



Toronto Coin Club

P.O. BOX 865, ADELAIDE ST. P.O.
TORONTO, ONTARIO M5C 2K1

(MEETS THIRD MONDAY OF THE MONTH @ 7:00 P.M.)

SEPTEMBER, 1975 -- OUR 39TH YEAR

TORONTO COIN CLUB EXECUTIVE (term expires December 31, 1975)

PRESIDENT: Ingrid Smith	RECEPTIONIST: Retta Frampton
1ST VICE-PRESIDENT: Marvin Kay	DIRECTORS: Herschel Howard
2ND VICE-PRESIDENT: Herman Gordon	Ray Pleau
TREASURER: Harvey Farrow	Sam Rogozinsky
SECRETARY: Terry Campbell	EDITOR: John Regitko
LIBRARIAN: Gordon Vanson	PAST PRESIDENT: Charly Danby

FUTURE MEETINGS

LOCATION: Confederation Room #3 unless otherwise indicated on the Royal York Hotel's bulletin board prior to the meeting.

DATES OF NEXT THREE MEETINGS: October 20, November 17 and December 15, 1975.

TIME: Doors open at 6:00 p.m.; Business meeting and program at 7:45 p.m.; Meeting adjourns at approximately 10:00 p.m.

LAST MEETING

Held on June 16 in the Algonquin Room of the Royal York Hotel, 22 members and guests listened to John Regitko present a paper on Odd & Curious Mediums of Exchange, with emphasis on why the Cowry Shell has been the most popular and widely-used medium of exchange since time immemorial. John showed numerous pieces of odd and curious monies from his collection. We are pleased to publish his paper in this bulletin.

Ingrid Smith brought with her a number of genuine goldweights of the Ashanti Tribe of Africa. The goldweight's significance can be understood when it is realized that the Ashanti Tribe did not use any other medium of exchange except gold dust and gold nuggets until World War II. Consequently the goldweights were a necessary integral part of the monetary system of the Ashanti. We are pleased to publish an expanded paper of her talk, complete with a few illustrations of goldweights representative of the intricate detail that went into their creation, in this bulletin.

Ingrid Smith also spoke on the Counterfeit Detection Seminar on which details have already been mailed to TCC members. This seminar is, of course, co-sponsored by the Toronto Coin Club and is headed by our very own President, Ingrid Smith, as its Chairperson. Since information has already been forwarded to you, it is not our intention to go into details here except to make you aware of the other TCC members that are serving on the Committee with her:

Al Bliman, TCC #368
Charly Danby, TCC #336
Harvey Farrow, TCC #35

Reanus Holtman, TCC #369
John Regitko, TCC #371
Jack Veffer, TCC #375

Guest Jean Niccoli drew the door prize which was won by Ingrid Smith.

NEXT MEETING

A "MY FAVOURITE NUMISMATIC JOKE" night is scheduled. Be prepared to tell us one or more jokes involving money (not necessarily collector-type money ... just any money). Example: Why is a poor singer like a counterfeiter? Because he gives out bad notes!

A panel of three judges will award prizes for the best jokes.

The success of this program depends on YOU, the members. Let's not only show up at the meeting, but let's show up with a numismatic joke!

The meeting will also feature a brief discussion of the 3-day Counterfeit Detection Seminar that will have concluded the day before this meeting.

FALL RALLY NEWS

DATE: Saturday, September 20, 1975.

LOCATION: Territories and B.C. Rooms, Royal York Hotel, 100 Front St., Toronto.

TIME: Rooms open for bourse dealers only at 9:00 a.m.; Admission to general public at 10:00 a.m.; Show adjourns at 10:00 p.m.

AUCTION: Frank Rose Enterprises Ltd. will conduct a 250-lot auction in the B.C. Room at 2:00 p.m.; Material will be on display from 1:00 p.m. onward; The listing of the 250-lot auction material has been incorporated into a catalogue that also lists material to be auctioned off at the CYN and TOREX Shows. All Toronto Coin Club members receive their complimentary copy automatically.

BOURSE: Seventeen bourse tables have been sold, on a first come, first served basis, to the following:

Leslie Allen, Wiarnton, Ontario
Georgian Bay Coins, Owen Sound, Ontario
Charlton Numismatics Ltd., Toronto, Ontario
Russ Jones, Rexdale, Ontario
Coins Brack, Toronto, Ontario
Springborn Coins-Stamps-Supplies, St. Clair, Michigan
Prentiss Glazier, Toronto, Ontario
White Eagle Coins, Toronto, Ontario
John Regitko, Toronto, Ontario
Corie Gowlett Coins, Toronto, Ontario
Pauline Kaill, Toronto, Ontario
Mark Drake, Willowdale, Ontario
D. Lockwood, Streetsville, Ontario
Hollywood Coins, Toronto, Ontario

DRAW: To be held at the Show at 5:00 p.m.; You do not have to be present to win; Tickets are 3 for \$1.00, with a limit of 450 tickets total available to be sold; The winner will receive an Olympic Coin Set (3rd series).

DISPLAYS: No displays will be set up at the Fall Rally. Reasons were adequately discussed at past meetings and a vote taken accordingly.

DOOR PRIZES

Until now the TCC has been in the habit of dividing any money taken in for admission, keeping half for the Club and giving away the other half as a door prize.

To assist members in enhancing their collections and to give the lucky winners the opportunity to obtain diversified numismatic material at virtually no cost, we are instituting a policy of offering two door prizes per meeting, consisting of Toronto Coin Club medals (what could be dearer to a TCC member?)

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

One of the things a new Editor is supposed to do when taking over the editorship, is to thank the former Editor. But in this case I do not consider it merely my duty to thank Harvey Farrow for the dedication he has shown over the past four years faithfully letting members know about the activities of the Toronto Coin Club. Having known Harvey for the past 17 years due to our mutual interest in numismatics and having observed him at work every day for the past 15 years (we are both employed by the same Company), I can personally vouch for his loyalty and dedication both on and off the job and in and outside his numismatic activities.

As Editor, I intend to continue reporting on the past and future activities of the Toronto Coin Club but, time and space permitting, I also intend to publish short papers submitted to me, such as the speeches presented at meetings. To promote personal relationships and an informal atmosphere among members, it is also my intention, starting next month, to publish brief resumes on the personal activities of a few of the more active members of the Toronto Coin Club.

It is my intention to leave the length and content of your Bulletin flexible ... some months you will see a one- or two-page bulletin, other issues four and, sometimes, as many as this 8-page effort. The cost to the Club, thanks to some arm-twisting, will be kept to an absolute minimum. Illustrations will be included from time to time.

But to turn these ambitious thoughts into reality, I must have your support. If you are a speaker at a future meeting -- whether a prime speaker or the look-what-I-brought-along type that some Toronto Coin Club members are known for -- please submit something to me for publication if at all possible. No fancy written masterpiece; just a few scribbled notes are fine providing you don't mind a little help in rewriting.

In closing, let me again, on behalf of the Executive and the membership, acknowledge with thanks the time and effort put into the bulletin by Harvey Farrow.

TCC MEMBERS ELECTED TO NATIONAL BODY

Congratulations are in order to the following TCC members who were elected at the CNA's Calgary convention to serve on the Executive of the Canadian Numismatic Association for the next term: As President: Alex Munro, TCC #245; As Vice President: Jim Charlton, TCC #9; As Ontario Director: Bob Aaron, TCC #342.

Also serving on the CNA's Executive will be TCC member #31, Louise Graham, who in her capacity of Immediate Past President will help assure the continuity of programs and activities of this national body.

BOURSE TABLES

Just a reminder that bourse tables are available at regular meetings for dealers or part-time dealers at the low price of only \$2.00 per 8' table per meeting. Although no advance reservations are necessary since we have never had to turn anyone away, they are made available on a first come, first served basis.

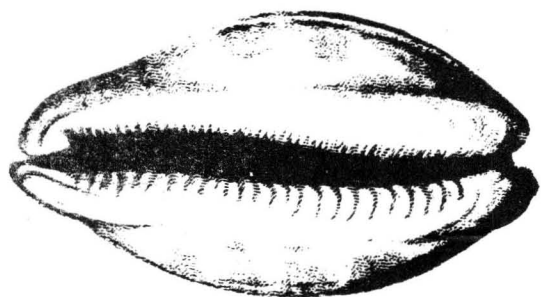
As an encouragement to members that are bona-fide collectors and wish to trade or sell off a few duplicates, we will be making available up to 4 feet of table-space at no charge. The only stipulations for this free offer are that a) you must be a member of the TCC; b) you require 4' or less of table space per meeting; c) that you do not bring along quantities of coins that are deemed more of an accumulation that you want to sell as opposed to a few duplicates; d) that you are known as a bona-fide collector only and not a full-time, part-time or sometime dealer; and e) you agree to the decision of the Executive of the TCC should there be a question about your material or your status as a collector, and agree to payment of rental accordingly.

JOHN REGITKO'S SPEECH PRESENTED AT THE JUNE 16 MEETING

ODD & CURIOUS MEDIUMS OF EXCHANGE OF THE WORLD

BY JOHN REGITKO:

Last week I visited a junk-shop in downtown Toronto and while browsing around the odds and ends department ... as if there were any other department in a junk-shop ... I spotted some funny-looking, over-size, what I knew from my Odd & Curious coin collection to be -- Cowry Shells. I was surprised to see not only the funny spots on it but also was



surprised at the large size. I rushed home and immediately began leafing through my numismatic library of odd and unusual currencies of the World. I have had these books for some years now and was surprised at the amount of information contained in them on just the Cowry Shell.

I found out, from the introduction of "A Survey of Primitive Money", that the ideal properties of money are that it shall be: 1. handy; 2. lasting; 3. easy to count, and 4. difficult to counterfeit.

So over the thousands of years, there have not been too many rivals to the precious metals such as gold and silver that we were accustomed to seeing in our own coinage until recently. However the most remarkable money has been the Cowry Shell which has extended in range further than any other form of money since time immemorial, spreading from China and India eastward to the Pacific Islands, travelling across Africa and even penetrating into the New World.

But why would Cowries, of all things, become the most popular medium of exchange ever? Let us examine the many other types of money that have existed over the centuries and maybe we can find the reason for it.

Why would Cowries become more popular, for instance, than the early Chinese coinages such as Knife Money or Pant Money? More popular than the Boat Money and Ant Money that was in use for hundreds of years in the Far East? Surely these metals would last longer than shells?



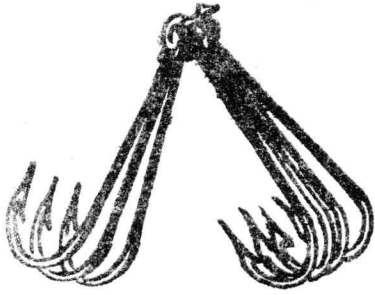
Or what about the Porcelain Money of Siam, or their gold and silver bars?

If you remember your history, when Cortez reached what is now Mexico, he found out that the Aztec Tribe had a treasure hidden deep in the jungle. Through bribery and murder, he found out where the tombs with these great treasures were. When he opened their doors he came across, low and behold, not gold or silver as he had expected, but a treasure more highly regarded by every Indian Tribe in South America: Cocoa Beans.

Surely you agree that cocoa beans are more desirable than just plain gold or silver? After all, when you started to starve, what could you do with gold or silver if there was a food shortage? But you could eat your wealth and therefore survive if it was in the form of cocoa beans, could you not?

By the same reasoning, musket balls were used as money in the Colony of Massachusetts during the 1860's. Without musket balls you could not kill the wild animals that settlers depended on for food. Surely you would die without your valued musket balls!



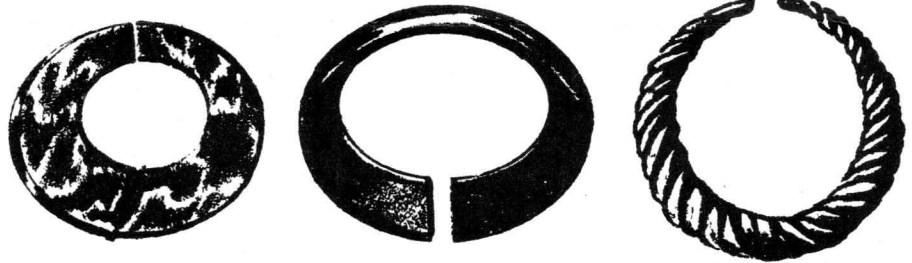


And what about the fish hooks that were used in the Pacific Islands as money? There is little better as a medium of exchange. After all, to catch fish you needed fish hooks, so immediately there were sought after by everyone. And not only that, but while this "money" was in your possession, it could earn interest for you by catching fish and still retaining its original value.

With opposition like that, how come the Cowry, which is not precious as gold or silver and cannot be eaten in time of need, still remained the leader?

What about the precious mineral used as money, known today as salt, one of the oldest mediums of exchange in the world? It was highly sought after throughout Africa and Asia, for once you acquire a taste for it, you crave it all the time. The same goes for tea that became a common medium of exchange in China. Or tobacco. Or what about the taste you acquire for opium, another highly sought-after commodity that became very popular in Burma and Lebanon?

Why didn't Ring Money become more popular -- it had from the 15th century B.C. to the 20th century A.D. to beat out the Cowry Shell. That's 3,500 years of use!



Or tree money? Very handy for carrying around. Just break off a piece to make a purchase.



I can see where edible rats, used as currency on Easter Island, didn't become too popular off the Island!

What about the money we have today? If you gave a \$1.00 note to a chieftain of a tribe in Africa or South America, he would look at you and laugh, for what good is a bit of strange coloured piece of paper?

So what makes some simple shell more desirable than anything else in the world? The reasons for the popularity are both obvious and concealed. The surface and the shape are attractive and decorative so that they can be used as ornaments and playthings. And when they are carried inland, they acquire the added charm of novelty touched with mystery. They were not easily counterfeited. They were easy to count in that they could be strung on rope by punching a small hole through them. They are lasting, and some pieces in excellent condition are being found buried with their owners in graves a thousand or more years old ... to pay for their passage to the "new" world. They are still used today as small change in certain sections of India and the Pacific.

About 400 years ago, two Cowry Shells would buy a wife. Personally, to a numismatist like myself, I think that was a rather high price to pay. No other medium of exchange has come close to that value of two for a wife. Even at the height of the Gizzi Penny's popularity, it took twelve to buy a wife, another twelve to get rid of one ... so if you had 24 you were all set!



But even the Cowry Shell has suffered. Inflation hit them also, and in 1860 their value fell and 2,500 would only buy a cow ... and a woman was worth 4 or 5 cows in those days. (Not any more, though! Have you heard anyone lately giving away 4 or 5 cows for a wife?)

Would you give me Dollars for a Cowry Shell? Would an African tribesman give you valued Cowry Shells for a Dollar? Certainly not, for regardless what the books say money should be, there is only one thing that makes your Dollar worth anything; that being faith. Faith in the Country that issues it. Faith in the Government. And next election, we'll see how much faith you have in your Government.

THE GOLDWEIGHTS OF THE ASHANTI

For the June meeting, Ingrid Smith brought with her a number of genuine goldweights of the Ashanti tribe that were smuggled out of Africa originally in jars of Nivea Cream. We are pleased to be able to publish an expanded paper of her talk, complete with a few illustrations of goldweights representative of the intricate detail that went into their creation:

BY INGRID SMITH

Coins, as we know them, were not in use in Ashantiland until about the time of World War II. Their culture, after the Ashanti migration from Central West Africa to the sea of what is now called Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast), became gold oriented, hence the importance of an accepted uniform measure of weights for the gold dust and nuggets that formed the area's only accepted medium of exchange.

Within the past few centuries up until World War II, the acquisition of gold ("money") became the occupation and preoccupation of the Ashanti. With their traditional tools the slaves hacked out the gold-bearing rock or panned stony river beds. The goldsmiths were royally entitled, by the tribe's chief, to work the gold and also cast the brass counterweights, the gold dust boxes, the spoons and scoops required to measure the gold, and they balanced the small scales (called n'frama n'senia, literally wind scales) so delicate that even a small breeze would make them fluctuate.

The most useful systems of weights and measures seem to be based on common and readily accessible units or standards, such as the last joint of a human thumb (the inch) or the foot (whereas the metre was impractically based, by the French Revolutionaries, on a portion of the earth's circumference). The basic unit in the Ashanti system of weights was the tiny red seed of the *Abrus precatorius*, a tree found very widely in the tropics and much used in decorative work by tribal artists in Africa, Oceania and South and Central America. The small brass weight was called ntaka, weighed approximately as much as ten abrus seeds, and was worth a shilling. The largest, the big pereguan du, was worth about \$400 in 1905. A system of metal weights in use in India was similarly based on abrus seeds.

Gold became a royal symbol in Ashantiland and members of the goldsmiths' guild kept their skills in their own families. The equipment of a goldsmith was first of all a large collection of carefully graded counterweights, known as mrammuo (one weight is an abrammuo). He also required the scales, a number of spoons for lifting gold dust to the pan of the scales, a simple scoop for lifting large quantities of the gold dust, also various shapes and sizes of brass boxes for holding the gold dust and nuggets.

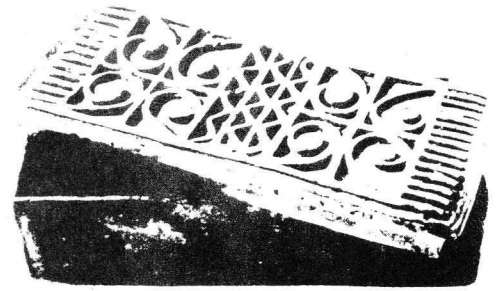
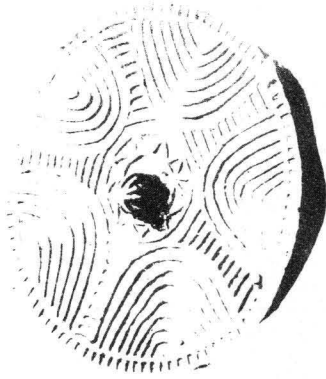
To cast a goldweight, the "lost wax" method was employed, the same process used to cast small animals and figures for religious shrines by the ancient Egyptians, the Bronze Age Europeans, the pre-Classical Greeks and the pre-Columbian Americans. The process is, in essence, a method of mechanically translating a wax form into a metal one. In the casting of such a small object as a gold weight, a clay core was seldom necessary ... the beeswax model of the weight was simply encased thickly in its porous clay cocoon and baked, the wax "lost" and replaced by molten brass or sometimes other metals (very often a small 'tail' is found on a weight, the remains of the pouring channel for the metal).

Not only did merchants need the scales and weights and boxes for their sales but their patrons must have a similar futuo in order to check on the metal content of the weights.

The naive charm of these naturalistic or geometric little brass weights has come to qualify them not only as a former necessity in carrying on barter, but as a really important art form!



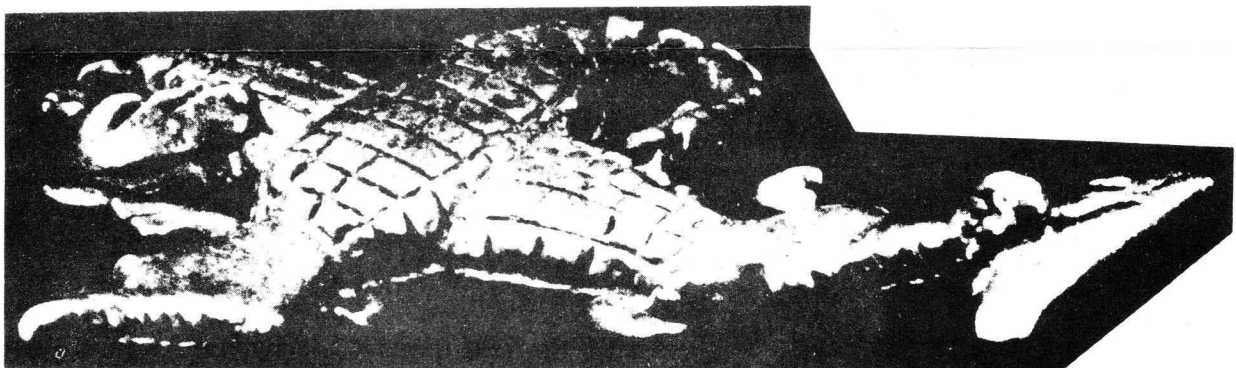
The delicate scale, or n'frama n'senia, carried by bearers for the weighing of gold for their master's purchases



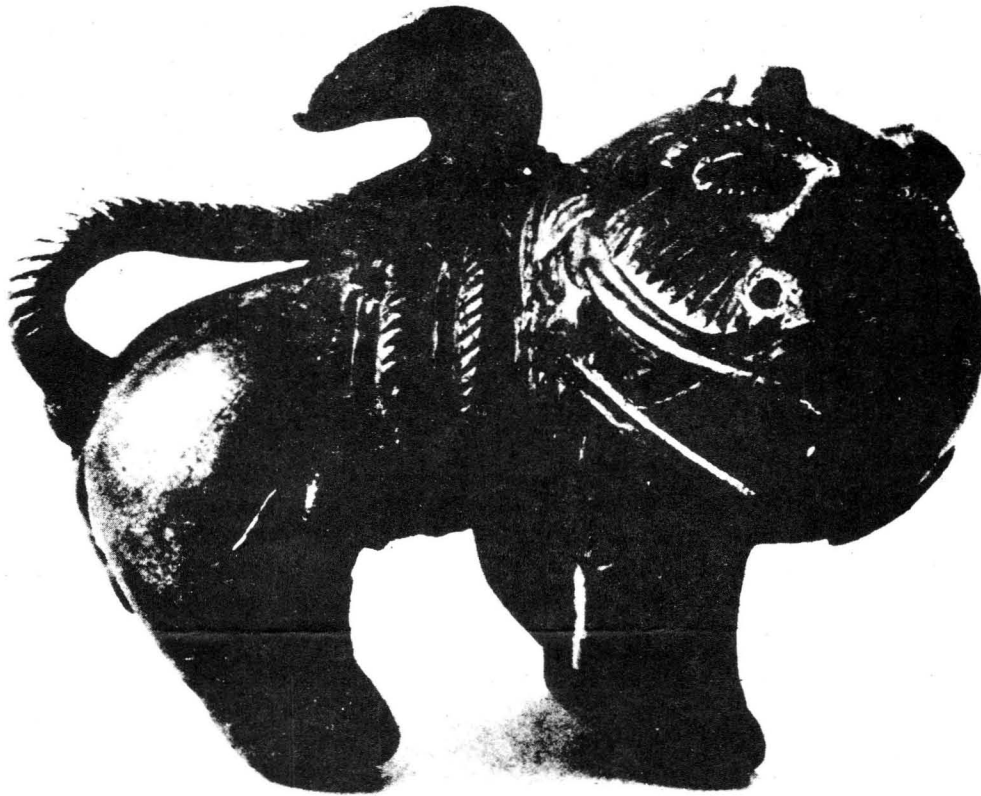
The cast bronze (brass) boxes for carrying the gold dust or nuggets could be square, rectangular, round, cruciform or semi-circular in shape. When decorated with geometric patterns they sometimes conformed to the scale of weights and could be used as such when empty. Others showed birds or animals on their lids. In many cases, gold dust boxes were not of brass and cast by the "lost wax" process, but of sheet metal with rivets or solder to hold the sides together. (above round is 2.1 inches; rectangle at 3.3 inches long).



The small spoons used for lifting the gold dust from the boxes on to the scales are almost invariably cut from sheet brass or sometimes heavy tin. The ashanti name for the spoons is n'sawa. (3.0 to 4.3 inches in length).



The proverb weight: "A family has many throats but only one belly". Translated also as: "Bellies mixed up, crocodiles mixed up, we have between us only one belly; if we get anything to eat it passes down our respective gullets". This proverb is reputedly quoted when there is any falling away of family unity. (2.5 inches long).



The lion (above), the king of beasts, the symbol of kingship, is handsomely represented here by a hollow-cast weight. The tawny lion, like gold, symbolized the fire of the sun and for many hundreds of years has been the emblem of great kings in many parts of Africa. In Ashantiland, the lion's name is gyata. (2.3 inches long).



A splendid catfish (left), further sculptured by long usage into gracefully curved forms. Sawfish, catfish, sunfish, sharks, mudfish, countless varieties of naturalistic and mythical heads of fish, and elaborate tails of fish, are reproduced as goldweights of all sizes. A number of these fish are sacred to certain Ashanti states and may not be eaten. (1.8 inches in widest part).

SPECIAL NOTICE TO NON-MEMBERS

If you have not been receiving the Toronto Coin Club bulletin lately because you are not a member for 1975, this is for you:

We will be sending you, without cost or obligation, copies of all Toronto Coin Club bulletins issued between now and the end of the year. After you have received the December issue, we want you to consider joining for the calendar year 1976 (of course why else would we send you free copies?)

We like to feel that with the expanded format of this bulletin, those people who have not attended monthly meetings regularly and therefore saw little value in laying out \$5.00, will now find a good incentive in joining.

And anyway, we need your membership fee to offset the additional cost of printing these expanded bulletins!
