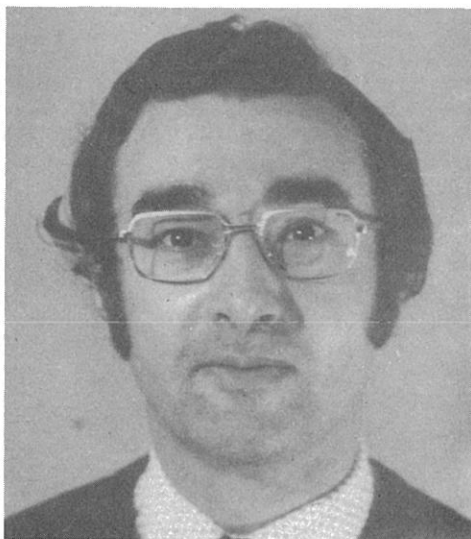


The future for quantity surveying

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The future role of the quantity surveyor has been under review and examination for over a decade. It has also been an important and interesting topic for discussion, often resulting in novel, if not outrageous, suggestions pertaining to their future. It should be remembered that quantity surveying is a young profession when compared with architecture, civil engineering or accountancy and as such its full potential has not yet been realised. Both architecture and civil engineering particularly, feel threatened by the surveyors' growth in stature.

Reduced Workload

There are those, however, within the quantity surveying profession, who take a rather pessimistic view of the future for quantity surveyors (Stimpson *Building* 23/9/82). Comments such as these cannot, however, be dismissed too lightly. There are those also, who suggest that because of a reduced workload this will mean an inevitable reduction in work for surveyors. One must assume that the decline in construction orders experienced during the 1970's and possibly throughout the 1980's will not (can not?) be a permanent feature for the remainder of

this century and beyond the year 2000, because buildings will need to be maintained or replaced and new structures for a new age constructed.¹

One could also argue that an upturn from the current economic recession, generally and particularly in construction, would leave us with too few surveyors to do the work adequately and efficiently.

Computers

There is also the fact of the computer revolution, that cannot be continually forecasted for 'next' year. This is likely to result in less labour intensive professions, who with the assistance of these electronic aids will be able to provide much more information both in respect of quantity and quality. Those most seriously at risk here, are the technician staff who do many of the routine duties now, which the computer will do in the future; and those who fail to respond to the change. The skills of the qualified quantity surveyor will not be lost, but the much talked about diversification of work will be put into practice.

Simplified System

Some also argue that quantity surveyors have made the system too complex, and there is evidence to suggest that the industry and clients, are both searching for a more simplified system. Perhaps there is justification here with the advent of JCT 80 and SMM6 and a further revision of SMM7. There is the danger of becoming too bogged down with constantly changing the rules, that we might accidentally avoid making the impact on the industry that is necessary.

The question, however, might be posed as to whether in this age there is a simplified system capable of fulfilling all the demands placed upon it. There are those, in answer to this question, refer to the American system as an example, although I for one remain sceptical and unconvinced that it is an improvement on our own procedures. The suggestion is made that the major difference between the two is the quantity surveyor. This is not true. There is the obvious danger here of throwing out the good and leaving us with an even poorer system. Is there any evidence to suggest that the employment of quantity surveyors, extends the design and construction period? increases total costs to the client? or reduces quality? Variations (which are a good thing for the Client, when used wisely), construction method (the use of labour and plant) demand and incentives, and particularly our planning system are more important and critical factors to consider in any comparison. We need to be careful not to use the QS scapegoat as the

answer to all our ills, but to see a more simplified process in its true light.

Contract Procurement

A further suggestion for change is that of an alternative method of contract procurement should be encouraged. I can well remember discussing this issue with a contractor's surveyor as long ago as 1968 when he claimed most vehemently that design and build would sweep the industry within a few years. Needless to say it did not happen. We have however, possibly failed to experiment with other methods of contracting, whereas this is a real feature of the American construction industry who are often more than ready to adopt unorthodox procedures. We must not, however, continually look West assuming that they have all the answers to our ills. The major contender in the U.K. is design and build, but this is fraught with so many disadvantages that it really can only have limited application. Although the quantity surveyor still has a very useful role to play with this type of contracting, he has been slow to emphasise the disadvantages of such an approach.

Reduced Fees

A further contender affecting the future of the QS profession is that of professional fees. Much has been said about reduced fee scales and allowing competition for work on the basis of a fee charged. I am still that old fashioned to believe that we should only compete for work as the basis of the quality of the professional service offered and not on the cheapness of our price. In any event the client will only get what he pays for, and a mediocre fee will mean a mediocre service, and this can't be good for the profession. Events seemed to have overtaken this fact. Reduced fees may, however, be partially absorbed by using the computer and other electronic devices where the mundane and possibly costly aspects of quantity surveying will be undertaken quickly and for a fraction of their present cost. I also cannot accept that a wise client will be prepared to forego cost control and cost advice that even at present day levels, is only a fraction of the total cost of any project.

Diversification

On a more positive note the profession must look forward to new opportunities, including and beyond the more normal spheres of working. The quantity surveyors' traditional role of preparing bills of quantities and final accounts for building works has already been expanded and this basis must be built upon. Bills of quantities will be with us for some considerable period into the future, their

usefulness must, I believe, be enlarged beyond their current functions. To those of you who feel that the B. of Q. is doomed – beware. Turner writing in the *Chartered Quantity Surveyor* (June 1982) emphasises the importance of bills of quantities and suggests pitfalls that will occur if they are dispensed with. Trimmer also reporting in the same journal (July 1982) mentions examples of problem projects caused because of an absence of bills of quantities. We must be careful that we do not undersell the bill of quantities.

We must also correct the false opinion that the quantity surveyor is nothing more than a preparer of bills of quantities. Perhaps the quantity surveyor has only himself to blame for allowing this false portrait to be painted. Tomlinson (writing in *Building* 16/2/73) states 'Has the time come for the profession to adopt a more dynamic image and to project to the other professions connected with building (construction) and to the public at large our true worth'. The public, those who at least have heard of the QS, picture him behind a tripod squinting through a telescope. More importantly there are professions concerned with construction of one form or another who are ignorant of the real value and purpose of quantity surveying. Perhaps the time has come for the profession to undertake some form of corporate advertising, aimed at bringing to the notice of all those concerned with construc-

tion of any type, the essential necessity of employing quantity surveyors. Promotion, marketing and advertising are topics which until recently, may not have even been considered by the profession. The institutions must now be prepared to make a positive step in these directions to avoid losing the opportunities for the quantity surveying profession. To prosper as a profession we must be prepared to show current and future clients the real value of employing a quantity surveyor. Possibly one of the best advertising medias is to show professional competence in our work.

The quantity surveyor has certain skills and qualities that are of necessity to the construction industry worldwide. These skills encompass measurement analysis, documentation efficiency and pricing assessment. In total they seek to achieve an economically designed product for the construction industry. Economic in this context taking into account future expenditure and current available finance. The whole of this work uses proven techniques supported by a study of appropriate knowledge.

The QS is therefore fully able to utilise these abilities in any situation under any conditions. He is at work in countries that are members of the Commonwealth such as Canada, Nigeria, Australia, Malaysia, etc. It would also be totally false to assume that his influence is limited by this fact. He is at work in all countries in the EEC, the Middle East

and far from us copying the American system, quantity surveyors are currently also employed in that country. There is a particular application for his work in the third world, and as this develops it will provide a regular source of employment for quantity surveyors, providing that we do not undersell ourselves. He is already employed with cost planning, where clients wish to make the best possible use of available resources. This will become more important in the consideration of new technologies and energy conservation. Graves (*Building* 28/9/72) has already suggested an appropriate diversification into project management, and has applied the theory in practice. Ashworth (*QS Weekly* 10/12/81) has outlined the role of the QS in the loss adjusting industry, and there are numerous other examples showing quantity surveyors already in proven practice in civil engineering, building services, petro-chemicals and off-shore oil, etc. The QS has, because of his working knowledge of contractual aspects an important role in arbitration, liquidation, construction claims and disputes. The future for the profession is far from gloomy if the opportunities that exist are fully exploited.

Reference

1 Buckmaster & Moore, Investment Analysts Report.

President's Speech

at the IQS Annual Dinner 5th November 1982



The President

Mr Montague Alfred, Mr Owen Luder, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank you Mr Alfred for your kind toast to the Institute and the generous terms in which it was given and your good wishes for the future.

With the unification debate now firmly resolved in favour I feel that on this historic occasion it would be appropriate for me to give a brief history of our Institute and the circumstances leading up to the recent agreement to unite with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

This Institute was formed in 1940 by a number of Quantity Surveyors who considered that there was a need for an independent body of Quantity Surveyors who could deal, unfettered, with all aspects of Building and Civil Engineering work. One of their main considerations was clearly the fact that whilst Contractors were becoming more convinced that they required the expertise of a professional person to carry out measurement and valuation work on their behalf, the only recognised professional body at that time – The Chartered Surveyors – did not allow their members to work or act for Contractors – and so our Institute was