EDITORIAL

The March 1986 issue of *Episodes* (p. 29-30) reported on programs recently adopted by several societies to facilitate the global flow of geoscience literature, in the interests of a stronger and more equitable distribution of scientific resources and a more balanced global scientific community. The International Association of Sedimentologists (IAS), one of the most active societies affiliated to IUGS, has now established a "friendship" scheme to enable IAS members to sponsor others from countries where salaries are low or where the local currency is not readily convertible. The aim is to create "friendship and scientific contacts between sedimentologists in different parts of the world." The IAS scheme is an excellent example of a useful and practical way in which scientists in the West can assist their professional colleagues in poorer or more financially restricted regions.

As IAS Past President Harold G. Reading (U.K.) wrote recently in the IAS Newsletter, "the cost of membership of IAS is not high for those of us in the West. It is little more than the cost of taking a friend out to dinner. This is not the way it looks in many parts of the world. Apart from the fact that in many countries the system of scientific organization is such that individuals are not able to join a foreign society, the salary structure may be so low that what seems a small sum to some of us is not so to them. In addition, and of prime importance in eastern European countries and many Third World countries, it is impossible to obtain foreign exchange. There is no way that people who very much want to pay the dues and join a foreign, international association can do so because their currencies are not convertible into a western currency.

"The problem of people in countries with low salaries or with exchange difficulties is not only that they cannot become members of IAS. They also cannot travel to meetings in other countries and naturally feel themselves cut off from the normal scientific exchanges that we take for granted. They may not go abroad for many years, and many young scientists have never had a chance to visit another country. Partly as a result of this isolation they are only too anxious to have visitors; they can frequently entertain them and show them around; and it may not be so difficult for them to pay the expenses of foreign visitors in their own country.

"We anticipate that many people will wish to make a friend. For those who have already been invited to a country and been entertained, this would be a way of showing gratitude. Others may be planning to visit a country and anticipate being offered hospitality. Yet again it may simply be because a person is working closely with a scientist, perhaps largely by correspondence, to further the same objectives.

"The purpose of this scheme is thus threefold. Firstly, it will enable many good sedimentologists to receive the benefits of belonging to IAS and to feel less isolated by joining our community. Secondly, it is a way of thanking people who have helped us in the past. Thirdly, and really the most important, it will enable scientific contacts between people in different countries to be strengthened and new friendships to be made. The scheme is not intended as charity. It will be a two way interchange with mutual benefits to both partners."

IAS is formalizing this arrangement by including on its regular annual dues statement a section where members can add the name of someone they wish to sponsor. This person-to-person scheme appears to be a precedent among major geoscience societies, one that others eager to extend their international scope might well adopt. To further the same aims, *Episodes* offers a gift subscription scheme described in the accompanying box.

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FORTHCOMING

The March 1987 issue of *Episodes* will contain a series of articles illustrating the work of INQUA, the International Union for Quaternary Research, to set the scene for its 12th Congress to be held next July-August.