

THREE INTO ONE – Thoughts over the next decade

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May I at the outset thank the Editor for inviting me to write a few words to express my personal views as to how I would like to see the quantity surveying profession develop over the next year. I therefore confirm the arrangement that I write my personal views as a member of this Institute and not in my capacity as President of the Quantity Surveyors Division of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

Therefore for the first time may I publicly state my regret that the members of the Institute did not support the members of the RICS in obtaining unification in 1977. If you remember the membership of the RICS voted in favour whilst the membership of the IQS on the advice of some leading members of the Institute will share the RICS regret over the decision which by any standard was not in the best interest of the profession nor of its clients. I hope that in due course the wishes of many thousands in both bodies will win through and the original target be achieved. A united profession would consolidate progress to date and pave the way for even more spectacular advances in the future.

Now to my personal views as to the development over the next year. A year is a very short time scale to discuss and obviously there will be very little real visible development during that period. However, if I can widen my brief to this decade then I can perhaps give a little food for thought as to how I would like to see our profession develop. Firstly I would welcome progress on talks towards achieving the aspirations that some Institute Presidents as well as some RICS Presidents obviously had in the early and mid 1970's.

Secondly I should like to see a major reduction in the volume of our documentation in the industry and hence make the letting of contracts become simpler, quicker and less onerous. This means a simpler method of measurement and smaller and less complex contracts. Why we have to make things so difficult in the UK is beyond me. If we allow the present trend to continue I am fearful that in Britain quantity surveyors could be priced out of the market or forced into liquidation because life is too complicated. It is nonsense to keep devising bigger and better standard methods of measurement which result in bigger and better bills of quantities. I repeat that we should all be aiming for smaller documents in order to charge smaller fees and in order to give a better service to clients. As you know there are now in existence two methods of measurement—one for work in UK and one for the rest of the

world. I leave you with the thoughts as to why the rest of the world is prepared to accept a simpler document whilst here in the UK we have to be tied to a much more complex system.

Thirdly we must also, as a matter of urgency, use and develop the computer and micro-processor revolution to the advantage of the construction industry in general and



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the QS profession in particular. This development is in my view critical. There is no doubt that progress in this field has been made, but not far or fast enough. During the last two decades it has been possible to get computers to do the necessary calculations to put men on the moon and what's more important, bring them back again. Whilst no computer can think, I believe the quantity surveyor should be able to make the computer do all the data production necessary to cost and build a project and if this happens I foresee a need for much smaller staff in the quantity surveyors office. Quantity surveying by its nature is a heavy labour intensive operation and if we are to survive we must reduce the high cost of salaries and reduce charges to our clients. If we can really achieve this breakthrough then quantity surveying will be

even more closely attuned to the building economist role which at the moment is really only done by a small number of partner or associate level surveyors.

Fourthly we must, as quantity surveyors, use our best endeavours to try and mould the construction industry into one industry instead of the fragmented conglomerate that it is at the moment and I believe that our profession where its members are employed in so many varying capacities is well placed to achieve this.

Firstly, in the field of marketing we are mere children lost in a big forest. In 1978 I acted as Chairman of a NEDO working party which produced a report entitled "Construction for Industrial Recovery". In the course of this work over 500 industrial firms throughout the length and breadth of the UK were questioned. The conclusions and recommendations were addressed to three audiences i.e. The Government, Industry and finally our own Construction Industry. Whilst there was a demand for new and refurbished buildings there was also a call for better marketing from the construction industry as a whole. To make my point I quote from two recommendations:—

- 3.2 "The professions and builders should use the main conclusions of this report on the need for better industrial buildings as the basis for a campaign to sell their services as an essential aid to improved productivity and better working conditions".
- and
- 3.5 "The RIBA and its fellow professional institutions should modify their restrictive codes of practice to promote the services of those members most capable of providing services to manufacturing industry".

I think I need say no more on this point as quantity surveyors are all part of the construction industry.

Finally I see the prestige, value and credibility of the quantity surveyor increasing daily throughout the decade. This will come only if the members of this Institute as well as those within the RICS adopt a more positive attitude towards developing methodology and they themselves take a positive lead in marketing the industry in general as well as their own vested interest in particular.

I wish all readers well and hope that before I retire in at least twenty-five years time that I shall only be paying one annual subscription for my professional activity and not three which is the case at the moment.