

REPORT OF THE FEDERATIONS COMMITTEE

The American Contract Bridge League has interaction with many federations in association with the participation of its members in world championships. The most well known of these, and the ones this report will mention, are the World Bridge Federation, the United States Bridge Federation, and the Canadian Bridge Federation. The Mexican Bridge Federation is also involved in such championships, but Mexico actually sends a team to world championships much less often than do the United States and Canada, and discussing their organization will add little to the discussion.

The World Bridge Federation is the sponsoring body for all world championships, including the World Team Olympiad (each leap year), the World Bridge Championships (each even numbered non-leap year), the Bermuda Bowl and the Venice Cup (each odd numbered year), and such other championships as the Executive Council of the WBF shall authorize (see the By-Laws of the WBF, which are attached.) At present these championships regularly include Senior Championships and Junior Championships, which are usually held separately from the others. The WBF assumed this role beginning in 1978.

The chief governing bodies of the WBF are a Congress and an Executive Council. The Executive Council consists of five members each from Zones 1 and 2 (Europe and the American Contract Bridge League), one member from each other zone, and the President of the WBF. The Congress consists of one member from each National Bridge Organization (NBO). The true power rests in the Executive Council.

However, teams represent NBOs. In Europe, where individual countries belong to the European Bridge League, and where individual bridge players pay dues to their respective NBOs, the situation is relatively simple. In North America, however, bridge players pay dues to the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) rather than to individual NBOs (although individual NBOs like the USBF and the CBF may collect some dues from a portion of the residents of their individual countries.) This procedure has led to some difficult problems regarding dues, especially since the dues paying practices of some other countries outside the “major” zones (e.g., China) are not comparable to our own. ACBL representatives to the WBF Executive Council have the constant duty of trying to make sure the ACBL pays its fair share of dues without subsidizing everyone else. This has the potential to remain a long-standing battle.

The advantages given to the “major” zones in the formation of the Executive Council make it imperative that the ACBL makes every effort to make the WBF work, even if it does not always work as those of us who live in a democracy might expect it to.

The fact that participants in world championships represent individual NBOs necessitated the creation of such NBOs within the ACBL framework. The Canadian Bridge Federation had already existed for some time before it became necessary for it to select teams on a regular basis. Olympiad teams represented single countries, but teams in non-olympic years could have members from more than one country, more specifically from

both the United States and Canada. Eventually, it became necessary for there to be NBOs in our zone to select international teams. The CBF was able to fulfill that role for Canada, but the United States Bridge Federation did not come into existence until 2001.

The ACBL was faced with the dilemma of passing the power to select teams to these NBOs, while simultaneously providing these organizations with the financial wherewithal to conduct trials and to help the selected teams participate. These organizations also needed the ability to assure that the participants in their trials and the teams selected to participate internationally were held to the same standard of conduct expected of ACBL players, and so they have had to create committee structures similar to those of the ACBL.

Much of the financial backing of these organizations comes from ACBL events. Clubs can hold games to benefit the International Fund, NABC events have a surcharge to benefit international participation, and the ACBL has passed on Junior Fund money so that junior players may also participate internationally. Both the USBF and the CBF raise money on their own, but without the largesse provided by everyday members of the ACBL, these organizations could not carry out their duties.

For these reasons, the ACBL has an obligation of oversight of the actions of these organizations. However, it also has the duty to allow these organizations to carry out the tasks that have been passed on to them. Inevitably, the conflict between these two functions may lead to some friction, but it is the belief of the Federations Committee that careful attention to the various interactions can and should lead to a world in which the participation of ACBL members in international competition may lead not only to thrilling experiences for the participants but also to positive publicity for the game of bridge throughout the ACBL territory

Respectfully submitted
William C. Arlinghaus, Chair ACBL Federations Committee