LETTER TO EDITOR

Dear Chief Editor

I refer to the letter to the Chief Editor of the IEM Bulletin by Ir. Dr Wong Fook Keong on page 19 of the October 2004 issue. As a Past President and a Council Member of IEM, I will be failing in my duties and responsibilities if I do not respond to the comments made.

I would first like to put on record the right perspectives on certain matters to avoid giving the wrong impression to our younger members and others. Every Council decision was and still is made by a majority or unanimous vote and not by a few vocal Council members and certainly not as a result of certain non-practising engineers making the decisions. The decisions made by the Council are most definitely made by strongly independent minded individuals who were and still are not easily swayed. An example was the case where the Executive Committee recently recommended conferment of an Honourary Fellowship to a senior and well-known politician. This was defeated by a majority vote by the Council. There were numerous such examples. Therefore any suggestions to the contrary are not true.

The IEM Constitution provides that every qualified member has the same right to participate in the activities and is given the opportunity to stand for any offices in the Council. Why should a member of the same grade be differentiated from another? How can we allow any differentiation and discrimination of one against the other? Is this the way to encourage more people to join IEM? I am totally against discrimination of this nature. I am also totally against the practice of excluding one member of the same discipline from practising in an area where he or she is qualified and competent to practise. For example, some engineers of the one discipline are trying to create rules or regulations to exclude the engineers of the same discipline, say from submitting plans to the local authorities and another is to use age limit to exclude others.

We are already facing a lot of challenges from other related professional groups. Others are gradually squeezing the engineers out in the areas, where they traditionally practise. In addition, these groups are also entering and taking over the leading roles of engineers in the construction industry. We should instead pool our resources together to fight this increasing encroachment into the engineering practices. We should all try our level best to maintain and enhance the role of engineers in our society. Therefore IEM and the engineering profession need people who are not only ready and willing but also able to sacrifice a little of their time and effort to assist the profession to achieve this common good.

In response to the statement in the October issue, please take note that the IEM Constitution does not make specific reference or use words "practising engineers". This is a clear unequivocal intention of the original drafters of the Constitution that IEM should belong to all engineers whether "practising or non-practising engineers". I consider it is inappropriate for anyone to suggest amending the IEM Constitution to exclude non-practising engineers from standing for offices in the Council. It is the right of any qualified fee-paying member to stand for office in the Council. I believe that IEM welcomes all qualified members to stand for offices in the Council. These members must not only be committed to the cause of IEM but also must be able to attend numerous meetings outside IEM to look after the interests of engineers in the forum where issues affecting the engineering profession are discussed and decisions subsequently made.

IEM is a society and an umbrella body for all qualified engineers and also potential engineers who are willing to become and remain as members. It is therefore, misleading to suggest that IEM is only for the practising engineers.

In relation to the question posed: *"why is the membership electing into office engineers who are no longer practising the trade?"* First I must say we must not underestimate the intelligence of the members at large. They are fully aware of whom they vote into office as the information of the candidates are fully disclosed to the members to decide. I am sure the voting members will be able to recognise potential candidates for their efforts and contribution to IEM and will vote them into office. I emphasise again that it is **SERVICE** to IEM, its members and the engineering profession is of paramount importance and not whether one is clothed as "practising engineer" or not. ■

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Chief Editor's Notes

We have allowed members to express their personal views in the Bulletin on such related subjects in the hope that it would create a constructive forum of ideas for the IEM to improve and change for the better. There have been many pros and cons supporting these ideas and I hope the Executive Committee and the Council would take all comments and suggestions with great care for the betterment of the IEM. I would like to end any further discussion or comments on this related issue for now. However, I do invite members to keep writing on issues that would bring IEM to greater heights and not to forget improvement to the Bulletin.