetings.

The first official Australian Rotary Institute was held in Adelaide in 1966 with Jim (now Sir James) Foots presiding.

The annual institutes are now firmly established. Convened by the incumbent director of Rotary International, they occupy five days and include annual meetings of RAWCS and its constituent bodies (IPAC, FAIM, SWSL, DiK), Rotary Down Under Council, workshops for incumbent governors and governors nominee and meetings of various standing and ad hoc committees of the institute, as well as reports to plenary sessions from all these groups, discussion of matters suggested by members and of subjects introduced by the board of Rotary International for consideration by all institutes. On three occasions, combined ANZO (Australian and New Zealand) Institutes have been held: Melbourne in 1981, Christchurch in 1984 and Melbourne in 1994. With 23 districts in Australia and six in New Zealand represented by their governors and nominees and a number of past officers, a combined institute assumes the proportions of a district conference with a total registration (including spouses or

"partners") of more than 500.

Despite their influence, institutes still have no authority and appear to be content with their status as advisory bodies with the additional prerogative of appointing standing and ad hoc committees which are able to perform useful functions. Also, of course, they are occasions for fellowship and re-unions of past officers who trained together at their international assemblies and worked together during their years of office; in this they bear some resemblance to alumni associations. Some consider that their most important function is to provide the opportunity for national Rotary action such as was only available, before the development of institutes, to Rotary's only territorial unit, R.I.B.I.

## ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

### Conventions

The Rotary International convention is the great annual gathering, planned at least four years in advance and held, usually, in a different country each year. Attracting huge numbers, in recent years in excess of 20,000 (the all-time record was Tokyo in 1978 with 39,834), its original legislative and business functions have been reduced, since 1970, to voting on any proposed legislation that has been enacted by the council on legislation but vetoed by at least 10% of clubs (which has never happened) and formally electing the officers of Rotary International: the president, directors and district governors. Apart from that it is an occasion for addresses by world-famous people, reports on aspects of Rotary, lavish entertainment, fellowship which includes host-club home hospitality of overseas guests, and a measure of self-congratulation. There have been only two international conventions held in Australia: Sydney in 1971 with 16,646 registrants, and Melbourne in 1993 with 22,083.

The 1971 convention in Sydney was an occasion for rejoicing. Australian Rotary had come of age to the extent that it could be entrusted with the responsibility of mounting Rotary's most spectacular event; and the 23,000 members of the 640 clubs in 13 Australian districts made the most of the opportunity. There was no building in Sydney large enough to accommodate the expected

10,000 to 12,000 conventioners (one slightly deranged optimist even predicted 15,000 but his ravings were deservedly, if, in retrospect, regrettably disregarded); so the huge Commemorative Pavilion at the Royal Agricultural Showground was hired for the occasion, with the Manufacturers' Hall, wired up with closed-circuit television to accommodate the overflow; and with many other buildings in the vast complex pressed into service as offices, youth hub, house of friendship and all the ancillary offices and stalls from which eager clubs flogged their wares to raise funds.

The public transport system managed to cope with the influx but, despite careful planning, accommodation was stretched beyond reasonable limits. The program, as so often happens, came apart at the seams, with most sessions running over time and people leaving in droves. Sheep were shorn on stage; famous speakers were imported for the occasion, including Rotarian Sir Edmund Hillary of Everest fame from New Zealand, who talked about his involvement in world community service in Nepal; and Rotarian The Rev. Norman Vincent Peale of The Power of Positive Thinking fame from the U.S.A., who exhorted us to beseech the Lord to send us more problems. Leon Becker presided over an on-stage presentation of Rotary at Work Down Under. George Means, attending his last convention as general secretary of R.I. was honoured; President Bill Walk's announcement that RYLA had been officially adopted was greeted with enthusiastic Antipodean applause; and The Story of Rotary in Australia 1921-1971 by Harold Hunt was launched.

No one who pretends to any respect for the first question in the Four Way Test could claim that it was a good convention. How many of them are? But the fellowship was superb and if there were any complaints they were drowned out by the lavish praise of the host club and the hospitality.

By 1993, when the Rotary International Convention convened in Melbourne, Rotary in Australia had achieved genuine maturity, reflected in the highly sophisticated organisation. By now there were more than 40,000 members of 1,154 clubs in 23 districts in Australia and Papua New Guinea, all of whom had reason to be proud of the efforts of Australia's first Rotary club in mounting a

memorable convention.

The whole program, under the leadership of the affable, imperturbable and nimble-witted President Cliff Dochterman, attracted record attendances at plenary sessions and enthusiastic participation in workshops.

It was educational, inspirational and always entertaining. There wasn't a dry eye in the vast auditorium when baby Kezia Ann became the 500 millionth recipient, on stage, of a polio oral vaccine; or, again, when Gabi Hollows, who had accepted the 1993 Rotary Award for World Understanding on behalf of her late husband, Professor Fred Hollows, concluded her address to the convention. And there was hardly a rib that wasn't aching during much of the final effervescent entertainment feature, brilliantly compered by the incomparable Campbell McComas, a former Rotary Foundation Fellow. Rotarians felt some pride in their achievements when the audio-visual program, Doing Service Down Under, was presented, narrated by PDG Leon Becker (who has been told that he will be required to keep on doing Australian convention presentations until he gets it right). Challenging speakers included Jean-Michel Cousteau, Sir Gustav Nossal, U.N. Under Secretary General Rafeeuddin Ahmed and Rotary Club of Sydney President the Rev Dr. Gordon Moyes.

It must be said (even by a New South Welshman) that the Rotarians of not only Melbourne but all the metropolitan and near-country clubs, the hotels and business houses, the transport authorities and the citizens of Melbourne did everything possible to make their visitors feel welcome; and the Police were shown up in their true colours as a bunch of softies with a talent for happy music expressed by the uninhibited exuberance of the Police Concert Band with its smartly uniformed instrumentalists and vocalists, both male and female.

Anyone who has any respect for the first question in the Four Way Test will assert that this was, indeed, a good convention – and that it also answered questions two, three and four in the affirmative; in the admittedly jaundiced view of this writer, a rare phenomenon indeed.

#### International Assembly

The immeasurably more important annual international meeting is the international assembly, at which all incoming district governors are instructed in their duties.

Inspirational addresses, study groups guided by carefully-trained leaders, on-stage presentations, with all the elements of motivation common to American sales promotion programs in evidence, the assembly is none-the-less an interesting, instructive and enjoyable experience for the participants, even those who, like most Australians and other British Commonwealth Rotarians, look upon some of the more extroverted aspects of the program with indulgent amusement. And there can be no doubt that the district governors embark upon their year of service with an extensive knowledge of their movement, a comprehensive understanding of their duties and a great deal of enthusiasm. For many of them, of course, the leadership training certainly also proves invaluable in their careers.

#### The Council on Legislation

The "parliament" of Rotary International is the Council on Legislation which convenes for a three to four days session every three years to debate proposed enactments (to amend the constitutional documents) and resolutions (to make policy decisions).

A constitutional amendment requires a two thirds majority. Constitutional documents of Rotary are the constitution and by-laws of Rotary International and the standard Rotary club constitution. Each district elects one delegate to the council and one "alternate" delegate. Only officers or past officers of Rotary International are eligible to serve.

All proposed legislation is submitted to all Rotary clubs before the council convenes so that they have ample opportunity to advise their delegates of their views.

Australian delegates to the council take their duties very seriously and attempt to gain an expression of opinion from clubs in their districts. They also hold special sessions in conjunction with their institutes to discuss proposed legislation and its implications. The council, originally always held at the venue of the

convention, is now held in a different country each year quite separately from the convention. Much proposed legislation is very hotly debated and some items appear at every council for years before they are finally disposed of by a decisive vote.

#### The board of R.I.

Meetings of the 19-member board of directors of Rotary International, at which the general business of the movement is conducted, are held as required but at least twice a year with a preliminary meeting before the new board takes office. Members serve a two-year term with half retiring each year.

#### R.I. Committees

Rotary International committees, appointed by the President to carry out a variety of functions and to "advise" the board, meet, usually for two to three days, as determined by the board, always at the secretariat in Evanston so that they can have access to the appropriate staff members and translation facilities.

Much of the preliminary work and study by committees will have been done by correspondence between the chairmen and members in the months before the meetings take place; thus the meetings are usually discussions of substance leading to positive recommendations to the board; which are not necessarily adopted.

#### International Institute

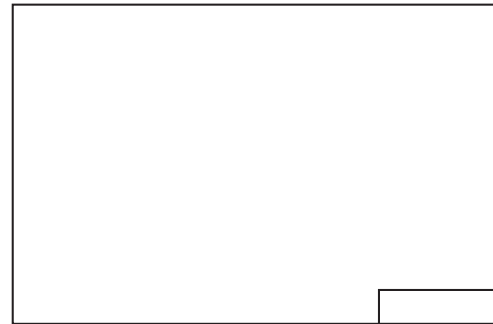
One other international meeting, not strongly supported by Rotarians from Australia, is the International Institute, held in conjunction with the international assembly and open to all past officers of R.I. The purpose is to ". . . afford present and past officers an opportunity to improve their knowledge of Rotary plans and programs and therefore to enhance their value as resource persons for their clubs and districts." A secondary purpose is to provide "help to the current and incoming leadership of Rotary by giving the leaders the benefit of the views of the present and past international officers." In fact, in the experience of Australians, fewer than 200 past officers, mostly Americans, attend and only a few (five to seven) countries are represented. One mildly cynical

Australian described the international institute as "an opportunity for self-promotion by P.D.Gs hoping to gain preferment by impressing the current or incoming president with their wit and wisdom" (referring to the president's prerogative of choosing R.I. committee members and personal representatives to attend district conferences, all involving free overseas travel).

A recent innovation is an international institute held immediately before the convention, which has proved much more popular, attracting an attendance of more than 500 with a large number of countries represented. The institute preceding the Melbourne convention, over which Kevin Hardes of Taree presided, was very well patronised by Australian past officers.

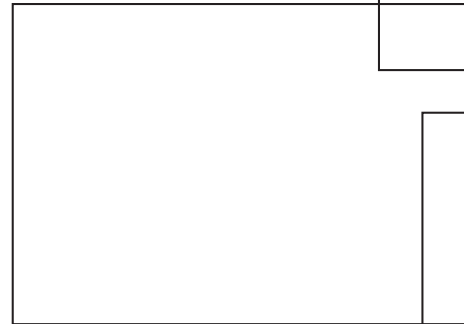
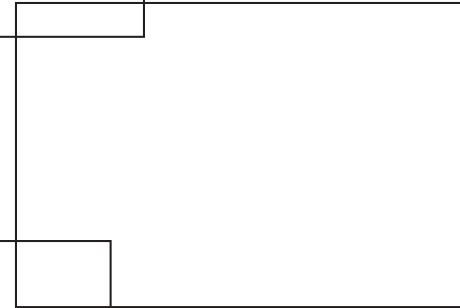
Inevitably the question will be asked: what have all these meetings, apart from club meetings and possibly district conferences, to do with the average Australian Rotarian? And the answer, equally inevitably, must be: not much.

However, it is important that the average Rotarian, serving quietly in his club - the only Rotarian who is indispensable to Rotary - should have an understanding of Rotary's support services. For that, in the final analysis, is what they are: meetings of people charged with the responsibility of helping Rotarians, in their clubs, to serve more effectively. And if they fail to do that, then they are wasting their time and your money.



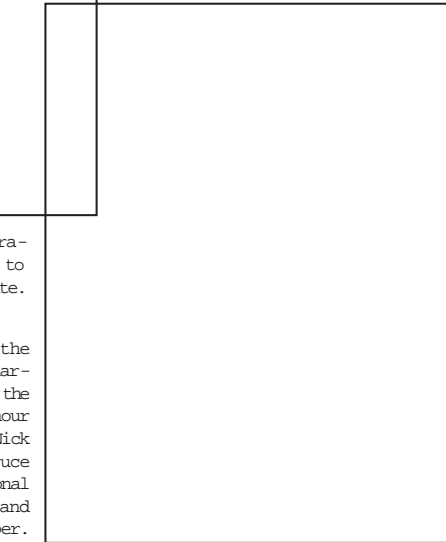
Left - Anyone for tennis? R.I. President Chick Keller (centre) often enjoyed a social game of tennis and, during his visit to Melbourne for the ANZO Zone 1 Institute in 1988, he took time out for a game with Australian Rotarians Jack Nankervis and Peter Blundell of District 9800, Fred Edwards of District 9830 and Bruce Johnston of District 9600.

Right - At a special interest meeting convened in 1993 R.I. President Bob Barth (left) named Professor Fred Hollows, centre, the recipient of the World Understanding and Peace Award. At right is R.I. Past President Royce

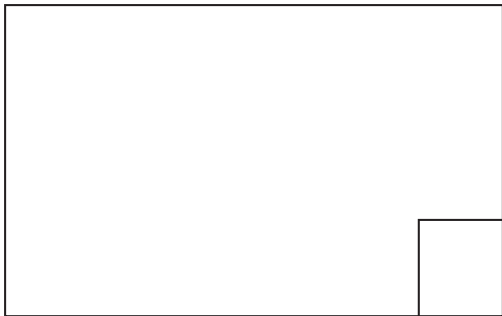


Above - Angela Newman, at the registration desk, sells a PolioPlus car sticker to Les Gilbert, at a Rotary Institute.

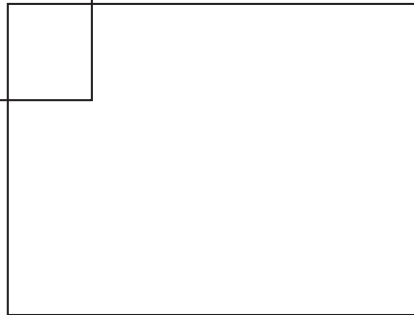
Right - Members and guests of the Rotary Club of Mooloolaba execute a daring high kick, attired in kilts during the Burns Supper held by the club to honour the Scots bard. From left, guest Nick Cherry, piper Len Moore, guest Bruce Cull, President Peter Young, International Service Director Grahame MacDonald and meeting chairman Bill Cooper.



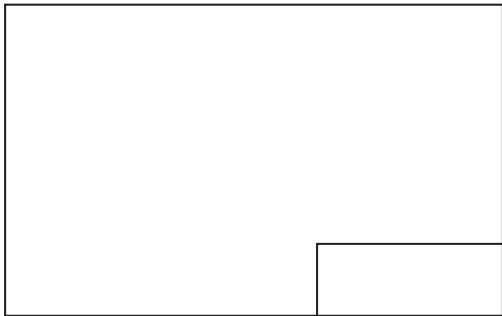




Left - Some things are more important than attendance. PDG Ken Collins missed a Rotary meeting in November, 1990, because he was in the Philippines with a Polio Plus Rapid Assessment Team. He is seen here interviewing a mother in Davao.



Below - R.I. Past President Dr. Carlos Canseco administers the 500th million dose of polio vaccine to baby Kezia Anne Bautista, in the presence of her parents, Benjamin and Odalie of Quezon City, the Philippines, at the opening session of the R.I. 84th World Convention in Melbourne.



Above - The Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Cr. Desmond Clarke, presents R.I. President Clifford L. Dochterman with the "key" to the City of Melbourne at a special Mayoral reception for visiting Rotary officials, in the Melbourne Town Hall prior to the start of the 1993 R.I. Convention.

Right - Enjoying fellowship at a Rotary Institute, three stalwarts from District 9700, Past Governors Wal Breust (Wagga Wagga), Maurice (Mo) Simpson (Grenfell) and Joe Scorer (Leeton).

## CHAPTER TEN

### GETTING ORGANISED

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a program chairman in possession of a good list of speakers on Rotary Information must be in want of an audience. (With apologies to Miss Jane Austen.) The mere suggestion of an imminent program on Rotary Information is enough to send club members scuttling in search of a convenient make-up.

There must be some reason for the unfailing unpopularity of any elucidation of the rather complicated organisational structure of Rotary. The most common explanation is that most Rotarians just want to get on with the essential work of Rotary and find any explanation of the bureaucratic organisation of their movement excessively boring. Let those who aspire to higher office in Rotary worry about the finer points of organisation and administration; and let us get on with the job of identifying and meeting human needs.

This, of course, is quite understandable but regrettable; for unless we make some effort to understand how our movement is constructed, its future reconstructions inevitably will be left in the hands of past district governors and the like, including those who really believe that our club goals should be set for us by a hierarchy of which they are or hope to be a part; and just imagine how disastrous that might be for all of us.

This short chapter, then, is devoted to Rotary Information and, like the last, is included for the benefit of newer Rotarians, non-Rotarians who are interested in how Rotary is organised and experienced Rotarians who are incurable masochists.

#### ASSOCIATION OF CLUBS

"The Object of Rotary", as set out in the constitution of Rotary International and in the constitution of every Rotary club in the world, "is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise and, in particular, to encourage and foster: First, the development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service; Second, high ethical standards in business and professions, the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations and the

dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society; Third, the application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian's personal, business and community life; Fourth, the advancement of international understanding, goodwill and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service." (Those who are familiar with this "Object" before its most recent amendment will observe that it has been slightly condensed by the removal of "gender specific" language.)

Rotary International is not a corporate organisation with authority vested in an elected or appointed elite who hand down instructions, pronouncements and policy decisions from on high to national branches for promulgation to local sub-branches or chapters. It only seems like that. It is, as its former name implied, an association of autonomous clubs.

The association is administered by a board of directors, including a president who is elected two years in advance by the convention of Rotary International, a president elect, a vice president who is selected from among the board members by the president, and 16 members, each elected for a two year term. Half the members retire each year. Directors are elected from the "regions" into which the Rotary world is divided. Because of the problems inherent in electing directors (and the president of Rotary International) by popular vote of its members (Rotary clubs), they are chosen by nominating committees, the members of which are elected by groups of clubs within each region. The choice of the nominating committee is published and, in the absence of any objection, the candidate is "elected" by the convention. If there is an objection (a rare occurrence indeed) provision is made for a ballot. To be eligible for election to the office of director, a person must have served in the office of district governor.

The duties of the board of directors, as set out in the by-laws of Rotary International, are to "be responsible for doing whatever may be necessary for the furtherance of the purposes of R.I., the attainment of the Object of Rotary, the study and teaching of its fundamentals, the preservation of its ideals, its ethics, and its unique features of organization and its extension throughout the world." The

board is elected to serve the clubs.

The president (who serves for one year in that office) is a past director of Rotary International and is chosen, also, by a nominating committee and formally elected by the convention. The nominating committee for president is made up of former directors representing all the regions.

The president appoints Rotarians from all regions to serve as members of Rotary International committees to advise the board on various aspects of Rotary service; and, in recent years, "task forces" to provide two-way information and advice between board and clubs.

The board, according to the constitutional documents, exercises "general control and supervision over all officers, officers elect, officers nominee and committees of Rotary International" and, of course, controls the staff of Rotary International; but, paradoxically, has very limited control over its constituent clubs.

Every three years the Council on Legislation convenes, at which proposed amendments to the constitution and by-laws of Rotary International and the standard Rotary club constitution and policy resolutions are debated. Enactments and resolutions of the council are submitted to all clubs throughout the world. Any enactment or resolution rejected by 10% of clubs is then presented to the next convention for determination. This has never occurred.

An international convention is held every year, never more than twice in succession in any one country and, in the past 20 years, almost always in a different country each year. Once the legislative body of Rotary International, its powers have been limited since 1970 when the Council on Legislation was given legislative authority. An unrepresentative gathering (despite the presence of duly accredited "voting delegates") it still formally elects the president, directors and district governors (the officers of Rotary International) who have been already chosen by nominating committee procedures.

#### CLUBS AND DISTRICTS

For purposes of administration, Rotary clubs throughout the world are allocated to districts. A Rotary district covers a number of

clubs within a defined geographical area.

The first district established in Australia was numbered 56 and covered the whole of Australia. In 1996 there were 23 districts in Australia. (The growth of districts since the first was formed in 1927 is shown in Appendix I.)

The district is administered by a district governor, chosen nearly two years in advance by the clubs in the district (using a nominating committee procedure) and elected at the annual convention of Rotary International. He is thus an officer of Rotary International and the representative of the international body within that district.

The term "governor" was probably adopted because, in the U.S.A., where Rotary began, the nation has a president and each State of the Union has a governor. To members of the Commonwealth, the term "governor" has an entirely different meaning. For this reason, until 1967, the term was not used in Great Britain and Ireland, where the officer was known by the unwieldy but probably more accurate title of "Rotary International Representative". In Australia, despite the possible confusion with State Vice Regal representatives, the title has been accepted - with the occasional facetious reference to "Your Excellency".

The officer is by no means a "governor" but rather a counsellor, whose duty it is to visit each club and discuss its program for the year, suggesting ways in which its service might be improved. He has no authority over the clubs except insofar as it may be necessary to remind them of their constitutional obligations and, under extraordinary circumstances, recommend the withdrawal of a club's charter for a deliberate breach of the constitution or for the club's failure or inability to discharge its service obligations (usually because of loss of membership). The district governor is also responsible for organising the district conference, the district assembly and the Presidents Elect Training Seminar (in conjunction with his governor nominee). In addition, he is expected to attend other district activities and functions such as seminars, briefings for exchange students and other programs arranged by his district officers, all of whom are appointed by him to be responsible for some aspect of district activity.

Before taking office, the incoming district governor is required to attend the international assembly to prepare him for his one year in office.

The "District Governor System", as it is known, is claimed to be successful and would appear to be so, for it has been adopted by all the other associations of service clubs.

As Rotary completed 75 years of service in Australia, a significant change was about to take place in the district administration following an interesting experiment in a number of "guinea pig" districts, one of which is 9600. The experiment involves the use of assistant or deputy governors to relieve the governor of some of the many tasks with which he has become burdened in recent years. District Governor Basil Shaw explained the experiment and its possible implications:-

"In 1991-92 District 9600 indicated an interest in participating in a world-wide pilot program incorporating alternative ways of administering the Rotary district. An outline proposal was submitted to the R.I. Board.

"District 9600 was one of 12 districts selected to take part in the trial, which ran during Rotary years 1993-94 to 1995-96. The main objective of the pilot was to find ways of reducing the governors' workload.

"Essential features of the trial were the appointment of assistant or deputy district governors who were given delegated responsibility for various district functions. In the process a pool of potential district leaders would be trained.

"In 1966 the R.I. Board announced that the District Leadership Plan had been adopted for implementation in 1997-98. The announcement included details of the training of assistant governors, their delegated responsibilities and the procedures to be adopted to put the plan into operation."

#### NEW CLUBS

The formation of a new Rotary club depends upon (a) the willingness of an existing club to sponsor the formation and (b) the recommendation of the district governor. Sometimes a club suggests formation of a new club to the governor, but more often

the governor, advised by his district extension committee, asks the club to survey an area within its territory and, if it is found that a viable club can be formed, to relinquish (or share) territory and sponsor the formation.

There follows a process of investigation and inviting reputable professional and business people to become "charter" members; of organising an "interest" meeting, followed by the "organisation" meeting at which those attending resolve to form a club and apply for admission to Rotary International. The new club is then designated a "provisional" Rotary club until it is admitted, after which it is usual for a special dinner to be arranged with local dignitaries invited for the formal presentation of the charter – all quite harmless if unnecessary; but the ceremonial aspects and the sense of occasion probably serve to impress the new Rotarian with the importance of the club he has joined and its status as a member club of a great international association.

To be admitted to Rotary International as a Rotary club, the charter members must adopt the standard club constitution, which can be amended only by the Rotary International Council on Legislation – Rotary's "parliament" – to which every district elects its own member, who must be an officer or past officer of Rotary International. Thus every Rotary club in the world is bound by the same rules, has an equal opportunity to propose an amendment to the rules and equal representation on the legislative body.

The standard constitution requires that each club adopt by-laws for the internal administration of the club, methods of election, annual subscription, day and time of the weekly meeting and procedures for electing a new member. A set of "recommended" by-laws is supplied. The club may amend its by-laws at any time, provided that any by-law is "in harmony with the club constitution and the constitution and by-laws of Rotary International" leaving so little opportunity for variation and so many possible interpretations of the rules that most clubs adopt the recommended by-laws.

Within the limits of its constitution, each club is autonomous; and this has been so well emphasised at their formation that most Australian clubs remain very jealous of their autonomy, vigorously resisting any attempt to impose limits beyond those already

implicit in the constitution; and, equally vigorously, resisting attempts to require their support of district, national, regional or international programs or projects. Individual club support of any such major activity is and must remain quite voluntary; and so long as that is clearly understood by those who seek their participation in major district, national or international programs, Australian clubs have demonstrated, time and again, their willingness to co-operate. It's a national characteristic, of course. Ask us and we'll be eager to help. Tell us and you might just as well tell Uluru to move over.

#### CLUB ORGANISATION

The organisation of a Rotary club differs significantly from that of most voluntary organisations (whether charitable, sporting, political, professional, business or mutual aid). The typical voluntary organisation consists of a small elected leadership group to which authority and responsibility are delegated by the larger rank and file. In a Rotary club, every member is responsible for some aspect of the club's activities.

The club members elect a president, vice president(s), secretary, treasurer and directors. Each director is responsible for one of the "avenues of service" – club service, vocational service, community service, international service and youth service. Each member of the club is then assigned to one of the major committees.

Under the umbrella of the "major" committees are several committees appointed to deal with the various aspects of the "avenue of service"; thus under club service are the program, bulletin, fellowship, Rotary information, classification, public relations, extension and membership committees.

Under "vocational service" there may be employer-employee relations, careers guidance, vocational awards, business and professional ethics committees and any others appointed for vocational service.

The community service directorate may include committees concerned with youth welfare, youth leadership (RYLA), Interact and Rotaract, education, health, recreation, fine arts, the aged, rehabilitation of the disabled, environment and any others appoint-

ed at the discretion of the club board. Or the various youth activities may be – and these days more often are – assigned to a Youth directorate.

International service usually has The Rotary Foundation, youth exchange, world community service, international contacts and world understanding committees.

Each of these committees under the four "avenues of service" has a chairman and several members, all of whom are expected to contribute to the work of the committee.

At the beginning of each year (in July) the various committees advance their plans for the year; and from the various submissions, the club will adopt its major project (or projects) for the year. It may be a community or a vocational or an international project, but when it is chosen as the club's major project, every member is committed to support it. The remaining projects advanced by the other committees then may be adopted as "minor" projects. Thus the club may adopt as its major project its international service committee's submission that a certain hospital in a remote Indonesian village be equipped with an X-ray plant and, as minor projects, the vocational service committee's recommendation that simulated job interviews be conducted for students at the local high school and the community service committee's suggestions that trees be planted around the new municipal children's playground, that a bus shelter be provided opposite the senior citizens' centre and that the Girl Guides' hall be given a coat of paint. In addition, the club will continue to do its regular jobs: it will raise funds for The Rotary Foundation and the Rotary Health Research Fund; it will select and pay fees for two candidates to attend the RYLA seminar; it will roster four families, each for one term, to be hosts to an exchange student from overseas; it will supervise its Interact and Rotaract clubs if any – or it will again consider the possibility of sponsoring such clubs; it might sponsor formation of a Probus club for retired people; it will assist at the annual fund-raising appeal of the Salvation Army – and/or some equally deserving body and it will be involved in a host of other activities.

Rotarians claim that, in their clubs, everyone "gets a guernsey" –

they are all players, and there are no spectators.

The club structure and method of adopting projects are common to all Rotary clubs and, as may be expected, are honoured in some countries more in the breach than the observance; but Australians are particularly comfortable with the system, which gains a high level of member participation in all aspects of their service activities.

#### ATTENDANCE

One of the reasons for the strong member participation is the emphasis on regular attendance at meetings. While most voluntary organisations attract very poor attendance at their general meetings, the service clubs enjoy much higher average attendances.

Rotary imposes very strict attendance rules. To retain membership, one must attend at least 60% of weekly meetings in any half year. If a member is absent for more than three successive meetings without being excused for a very good reason, termination of membership is automatic. However, a member who is unable to attend a meeting of his own club may gain attendance credit by attending a meeting of another Rotary club. In this way, Rotary clubs ensure that their members participate fully in the corporate life of the club; and, with occasional make-ups, share ideas with members of other clubs.

But mere attendance is not enough. Those who are not available for work when required but still maintain high attendance at weekly luncheon or dinner meetings, soon gain the reputation of being "knife and forkers". They seldom last long in Rotary.

An interesting situation was discovered in another country by the late Ken Scheller when he was visiting as a Rotary International vice president. He reported that it was not unusual for five or six clubs in a district to maintain 100% attendance for the year; but this was achieved by an ingenious strategy. When a Rotarian was in hospital and was thereby unable to attend his meeting or make up at another club, the secretary visited him with a bouquet and a letter of resignation for his signature. He thus ceased to be a member for the period of his illness but was immediately reinstated when he recovered. When attendance percentages were computed

at each meeting, the number in attendance still equalled the number of members on the roll. In vain Ken attempted to explain that the purpose of encouraging high attendance was to extend fellowship and thereby strengthen participation in service activities. The "good book" of Rotary (the Manual of Procedure) said that every club should strive for 100% attendance and the Rotarians of that district were complying with the letter, if not necessarily with the spirit of the exhortation.

Most clubs in Australia would claim a rather more sensible attitude to attendance. The Rotarian who contributes his time and talents to service projects is more highly valued than the compulsive attender. This attitude was probably best expressed by Vic French, then of the Rotary Club of Coburg and incoming governor of District 280 (9800) at a Rotary institute in 1967 when it was pointed out that a member of his district had maintained 100% attendance for 25 years and had been named in Rotary Down Under. "Yes, I saw the story," he said, "and that was the sum total of his contribution to Rotary in 25 years of membership."

Attendance, though not encouraged to become a major preoccupation, is still important. The argument often quoted is that the ordinary citizen who discovers a community need will find it difficult to persuade his fellow-citizens to support him in any effort he might make to meet that need; but a member of a Rotary club can bring the need to the attention of his fellow members who will gladly provide the work force and the expertise, because they are his friends; and they became friends because they had been meeting for luncheon or dinner every week, had discussed local, national and international problems, had gone to family picnics and outings together. They know each other well because of their regular attendance.

Australian clubs were in the vanguard of the long campaign to modify the attendance requirements by authorising clubs to cancel up to two meetings a year for national, religious or regional holidays. As we all know, Christmas signals the beginning of the summer holiday when many businesses find it convenient to send their staff on annual leave. Some concerns, in fact, close their doors for a month. For a Rotary club to maintain any reasonable atten-

dance at meetings during this period was well nigh impossible; but the problem was not acknowledged by the rest of the Rotary world where four to six weeks annual holiday seemed an unnecessary indulgence and where the notion of a national close-down was incomprehensible.

Many were the devices adopted to try to meet the requirement that a weekly meeting be held. So-called "fellowship" meetings would be convened, at which attendance of anyone arriving at the venue was recorded (and the attendance of any visitors), a few drinks were consumed and everyone went his way. In many areas the usual venue was not available during this period, so "meetings" were convened in homes, pubs, clubs and, in at least one seaside town, on the beach, where a barbecue was prepared and the attendance officer faithfully recorded the names of all those who lined up for steaks or sausages.

At each Council on Legislation, Australian (and New Zealand) delegates proposed some modification of the rule that demanded 52 Rotary meetings each year with an average attendance of 60%. It was not until 1989 that they were finally successful. The necessary amendment was enacted and antipodean Rotary clubs were no longer obliged to hold "sham" meetings to satisfy what they regarded as an unnecessary requirement.

#### THE CLASSIFICATION PRINCIPLE

In the first Rotary club (Chicago, 1905) each member was drawn from a different business or profession.

The reason, of course, was to preserve harmony in the club in a city and in an age in which business competitors were not regarded as colleagues to be helped but as enemies to be destroyed.

As the Rotary clubs evolved from mutual aid societies, in which Rotarians advanced their own business interests by advancing those of their fellows, to service clubs in which the *raison d'être* was the advancement of human welfare, the "classification principle" remained; justified with the strong argument that a Rotary club, by limiting membership to but one man from each business, professional or trade "classification", was representative of the whole community, would be "inclusive" rather than "exclusive" and

could not be dominated by any one professional or business group. Moreover, a newly-formed club would be forced to seek a membership from a wider field than if the charter members were permitted merely to recruit their own colleagues.

Modifications began within the first few years; and by the time Rotary was extended to Australia and New Zealand, the system of "major" and "minor" classifications had been established with no more than 10 percent of the membership belonging to a "major" classification. Thus within the major classification of Medicine, a club of 50 members could include several practitioners; e.g. general practice, surgery, dentistry, gynaecology and psychiatry. In due course (1966) the major and minor divisions were abandoned, each "minor" classification became a classification in its own right rather than one of a major group of occupations and the 10 percent limit no longer applied - except as a "recommendation". To-day's Rotarians are probably unaware that it ever existed.

Other modifications were the introduction of additional active (1915), past service (1930) and senior active membership (1939).

Senior active members had served for 15 years, or 10 years having reached the age of 60 years, or five years having reached the age of 65 years and who were willing to surrender their classifications and accept senior active status. The classification of the senior active member was thus vacant and could then be filled by another person in the same business or profession. Some, of course, refused to surrender their classifications, until, by action of the Council on Legislation, those eligible for senior active membership were automatically "promoted"; and officers and past officers of Rotary International, whether otherwise eligible or not, were also granted senior active status.

Past service members were those who had served for a minimum of five (now three) years and had retired from the work force.

An additional active member was one who was a business partner or member of the same firm as the holder of a classification and had been nominated by him. In 1977 the holder of a classification was given the right to nominate persons of the same classification who were not members of his own firm (in other

words his competitors) as additional active members. Former Rotarians moving into a club's area could also be elected to additional active membership. Thus it became possible for three members to represent one classification in the one club.

These modifications were obviously designed to permit the recruitment of more members; but every one was most vigorously resisted. The proposal to introduce "senior" membership was hotly celebrated at the 1935 combined conference of the two districts in Australia and was not enacted in a modified form, for another four years. Even the simple amendment to give the holder of a classification the right to nominate a business competitor for additional active membership was considered by three Councils on Legislation before it gained the two thirds majority required for a constitutional change; and a most distinguished Australian Rotarian still declared, at the time, that it was "a retrograde step".

Again, most Australians, but by no means all, have been among the strongest advocates of change to the "classification principle", arguing that the "principle" was effectively abandoned when additional active membership was introduced in 1915 and that, from that time, it had been a "system" subject to modification to meet changing circumstances.

Another dramatic change, which was achieved in the face of strong opposition, was the introduction in 1968 of the residential qualification for membership, which enabled a club to recruit people who lived within its territory but whose place of business was elsewhere. Many Australian Rotarians fulminated against this impudent heresy when it appeared as "Proposed Enactment 68/42". Angry letters and articles appeared in Rotary Down Under written by some of the most highly respected Rotarians of the day. We were warned that, if passed, this would mean the end of Rotary and probably the end of civilization. But it was adopted by the Council on Legislation and the convention which, before 1970, was the legislation body of Rotary. The sky did not fall; and "dormitory" suburbs and villages, with few businesses and professional practices, were able to sustain a Rotary club.

\* \* \*

Within this complicated structure, Rotary carries out its various

self-imposed tasks, principally at the level of the Rotary club but also with a growing number of activities at district and international level.

Apart from the unique territorial unit known as R.I.B.I. (Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland) with a president, board of directors and general council (including all district governors) which has existed since 1914, there is no national or regional organisation. Rotary districts are merely "clusters" of clubs grouped for administrative purposes; and, though the district governor appoints various committees to assist him, there is no formal district hierarchy: just a district governor.

There has been a European office of R.I. in Zurich since 1925 and regional offices in Asia and South West Pacific since 1982; but these are branch offices of the secretariat responsible to the general secretary and are not subject to local control.

Australia and New Zealand in 1965 established a regional council of R.I. officers in the region as the governing body of the regional magazine; and this council, co-incidentally, has accepted responsibility for the administration of certain other regional Rotary activities (discussed elsewhere in this book), but beyond these limits, it has – and pretends to – no other authority.

Thus, (apart from the clubs in Britain and Ireland), Rotary clubs, as member clubs of Rotary International, are in direct relationship to the R.I. board. Clubs may, without the authority of any intermediate body, make recommendations to the R.I. board; and may propose constitutional amendments or policy resolutions for consideration at the next Council on Legislation. The fact that clubs are most strongly urged to submit proposed legislation or resolutions first to their district conferences so that their proposals (if adopted by their conference) will be seen by the Council on Legislation to have been supported by a majority of clubs in their districts, in no way diminishes their right of direct access.

#### FOUR AVENUES OF SERVICE

Four "Avenues of Service" are identified by Rotarians to classify each activity. They are Club Service, Vocational Service, Community Service and International Service.

Each of these broad classifications coincides with one of the four parts of the Object of Rotary (quoted at the beginning of this chapter).

The first part – "The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service", is identified with all the activities under Club Service.

Second – "high ethical standards in business and professions, the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations and the dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society" is related to Vocational Service.

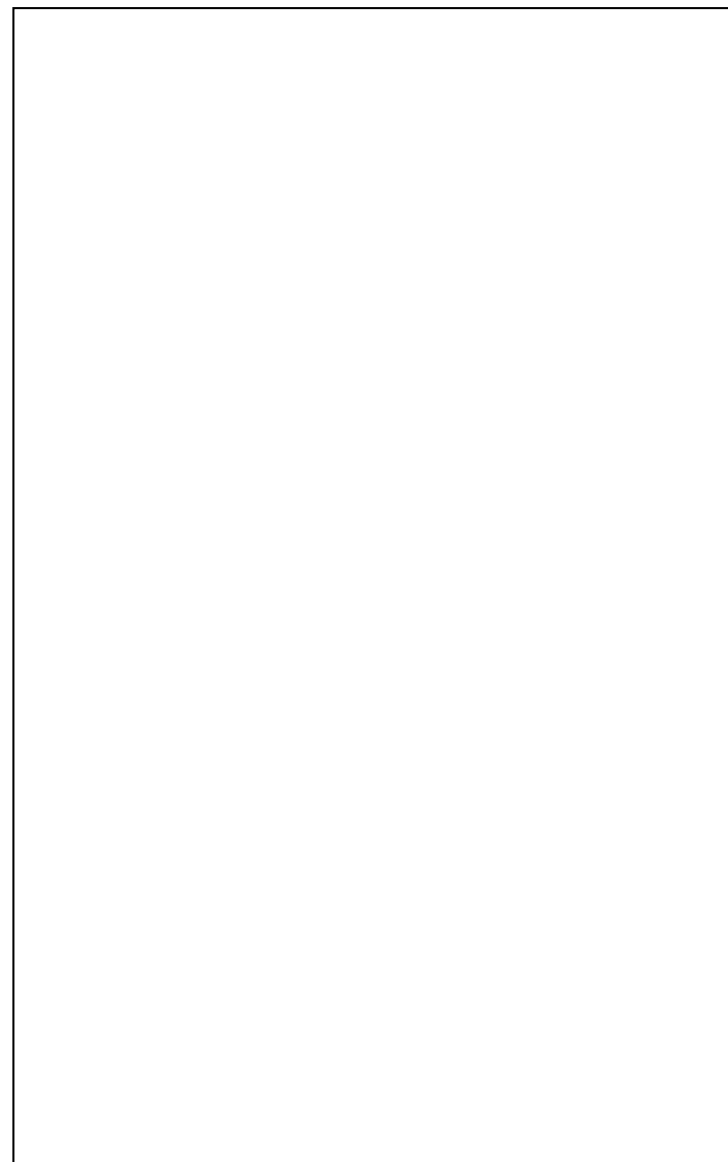
Third – "the application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian's personal, business and community life" is accepted as the exhortation to practise Community Service.

Fourth – "The advancement of international understanding, good will and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service" provides the inspiration for International Service.

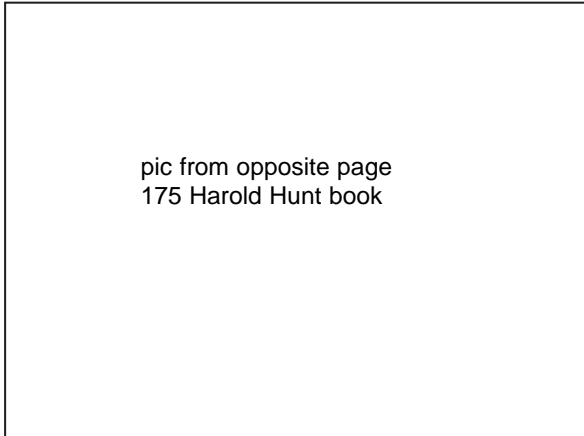
It is not always possible to work rigidly within this tidy arrangement. Many Rotary clubs have a separate Youth Service directorate, which may deal with student exchanges (International), Rotaract, Interact, RYLA (Community), careers guidance (Vocational). And obviously, some activities will seem to belong in two or more categories, such as the volunteer program in which professional people serve for a period in a developing country – Vocational and International. In most areas of service, however, the identification of each part of the Object of Rotary with one of the Avenues of Service is regarded as a useful means of allocating tasks to the various committees.



Montage of Manual of procedure,  
Official directory, R.I.  
Organisational chart



R.I. President Royce Abbey (seated centre) of the Rotary Club of Essendon, Victoria, is pictured with his 1988-89 Rotary International Board of Directors. R.I. Director Grattan O'Connell of New Zealand is pictured (standing) back row, third from left.

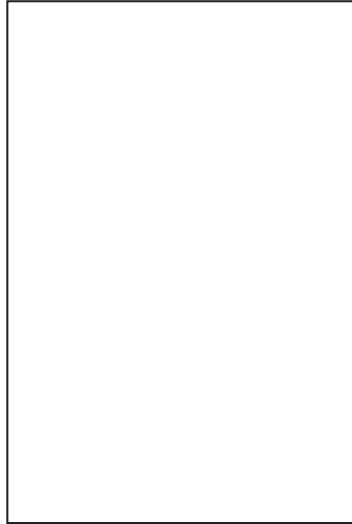


pic from opposite page  
175 Harold Hunt book

Angus Mitchell,  
Councillor R. Solly,  
Lord Mayor of  
Melbourne, and  
Rotary Club of  
Melbourne President  
J.T. (Jock) Reid at  
the commemorative  
seat in the grove of  
Friendship in 1953.



Sidney Riley



Angus Mitchell