

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT - I.E.S.L.

Mr. D.L.O. Mendis

It is customary for the new President to address a message to members, in the first issue of the quarterly Journal during his term of office. This year I had the privilege of delivering an Inaugural Address on Tuesday, November 4, 1986, following a tradition observed in the Institution of Civil Engineers, London, the oldest professional body of its type, in the world. Hopefully, this will henceforth be the practice in our Institution also.

In this message, I wish to briefly describe how the Council of our Institution conducts its activities. In all activities, Council functions as a policy making body appointed by the members of the Institution, and therefore answerable to them. Council is supported by advisory committees which do the detailed background work. The ex-officio Chairman of these committees is the President of I.E.S.L. In practice the Finance & Administration Committee and the Professional Affairs Committee are chaired by the President; and the Development Committee, the Education & Training Committee, the Library Publications & Publicity Committee and the Membership Committee are chaired by Vice-Presidents. Each of these Committees meets once every month.

The Finance & Administration Committee directs the Secretariat of the Institution under the Executive Secretary in the administration of the affairs of the Institution. An annual budget is prepared by the secretariat in concurrence with the Hon. Treasurer, which is tabled and discussed at the first meeting of the Finance & Administration Committee. Thereafter, a statement of finance is tabled at each monthly meeting.

The Professional Affairs Committee deliberates on various issues relating to the membership and the profession. Two important issues now being discussed are the proposed Registration of Professional Engineers, and the proposed Technician Engineers Section.

The Development Committee chaired by Mr. G.J.P. Gunawardene, Senior Vice-President has a number of interesting on-going items on the agenda of its monthly meeting. Many of these items are studied in depth by Specialist Study Groups set up from time to time by Development Committee. Some of these SSG projects are the following: Technology Indicators (in concurrence with NARESA); Local Construction Industry; Transport.

The Education and Training Committee with Prof. C. Patuwathavithana as Chairman is responsible for all work relating to examinations conducted by the Institution. It also processes and prepares material for liaison with outside organisations concerned with education and training of engineers at all stages of their career, including Universities, Ministries and the National Apprenticeship Board.

The Library, Publications & Publicity Committee with Mr. S.M.B. Dolapihilla as Chairman is responsible for the library and for assisting the Editorial Board of the "Engineer" Journal and the Editor of the Newsletter in their work. This Committee is responsible for ordering new books and journals for the library. In the coming year the L.P.P. Committee will study the possibility of starting a new series of publications by the Institution which will embody the engineering experience of senior engineers in this country. Hopefully,

before the year is out, we will have the memories of some of our most distinguished elder engineers like Mr. B.D. Rāmpalā and Dr. A.M.S. Kulasinghe (to mention only two of our illustrious past-presidents), published or at least in the press.

The Membership Committee with Prof. A. Thuraiajah as Chairman is responsible for all activities relating to membership matters. Individual applications for membership in every grade from Student to Fellow, and for transfer from one grade to the next higher grade, are scrutinised by this Committee and submitted to Council with firm recommendations. Professional Reviews for the Professional Charter are also the responsibility of this Committee.

In addition to these advisory committees that support the Council, there is a Board of Trustees with Mr. M. Chandrasena as Chairman that is responsible for the infrastructure owned by the Institution, chiefly the headquarters building.

The by-laws of the Institution also has provision for a Disciplinary Committee and three past-presidents were appointed last year to constitute this new committee. This year Council will also continue this useful precedent of appointing 3 members to constitute a Disciplinary Committee before any matter is referred to such a committee.

According to the by-laws, there also are statutory committees described as Sectional Committees whose chairmen are ex-officio members of Council. Three statutory committees were set up by resolution at the Annual General Meeting about ten years ago, representing Civil, Mechanical and Electrical engineering. Last year two more sectional committees were given the greenlight namely Agricultural and Chemical engineering and these new committees are being constituted this year. They have a lot of responsibility to give a good start in two disciplines that are both extremely important for the economic development of

our country.

Finally may I make a brief reference to some activities already initiated by the new Council. Members of the Institution have made many requests to Council to lobby the interests of the membership and the profession amongst politicians and other important persons. For example, it has been pointed out that the local construction industry has suffered rather than gained from the increased tempo of construction activity in the country in the recent past. It has also been repeatedly pointed out that engineers in the public sector are often by passed when appointments are made to top administrative positions. It has been said that we must be able to impress on important politicians that we engineers can and must be used more purposefully by government in the development of our country.

The new Council has taken certain steps to set up a dialogue and conduct continuing discussions with Ministers of Government in order to lobby there issues. A letter was addressed to the Hon. Minister of Finance shortly before the recent Budget, requesting an opportunity to present certain views on behalf of engineers. The Hon. Minister agreed to meet a delegation of 5 senior members, and a very useful discussion took place. Since then this small group has been working on certain issues and will be meeting other important government officials and politicians in the near future. I shall keep Council informed of developments, and keep the members of the Institution informed through the monthly Newsletter.

I do hope that this brief message will clarify the functions and responsibilities of your Council and will motivate members to take a keen interest in Institution activities throughout the coming year. The Institution can only grow from strength to strength through the interest and enthusiasm of its members. This interest and enthusiasm will also reflect the standing of the engineer in our society.