



PROFESSOR PETER DALE, PRESIDENT OF FIG

Developing the Profession in a Developing World

The Changing World

It is a truism that the world is changing. I admit that the way ahead is not entirely clear; but at least this Congress will give us all a greater insight into what needs to be done in response to the changes that are taking place. Some of these changes have already made the world a much smaller, but a much more complex, place in which to live. They have also made us much more conscious that, although each of us is an independent being, we are all inter-dependent. Recognition of this inter-dependence needs to be at the heart of our response to the challenges ahead.

We are of course not alone in trying to come to terms with change. Every profession, not just that of surveying, is having to develop strategies to ensure that it remains relevant in the new world order and the global market place. It is the pace of change that many find so disturbing. When FIG met in Budapest in 1989 and selected the UK to administer its affairs and to host this, its Twenty First Congress, the Berlin Wall was still in place. A few weeks later saw the start of the collapse of the whole of the communist empire. None of us at the time anticipated the enormous political and economic upheavals that lay ahead.

Nor did we anticipate the rate at which technology would alter our lives. Four years ago at our Twentieth Congress in Melbourne, we discussed whether our Members would be able read information if it were provided on a floppy disk. Such technology will soon be obsolete. Today our obsession is with the Internet. But what will be the key technologies in four years time? Already, at least two new generations of technology are waiting in the

**MAANKÄYTTÖ JULKAISEE FIG:N
PRESIDENTIN PROFESSORI PETER
DALEN FIG:N XXI KONGRESSIN AVA-
JAISSA BRIGHTONISSA PITÄMÄN
PUHEEN KOKONAISUUDESSAAN.**

**PUHEEN OTSIKKO OLI SAMALLA KOKO
KONGRESSIN KANTAVA TEEMA. AVA-
JAISTEN MUISTA KEY-NOTE-ESITEL-
MIEN PITÄJISTÄ RICS:N PRESIDENTTI
RICHARD LAY LÄHESTYI TEEMAA SEN
KAUPALLISESTA NÄKÖKULMASTA JA
JONATHON PORRITT, FORUM OF THE
FUTUREN JOHTAJA, YMPÄRISTÖ-
NÄKÖKOHDISTA. KONGRESSISSA PAI-
NOTTUI MUUTENKIN ERITYISESTI
KESTÄVÄN KEHITYKSEN EDISTÄ-
MINEN.**

laboratory to be released as soon as we have begun to absorb what is presently available. How soon will they be released?

Since I do not know the answer to that question, I shall not speculate on the form of future technology. But I am sure that we must make it our servant rather than our master. We must never be dominated or intimidated by bits of silicon, copper wire and plastic – and I just hope that no computer hears me say that!

The Impact on Surveyors

I am equally sure that the new technologies are enabling others to provide services that only professional surveyors were able to provide in the past. Many of our old skills are no longer required. I know that many people find this threatening. But if less qualified people can do our work then I suggest that we are doing the wrong job. The choice is then between moving out or moving on, between becoming experts in a narrower field or going for breadth and offering a wider, more comprehensive service. Our profession, I believe, has

need for both such approaches.

We all recognise that some of the changes to our working environment are driven by technology; others stem from social, political and economic factors over which we have little or no control. But some changes, let us not forget, are brought about by ourselves, whether as ordinary citizens or surveyors. Never underestimate the power and influence of the individual—and that means each one of us! It is, in practice, individuals who change the world, even though it is not always in the way that they intend.

Neither should we forget that all surveying is an investment in the future, its impact often lasting for centuries or millennia. It struck me a long time ago when I lived in Cambridge that the traffic problems in that city arose because of the work of a Roman surveyor undertaken two thousand years ago. He laid out a road straight through the city centre in a way that has caused enormous difficulties for modern traffic planning. Had he foreseen the days of the motor car, he might have done things differently!

Now I do not for a moment suggest that any of us can see twenty years ahead, let alone two hundred or two thousand. But I would suggest that, for all of us in the surveying business, our work is a monument to the future. From the design stage, through setting out and construction to the subsequent maintenance, management and use of land and buildings, the activities undertaken by surveyors are directed towards enhancing the environment in which we all live. Future generations will suffer or enjoy our work for, although we literally build on the past, we are helping to create tomorrow's world.

That places a huge responsibility on us all.

Hence the importance of surveyors understanding the nature of the changes that are taking place. If we fail to accommodate change our services will become irrelevant and we will run the risk of being overwhelmed. We must be proactive rather than reactive. We must turn problems into opportunities.

As members of FIG we are in a strong position to do this because the work of the surveyor is crucial to economic and social development. Land, property and construction are key parts of every national economy, accounting for 20% or more of the world's GDP. Every profession, of course, strives to make the world a better place in which to live, work and play. But we surveyors are uniquely placed to do this because we are part of the infrastructure, part of the foundations on which societies develop. Our actions affect the world as a whole.

As President of FIG I am often challenged as to why surveyors should worry about the world at large when all that really matters is what happens within fifty kilometres of home. I had a friend, sadly no longer with us, who, with some political incorrectness, used to say that in his family he made the big decisions such as what the family attitude should be to the current economic crisis in South East Asia. He joked that his wife dealt with the trivial matters such as what they were going to have to eat or what new clothes the children required.

It is of course essential that we address domestic matters. Food and shelter are for all of us the number one priority. But it is equally important that we keep our sights on the big picture. What happens elsewhere in the world affects what and how much we can buy with the pound, the dollar, the euro or the yen that is in our pocket. It affects local levels of employment, especially where there has been significant inward investment as here in the UK. It can even affect the air that we breathe and the overall quality of our lives, as our friends in South East Asia found from the illegal behaviour of logging companies in Indonesia. We are all inter-dependent.

Interdependence

None of us can escape the effect of globalisation. Hence we must take advantage of it, by developing the profession in the overall context of global developments. In my experience, the cross fertili-

sation of ideas that comes from international involvement opens up opportunities for growth not only in a business sense but also in experience, understanding and wisdom. We learn from each other. Add to this the huge pleasure of sharing international experiences and observing different cultures, as I hope and feel confident that you will all be able to do this week, and you have a recipe for a spiritually as well as an economically richer life.

But as the world appears to become smaller, so we must make sure that the individual is not drowned by what I call the tyranny of conformity. We could all so easily become clones, wearing the same sort of clothes, eating the same sort of foods, speaking roughly the same language, using the same software to write the same sort of professional reports.

Anxiety about the pressures for uniformity exists in many countries. I recently visited Slovenia which, for the first time since the eighth century, is now once again a fully autonomous, sovereign state. The citizens of Slovenia are understandably torn between the economic imperative of joining the European Union and their deep reluctance to surrender any of their recently restored sovereignty. Their dilemma is how to balance inter-dependence with independence. The logic of moving towards greater political and economic integration needs to be counter-balanced by devolution and greater responsibility at the local level.

The need for such a balance is especially evident when we seek to manage the conflicting demands that a rapidly expanding world population is making on the finite supply of land. On the one hand we have the massive shifts of population from rural to urban areas which have caused a disproportionate amount of often scarce resources to be channelled into programmes of urban development. On the other we have the reaction that occurred in London earlier this year when 200.000 rural dwellers converged on the city to protest at the way that rural communities in the UK were being treated in comparison to city dwellers. Rural communities in Australia and in the United States have expressed similar frustrations.

The issues surrounding urbanisation were discussed by heads of state at the Habitat II conference in Istanbul in 1996. During that conference FIG, in partnership with the International Real Estate Federation, FIABCI, and the UN Centre for Human Settlements, organised a dia-

logue on rural/urban linkages which focused on the ways in which cities are dependent on their hinterland while rural areas depend on nearby cities for supplies and for outlets for the produce.

This awareness of rural/urban interdependence is already occurring in the countries of east and central Europe. The transition from communism to market economies initially led land reform programmes to focus on improving agriculture. Little or no attention was paid to developing urban land markets because of the traditional separation of rural and urban affairs. The concept of a single, seamless land market was not understood. Now there is a growing realisation that urban and rural communities can no longer be thought of as completely separate entities.

Forgive me if I now remind you of two statistics that underline the importance of adopting this holistic approach to managing the earth's surface. The first is that, whereas in 1970 two thirds of the world's population lived in rural communities, by 2030 two thirds will live in cities and towns. The second is that, again by 2030, 80 percent of us will live within 50 kilometres of the coast. The need for surveyors to focus more on the management of urban land and on the coastal zone should be obvious.

Team Work

Surveyors are a multi-disciplinary group with a great variety of skills. But no profession has a monopoly of wisdom and if the complex problems of urbanisation, coastal zone protection and environment control are to be solved surveyors must learn to work more closely with other professionals who have complementary skills. The rivalries between professions need to be turned from competition into co-operation if we are to achieve sustainable development.

To be successful players in a team, we need to be more sensitive to those around us and become better listeners. As someone who has worked in recent years in central and eastern Europe, I have seen many examples of foreign consultants who do not listen, who have solutions already prepared for problems not yet defined. They arrive insisting that there is only one way to solve a problem and that is the way with which they are familiar. Personally, I have never undertaken a consultancy in which I have not learnt far more than I have ever been able to offer in return. Solving problems is usually easy;

it is defining the problem that is often the most difficult task. Part of professional development involves becoming a better listener and seeing things from other people's points of view.

This is a pre-requisite if we are to be part of the new partnership that is so often spoken of these days, especially in the context of relationships between government and the private sector. Partnership is not only the buzzword but also the actual model of the day. At the international level, funding bodies and especially the United Nations agencies have been encouraging non-government organisations such as FIG to be partners in development projects. This empowerment of NGOs is happening at all levels including nationally where FIG Member Associations operate, and at the local level within cities and rural communities.

Recently tasks that have traditionally been regarded as activities to be undertaken by central or local government have been outsourced to the private sector. The reasons may be as much economic as ideological—often the private sector can do the work much more cheaply because of government labour rates and overheads. Outsourcing results in new relationships between the public and private sectors.

A key element in market driven economies is of course competition. The upside of open and fair competition is that the customer should gain through the delivery of products and services that are fit for their purpose at a price that the customer is willing to pay. The downside is that short-term interests may dominate over the long-term benefits and greed may raise its ugly face. Self-regulation by the professions is one way to ensure that this does not happen. With this in mind, as some of you will know, FIG has rewritten

its Code of Professional Conduct to take into account contemporary issues and practices.

The revision of our Code was no easy matter because often what is considered unethical or unprofessional in one country may be acceptable in another. What in one country is regarded as a bribe may in another be a routine agency handling-fee. One person's concern for environmental damage may be another person's economic imperative. When working in a global market place, we need to be sensitive to local conditions; but we also need to remain professional and adopt a common code of conduct.

The Way Forward

History shows the great contribution that surveyors have made over the last four millennia—right back to the time of the ancient Egyptians. We need to ask ourselves what our descendants will see when they look back at the end of the next one thousand years. Will they see surveyors as multi-disciplinary experts who continued to provide the infrastructure that underpinned the development of all land, property and construction? Or will they see surveyors as a species that died out because it would not respond to the changing order?

I am confident that it will be the former. There is a poster currently on the London underground that says 'Don't just do it. Do it better.' It then adds that 'Life

is not a spectator sport.' That perhaps says it all. As individuals, we need to be proactively rather than reactively involved. We need to retain our independence and integrity while accepting that we cannot act alone. We need to accept the benefits of competition while understanding the value of co-operation and partnership. And more than anything else, we must undertake continuing professional development and keep up-to-date.

I would say the same of our professional associations. For many of them the impacts of changes are even greater than for their individual members. At home, deregulation is denying them the monopoly that they once had; abroad, internationalism has become a local issue. They too need to learn to work with other professional bodies if the goal of sustainable development is to be achieved. Already the barriers between professions are breaking down, a trend which I for one welcome.

But what of FIG? When asked why should any surveyor become involved with our organisation I always point to the business value of networking, the benefits of life long learning, and the sheer pleasure of building new friendships. I would now add that with our new Permanent Office, due to be opened next January, we will be able to provide a better service to our members, undertake longer term strategic planning, have greater influence in the world, and open up new opportunities that currently cannot be pursued. We shall enter the next millennium stronger, fitter and more effective.

FIG, like its members, is undergoing professional development in a developing world. That is what this Congress is all about and what each one of us should be striving to achieve.

Kongressin tekniset opintomatkat suuntautuvat pääosin Lontooseen, jossa kohteina ovat Greenwich sekä Millennium.



© Markku Viilikka