## EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

I am pleased to announce that Neil Britton, New South Wales, Australia, has agreed to accept the invitation extended by the Officers of the Research Committee on Disasters to serve as co-editor of the International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters. Neil is a member of the Behavioural Sciences faculty at the Cumberland College of Health Services, a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Rehabilitation. He has made many excellent contributions to the disaster studies literature over the years. I look forward to working with him as we seek to expand and improve the quality, scope, and professional stature of the Journal.

Taking a broadbrushed approach, as only someone with comparable years of experience could do, Russell Dynes opens this issue with a survey of the unique theoretical, methodological, and logistical difficulties inherent in cross-national studies of disaster responses. This article is an expanded version of a presentation he has prepared for presentation at the ISA Research Council's meeting next month (September 1988) in Ljublijana, Yugoslavia. Undoubtedly, many readers will have special interest in his summary of newly emerging collaborative efforts in southeast Asia, India, China, and elsewhere.

Extending their analysis of data collected at the largest hazardous waste landfill in the U.S.A., Charles Faupel and Conner Bailey have prepared a summary of the weaknesses they discovered in emergency response planning. They place their case study into historical context and thereby provide readers with an overview of the recently emerging policy changes and future challenges represented by this hazard.

What are the impacts of disaster on the mental health of rescue personnel? How can such impacts best be assessed and ameliorated? These questions are important and will remain controversial until a great deal of additional research has been completed. One of the first steps, however, must be the development of better measurement instruments. Dianne Green, Antony Taylor, and Frank Walkey juxtaposed information collected from the rescue team that recovered the bodies of victims

of the air crash on Mount Erebus in Antarctica (November 1979) with other data sets so as to create a new assessment tool which may be useful to those pursuing this complex set of issues.

Finally, Nicholas Petropoulos takes us to Greece. He summarizes the findings from numerous studies of post-disaster responses that have been completed there during the past two decades. Contrasting the methodologies used in these studies with the insights offered by the New Zealand researchers, i.e., Green, Taylor and Walkey, clearly reveals the type of methodological sophistication required in future work. Equally important, Petropoulos advises us of new organizational relationships and sponsorship priorities that have emerged in Greece. These promise to stimulate additional studies and perhaps even curricular changes whereby disaster research will be made available to university students and practitioners.

In the Feedback From the Field section, we have a report on the emergency response following a tornado that hit the south central portion of West Memphis, Arkansas, on December 16, 1987. A team headed by Charles Faupel assessed pre-disaster emergency planning activities and highlighted several operational inadequacies which were exacerbated because the response had to take place in darkness since the major power substation was damaged.

Review of a video recently released by the Pan American Health Organization concludes this issue. It was prepared by E.L. Quarantelli who has taken over the **Journal Book and Film Review** responsibilities from Dennis Wenger who had served in this capacity for several years.

The assistance of Professors Britton and Quarantelli, the continued production and distribution from the Office of Hazards Studies at Arizona State University, and an increased responsiveness from the disaster research community, promise to make the **Journal** an increasingly significant forum in the coming months.