

(Editorial Commentary):

Since its inception in 1983, the International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters was edited into final form, printed and mailed in Sweden. When I agreed to serve as co-editor last year, I assumed this arrangement would continue. Unfortunately, a variety of problems have precluded the continuation of this practice although the Research Committee Officers have been assured a final 1986 issue will be distributed in the near future from Sweden.

Through numerous telephone conversations and letters during the past year, I urged, International Sociological Association, to clarify the situation in Sweden or to identify an alternative arrangement that would permit the Journal to be issued in a more timely manner.

Given the long history and past successes with the Swedish office, there was an initial reluctance to suggest terminating the relationship despite continued inaction. Both the President of the Board of the Research Committee on Disasters and my former counterpart, attempted to move things along but remained unsuccessful.

Later I was advised that explorations were being made regarding an alternative non-USA editor who could arrange for partial funding of the Journal publication costs. Eventually, Arizona State University, Secretary of the Research Committee and Editor of *Unscheduled Events*, the Committee newsletter, offered to arrange for the printing and distribution of the Journal so as to avoid further delay. In a subsequent issue, a new non-USA co-editor will be announced.

The issue opens with a challenge regarding the definitional boundaries of what should circumscribe disaster studies. In his Presidential Address, delivered at the August 1986 meeting of the International Sociological Association Research Committee on Disasters at the World Congress of Sociology in New Delhi, India, Quarantelli provided his analysis of this complex and controversial matter.

Organizational decision-making in emergency warning systems is rigorously dissected by NN and NN. They suggest that decision-making uncertainty is a major constraint to warning effectiveness.

Three persons extend their analysis of the long-term impacts of the 1976 Guatemalan earthquake on families. By focusing on the difficult methodological problem of measuring the assets of a household prior to and in the years following this catastrophe, they offer several important conclusions regarding policy that were permitted by the increased rigor of their methods.

Two insightful statements comprise the "Feedback from the Field" section of this issue. NN describes her experiences in a flood mitigation planning effort and highlights four significant issues that may confront many communities involved in such activities. NN summarizes an update of her earlier studies on the implementation of legislation in California that requires real estate agents to advise prospective purchasers that the house they are considering is located near a known earthquake fault. Her interviews with local officials and real estate developers highlight the difficulties and tensions inherent in many mitigation efforts.