

# ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT/JAARVERSLAG VAN DIE PRESIDENT

M.I. OSBORNE

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## INTRODUCTION

In his address at the AGM last year Mr Els talked of the common ties which make us professional people, how the Institute represents us as the flagship of our profession including us into a recognisable body, controlling the way we interact amongst ourselves, with the public and with other professions.

Tonight I would like to take a little further the aspect of professionalism and what I believe it entails.

### **Definition of a Profession:**

I would define a profession as:

“A fraternity of persons having common specialist knowledge and training usually organised to ensure a high standard of service and behaviour to the community.

Members of the Profession are required to observe a code of ethics and professional behaviour.”

**Aim:** The major aims of such a fraternity seem to be:

- (i) To ensure *recognition* of its particular art/science or field of endeavour and to further its knowledge.
- (ii) To create *status* for the fraternity which will ensure trust, respect and confidence from the community.
- (iii) Stemming from recognition and status the fraternity looks for *adequate financial reward* for long years of study and for the ability and expertise of its members.

Recognition and thus status are essential if one's ideas are to be given due weight in society and both concepts rely, I believe, on the idea of higher education and training in a specific field *coupled with an integrity of purpose and behaviour.*

An undisciplined, ill-directed profession cannot achieve or maintain the respect and confidence of its fellow professions or the public and thus professions have *Codes of Conduct and Ethics* backed by *Disciplinary powers.*

**Code of Ethics:** I see a code of principles which define a person's duty to his fellow

man – based on accepted morality. Thus you will find that these principles are built into the Rules of professional bodies regulating and laying down how a professional should act toward the public and his fellow professional.

Let me stress that these rules are there to ensure our moral behaviour is in the top bracket of behaviour. Whereas non professionals are governed only by the laws of the state and punitive action by it. Into the latter category fall most businessmen. If your desire in life is to make as much money as possible then don't practise a profession – you are only burdening yourself with another set of rules of behaviour apart from the codified laws of the country.

You may feel that many of the rules apply only to the consultants in our profession. That may be so but always remember that it is the consultant who tends to be more visible in the informed public eye and that his status and earning capacity has a direct bearing on that of the government or municipal planner.

Professions and their place in the world rest on several pillars which are interlinked:

- (i) Compulsory Membership (Registration)
- (ii) Restricted advertising
- (iii) Control of Tariffs
- (iv) Work Reservation.

### **Compulsory Membership:**

- Includes the protection of title – so that the public can identify who is properly qualified to serve it in the particular field.
- Includes regulation and discipline by the profession
- Includes standards of education and training (articles)
- Endeavours to ensure a sense of duty to the public, a respect for fellow professionals and fair and honest behaviour.

### **Restricted Advertising:**

Is basically to ensure fair competition between professionals of different means. It is a very small part of the public who

could distinguish between a good advertiser and a good consultant. It is obviously a matter of degree. If a profession agrees to a certain degree (and not uncontrolled) of advertising then of course it must be prepared to monitor the results.

### **Control of Tariffs:**

A profession seeks to ensure its future by attracting the right young people to its particular discipline. As I said earlier it seeks adequate compensation for the long years of university study and articles and the ability and expertise of its members. It is perhaps a sad fact in this modern world that young people today, however driven by a sense of vocation, are very alive to the possible monetary rewards of various avenues of employment – and rightly so. Hopefully it is those persons of sensitivity and integrity who will enter our profession – knowing that they may never be millionaires but that at least an adequate livelihood can be expected after years of study. The inherent risk of committing oneself to at least 6 years of study and articles in a profession such as Town and Regional planning which narrows the field in which one can earn a living does require some promise of future financial security.

The idea of a fixed tariff is to ensure two things amongst others-

- (i) that competition between consultants will be by proven efficiency – not price.
- (ii) that should a court have to rule on a consultants account it has a true standard with which to measure. Should such an account be based on the accepted tariff it will be upheld by the court in all likelihood – thus a measure of assurance can be given to a consultant's projected earnings – not so with a businessman.

From this assurance that one can earn a living commensurate with one's peers, comes the most important asset in a professional for the public – a judgement of the merits of the client's proposal not influenced by anxiety regarding money.

## Work Reservation:

I believe quite sincerely that reservation of work to any particular profession was brought in principally to protect the layman public against the advice of those not qualified to give it. Certainly, as many articles say, there is an element of self interest in such a monopoly but there are many cases where the good outweighs the bad.

In much of the planning work done by planners or perhaps other professions today there is no way that the client can tell if he is receiving good or bad advice or service from the planner or so-called planner. Is it not in the interest of the public that only properly trained and qualified persons should be permitted to do such work?

Once more security of income and security of work leads to the most important asset in a professional man for the public – dispassionate responsible advice and service not unbalanced by achieving “the fast buck.”

Were all men idealists of course there would be no need for statutory professionalism.

I must say that as a consultant, or even when I was a senior planner in Johannesburg Council, my major reward is, and was, the trust the public put in my judgement.

I might also add that my judgement for my *own* affairs is not nearly so good! Perhaps I should employ a consultant!

Many of you will be aware that over the past five years certain changes in the four pillars of professions I have referred to have occurred in America and the United Kingdom.

The American Institute of Certified Planners permits “truthful” advertising as well as direct canvassing of clients.

The Royal Town Planning Institute permits advertising with certain restrictions but disallows canvassing.

The Royal Institute of British Architects on the other hand restricts advertising but permits canvassing!

Imagine what will happen in multidisciplinary firms!

We hear that our own Competitions Board is in contact with the Architects and Quantity Surveyors and asking why those professions have “the four pillars.”

*One hopes that any change proposed will be measured against the question – will it improve the service of the profession to the Public?*

The decontrol of any one of the four pillars mentioned will have an effect on the ones remaining and I therefore warn against change for the sake of change.

I believe the public needs the services of trustworthy professionals of integrity and dispassionate judgement – that is what we should aspire to – never forgetting we have a broader duty toward the reservation and protection of the environment and public good order.

## The Town and Regional Planners Act: Act 19 of 1984

The Act provides for a First Council to set the new body on the right lines. The First Council is supposed to sit for a year and then give way to a new Council which will sit for three year periods.

Both Councils will be similar in composition having 8 members nominated by the Institute, 2 members nominated by the Council of University Principals and one Government nomination. There is also an Education Advisory Committee nominated on similar lines to help and advise the Council.

After calling for nominations from all Branches and Institute Council Members we put forward in June 1984 a list of names to the Department as nominations for the First Council plus a request for a loan to help finance the first year. I'm told that all nominations from government and Universities have now been received and that selection of the Council members and publication of their names should occur in the next month.

In the first year the First Council should sort out and approve the Rules to regulate:-

Entry Requirements  
Principles of Behaviour  
Discipline etc

I quote from Section 9(i) of the Act:

9(i) Die Raad mag – “die stappe doen wat hy raadsaam ag vir die beskerming van lede van die publiek in hul transaksies met stads- en streekbeplanners of met stads- en streekbeplanners-in-opleiding en vir die handhawing van die *integriteit* van, die verhoging van die *status* van en die verbetering van die *standaard van dienste* gelewer deur stads- en streekbe-

planners of stads- en streekbeplanners-in-opleiding en, na oorweging van enige advies of aanbevelings van die Adviserende Onderwyskomitee, die verbetering van die standaard van die akademiese kwalifikasies van stads- en streekbeplanners.”

U sal opmerk dat die woorde “integriteit”, “status” en “standaard van dienste” in gebruik is.

It is hoped that the First Council will consider incorporating a special Code of Professional Ethics or Behaviour apart from the normal rules of conduct.

I have requested the Minister to set the first meeting of the First Council for 15th February 1985 when the Act will then come into operation (in werking tree) except for the section dealing with work reservation.

Only the tariff and work reservations are subject to Ministerial approval.

The Act provides that all corporate members of the Institute must register with the Statutory Council within 6 months of February 15 or such later time as may be allowed by the First Council.

There is also provision that Architects, Engineers, Land Surveyors and Quantity Surveyors with at least 10 years appropriate experience may register as well as other persons having at least 15 years appropriate experience.

In the past year our Institute Committees have drafted possible new Rules and other items for the Statutory Council in an endeavour to save time.

It seems our profession has now come of age and is recognised as equal in status to the other older allied professions. I pay tribute to those founder members of the Institute who ensured from the beginning that town planners always behaved as true professional people.

A small sign of the progress made is that myself and Mr Oakenfull were invited to attend the meetings of an inter disciplinary group called EQUALS which deals with problems common to engineers, quantity surveyors, architects and land surveyors.

In addition I was invited to serve on the Executive Committee of Associated Scientific & Technical Societies at Kelvin House.

### *The Past Year*

In the past 12 months in addition to normal duties your Institute Council has decided to put all funds for educational purposes into a special *Consolidated Fund* supplemented by the Peter Raath bursary fund and the generous donation of Max Kirchoffer. We have asked you via the Newsletter to contribute to the new fund and await your cheques please.

*The new tariff* based on land value has been settling in with relatively few adverse reactions but discussions are continuing with the government departments on it.

At the beginning of the year we created an "Executive Committee" with delegated powers to handle matters which could not wait until the normal Council meetings, such as membership applications. The Committee comprises, The President, the Vice President and the

immediate Past President.

The present membership of your Institute now stands at:

493 Corporate Members

135 Graduates and

47 Students and I believe we are set fair for the interesting year ahead.

May I in conclusion wish my worthy successor Les Oakenfull the very best for the coming year and to especially thank him for his hard work and support.

In addition I thank all my Council Members for their support with a special word of thanks to Paul Waanders and Charlie Els for their extra work; Dirk Viljoen, although not a Council Member has been good enough to give much of his time and expertise to us and deserves a very special thank you – Dankie Dirk.

Thank you also to John Erasmus and Franca Veldman of AS & TS who have helped us out of a rather troubled year

secretarial-wise and to Klaas Meekel who left for the Eastern Cape in June. I believe that Russell Attwell will prove an excellent Secretary – thank you for your recent efforts Russell.

This has been a sad day in many ways as today is the last day of Peter Reinecke's participation in our Institute. Peter as you all know has been one of the stalwarts of the Institute for many years, giving greatly of his time and expertise. He has twice been President and as our representative on the AS & TS Executive Committee for many years has built up a very respected reputation with it.

I'm sure you will all join me in thanking Peter for the many hours he has given to us and wishing him good luck and health in the future.

My very best wishes to the incoming Council and to Les Oakenfull and Bertie van Zyl.