

AN ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATE

STEVE STOCKDALE*

IN THE FALL 2003 issue of *ETC*, we reported on the organizational situation concerning the Institute of General Semantics and the International Society for General Semantics, that “a formal plan for merger is before the boards of both organizations.”

The Board of Trustees of the Institute and the Board of Directors of the Society each approved the legal Plan of Merger in October. Jeff Mordkowitz and Charles Russell, presidents of the respective organizations, each signed the Articles of Merger in November. The required set of legal filings was submitted by our attorney to the Secretaries of State in Illinois (state of incorporation for the Society) and Connecticut (state of incorporation for the Institute) in December, along with the request that the merger approval take effect January 1, 2004.

During the third week in November, we mailed letters to all current members of the Institute and the Society that announced the merger and summa-

* Steve Stockdale currently serves as Director for Programs for “the Institute” and as a Director for “the Society.” Effective January 1, 2004, he will assume the duties of a new position, Executive Director of the Institute of General Semantics. The Institute will shortly thereafter relocate to Fort Worth, Texas.

rized some of the plans for the next year. (In case you did not receive it, the text of the letter, signed by Jeff, Charles, Paul Johnston, and me, appears below.)

We have begun to receive reactions from members of both organizations. Generalizing, the consensus opinion expressed so far has been positive and to the effect that, "It's about time!" We have also received questions, comments, and suggestions regarding concerns about the future: *Will we continue to support E-Prime? What about more interaction with scientists? Can we provide more material for second-graders? We need to have an up-to-date website. We need to make connections with other organizations. We need more research on*

Clearly, we have much to do in order to fulfill many different sets of expectations and desires for both the 'new' Institute of General Semantics and the discipline of general semantics. We encourage suggestions, criticisms, support, assistance, etc., from our members, readers, and supporters. And we ask for a certain degree of what I'll call "watchful patience" in recognizing that 'we' cannot please everyone in the same way at the same time.

To that end, I offer this excerpt from comments that Alfred Korzybski made to begin a seminar in Chicago on July 9, 1937:

I will never forget a meeting I attended where they were speaking all the time of what a wonderful country the United States is – what wonderful resources they had – how much wonderful goods they can produce – everything wonderful, wonderful, wonderful. They were telling what can be done. A friend of mine, Dr. Polakov, was the last to speak and he said: "We are hearing here of the wonderful things that can be done, and this recalls to me a story of a rooster who found an ostrich egg. He brought the egg to the hens and said to them, 'Ladies, I don't want to make any personal remarks, but I am showing you what can be done.'"

In other words, we need to do what "can be done," while recognizing limits where limits exist.

The Spring 2004 issue of this journal will serve as the 'inauguration' of this new phase for the discipline of general semantics. If you've recently received a notification that it's time to renew your membership and subscription to *ETC*, please return it promptly with your payment to make sure you receive this very special edition issue. You won't want to miss it.

Letter Sent to Members of ISGS and IGS in November, 2003

November 19, 2003

Today we bring you exciting news regarding the future of general semantics. The Institute of General Semantics and the International Society for General Semantics have agreed to merge, allowing both organizations to combine their energies and focus ever more sharply on the reason for their existence: bringing the knowledge and understanding of this most important discipline to the greater public.

The new organization will do business under the name of the Institute of General Semantics, the organization Alfred Korzybski founded in 1938. Current members of both the Society and the Institute will continue their membership in the new organization. Members will receive four quarterly issues of *ETC*, the annual *General Semantics Bulletin*, and four issues per year of the *Time-Bindings* newsletter. The new basic membership rate will be \$40 per year, effective with your next renewal.

Before delving into the details of the merger and bringing you news of our future activities, we'd like to acknowledge the hard work and sacrifices made by several individuals. Paul Johnston, Executive Director, and Emily Shomaker, Assistant Executive Director/Secretary of the Society, have worked tirelessly for the good of the discipline, and at times under very difficult circumstances. We congratulate them for their wonderful efforts in bringing us to this point. Jeff Mordkowitz, President and Director, and Martha Santer, Executive Secretary of the Institute, also deserve our congratulations for their significant contributions over the last four years, having taken over the reins of the Institute in 2000 under trying circumstances.

The new organization will have its headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas. Beginning January 1, 2004, Steve Stockdale will assume responsibility for leading the new Institute as its Executive Director. Steve brings many years of hard work, service and accomplishment with him, having served as a Trustee of the Institute since 1996 and more recently as a Director of the Society. We also owe a huge debt of gratitude to Steve for his superb efforts in producing the successfully concluded Twelfth International Conference on General Semantics. We have every expectation that Steve will have continued success in his new role as leader of the combined organization. He will also have the support of Paul Johnston, who will continue as editor of *ETC*.

Which brings us to the future, and to many new initiatives during the coming year, including:

- An exhibition booth later this month at the National Council of Teachers of English annual convention. Steve, Gregg Hoffmann, Andrea Johnson and Katherine Liepe-Levinson will also present a 75-minute panel session on "General Semantics and Critical Literacy." An estimated 7,500 English teachers will attend the convention.
- Four seminar training programs in 2004, including two weekend programs in Fort Worth, a week-long Seminar-Workshop co-sponsored by the Institute and Alverno College in Milwaukee, and a special 3-day Teacher Development Conference during the Christmas break.
- The purchase and remodeling of a building in the nationally designated historic district of Fort Worth that will serve as our permanent headquarters. Look for more details soon as we begin a fundraising campaign.
- A conference specifically for university students to encourage writing and speaking on topics related to their study of general semantics. This developed as an outgrowth of our recent conference on general semantics in Las Vegas.
- Actively engaging and growing our membership through a variety of means, including the creation of a new and more interactive website.

So hold onto your hats, and get ready for an exciting adventure. We have a lot to be proud of, and much to anticipate. Please let us know your reactions and suggestions. We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Jeffrey M. Mordkowitz
 Director
 President of the Board of Trustees
 Institute of General Semantics

Charles G. Russell
 President, Board of Directors
 International Society for
 General Semantics

Steven E. Stockdale
 Executive Director-Designee
 Institute of General Semantics

Paul D. Johnston
 Executive Director,
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