

## Letter from the President

**November 14, 2006**

By tradition, each issue of InULA Notes includes a "Letter from the President," and now comes my turn to write one. I asked Emily Okada, one of the co-editors, whether she had any ideas about what I should include in the letter. She responded in part, "I guess this is the article where you lay out your presidential plans for the year. A tax cut would be nice."

I don't know whether I have anything as grandiose as "presidential plans for the year" in my head, but let me suggest a handful of ideas:

1. I'd like to see InULA Notes get on track with a semi-annual publications schedule: one issue in the fall, and one issue in the spring. We tried to do this last year, but didn't make it - we got a fall issue out, but no spring issue. In fact, we've had trouble getting out regular issues since 1998, judging by what's archived on our web site, "InULA Web." In 1998 we got out a fall issue, in 1999 a spring issue, in 2000 likewise a spring issue, in 2003 another spring issue, and, as I said, in 2005 a fall issue. No issues at all appear to have been published in 2001 and 2004. You have before you the fall issue for 2006-2007. Let's see if we can adhere to our resolution to get out a spring issue for the benefit (at least we'd like to think it's a benefit) of our members.

2. In order to provide for greater organizational continuity, I'd like us to consider a new officer position, "past president." The past president would be someone who could assist the president and the rest of the board with advice and counsel. Many groups similar to ours (that is, groups that hold annual elections to what are, in fact, largely volunteer posts) have added such a position to their organizational structures. The InULA Board has already kicked this idea around informally. Perhaps after further discussion we might decide to put forth to the membership a proposal to amend the constitution along these lines.

3. As an organization, we need to decide what to do over the long term with our finances. This is a matter that is discussed elsewhere in this issue in the form of the report from last year's Endowments Task Force and is, I think, actually the most important item on our plate this year. I confess to a certain amount of personal ambivalence about setting up endowments for the Nilson Scholarship Fund and the Research Incentive Fund. On the one hand, the idea is to put our money to work more effectively and let it earn more income than it currently does. On the other hand, setting up endowments would subject our money to greater market risk than is now the case, and would also deprive us of what is currently almost absolute flexibility in terms of finances.

4. Finally, what about that tax cut that Emily mentioned? The good news is that InULA is, at present, very solvent. It appears that nearly 90% of our income comes from our annual book sale, with the bulk of the remainder coming from membership dues. As long as the book sale income continues to hold up, we could probably actually dispense with the dues. In fact, your Board probably won't recommend that we go that far. Ten dollars a year for dues isn't a lot to ask to become a regular member. We do, however, have an unresolved problem to deal with, and that is that we have split the process of becoming a member into two parts: (a) filling out an online

membership application, and (b) paying your dues. Even though you've filled out your application, you're not really a member unless and until you've paid your dues. Unfortunately, we haven't quite made it into the 21st century by being able to accept dues payments online. We need to consider the pros and cons of doing so. If it's not a good idea, should we go back to paper membership applications (so you can include your check with your application and more easily remember to get both parts of the process accomplished)? Or do we just learn to live with and love the current process? Stay tuned.

Those are the main "presidential plans for the year" at the moment. Undoubtedly other things will present themselves to me, the Board, and the membership by spring. See you all at the annual holiday membership meeting and luncheon on Dec. 15th.

Gary Charbonneau, InULA President