

# The position of LAA Industrial Officer — some problems and directions —

THERE IS some confusion amongst LAA members as to the role of the Industrial Officer. Some members think the Industrial Officer may intervene in industrial tribunal hearings and also look after them on individual industrial matters. Members wanting interpretation of their awards and agreements also pose a problem. In all such cases the appropriate bodies are the employers and the unions but the existence of a position designated Industrial Officer in the LAA sometimes means members approach that officer instead.

A great deal of work is involved in servicing special libraries which are award free. This underlines the need for proper industrial regulation of this sector.

The lack of standards for many types of

libraries hampers the work of the Industrial Officer. In these difficult economic times when service areas such as libraries are under real threat, minimum standards set by a body such as the LAA would be very useful industrial/political tools.

Confusion is created when employers and unions are lobbied by office bearers of divisions of the LAA putting points of view that conflict with LAA policy. As an employee of the Association this places the LAA Industrial Officer in a very awkward position. Lobby groups and divisions might check with the Industrial Officer and make sure of LAA policy on industrial issues.

Problems also arise when Divisions of the LAA want industrial matters to be channelled through them, although they may include members who have a conflict of interest on a particular issue or no interest at all.

In an attempt to implement LAA policies Branches need to write to employers concerning advertisements for inappropriately classified library positions. Because immediacy of response is needed in such cases this is best handled at the Branch level. It is also desirable that a person be available locally for discussions with the employer if necessary. It is advisable that Branches forward copies of such correspondence to the Industrial Officer. This way a file on all such incidents might be built up and the Industrial Officer alerted to matters which have wider implications. In some circumstances it may be necessary for the office of the Association to write on these matters, in which case the Office will forward copies of all correspondence to the Branch concerned.

Appearing as an 'expert' witness in industrial tribunal hearings is a frustrating business. The real experts are the library staff in the field. A more appropriate position for the LAA Industrial Officer in such hearings would seem to be in providing research and information to be used in arguing the case.

Working with and advising both employers and unions on restructuring and introducing technician classifications is probably the most useful part of the job. It is possible for the LAA Industrial Officer to collect information from around the country and per-

haps devote more time to research into purely library industrial matters than would the unions and the employers. Since the Association has made certain statements related to employment the Industrial Officer is able to put these forward as Association policy and attempt to have them incorporated in awards etc. It also doesn't hurt for employers and unions to know there is an organisation which is monitoring the industrial situation for library staff.

I am pleased at the extent to which the services of the LAA Industrial Officer have been called on although of course there are many areas which I perceive as needing attention which have not yet received it from either the employers or the unions. The salary data collected and published is now quite well known and used. However there are other matters connected with employment which are just as important. I have been embarrassed on some occasions in not being able to assist enquirers to the extent I would like to because of lack of information.

More time needs to be devoted to creating and maintaining the data base which is the essential tool of the job. Promotion of the use of that data base also needs to proceed with its creation. Time will hopefully be gained to engage in these activities if the individual servicing mentioned at the beginning of this report is redirected to the appropriate bodies. The new union for Specials in NSW if they are able to gain an award should relieve some of the pressure. Gradually those covered by awards and agreements, i.e. the Public sector library staff, are realising that they should contact either their union or employer concerning their individual working conditions.

The following are priorities I see for 1983:

- Survey of classifications in school libraries and investigation of the feasibility of introducing technician classifications (survey to be completed by May).
- Creating a file of job descriptions for representative classifications within the different library services. (To be started after July.)
- Survey of working conditions. (To be started after July.)
- Re-opening discussions on creating classifications for library technicians in the Commonwealth. (I have already written to the Public Service Board and the Unions suggesting a conference.)
- Compiling a brief industrial bibliography of material related to libraries and industrial matters. (Started but to be completed after July.)
- Collating responses to the draft statements on librarians and technician appointments and producing a final draft for consideration by General Council. (Started and will be completed by May.)
- Continue work on producing universal classification guidelines for library staff. (Working Party on work level standards appointed by General Council, work to be completed by November.)
- List agreements and awards covering library staff. (To be started after July.)
- 'Give every assistance to members anxious to form an independent union parallel to the Association' — General Council resolution 47/73 and 35/74 — (currently assisting the establishment of the Library and Information Staff Union.)

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Industrial Officer

The above paper was prepared for the Executive Committee of General Council who directed that it be published in *Incite*. At the March General Council meeting the title of Industrial Officer was changed to Industrial Information Officer.

## 2ND NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON CURRENT AND FUTURE URICA DEVELOPMENTS

The Islander,  
Surfers Paradise

MAY 19 — 20, 1983

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