

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

In July and September 2004, *Jurutera* was published with an advertisement jacket covering half the cover of the bulletin. The Editorial Board heard there were a lot of grumblings and upset members. Unfortunately, we merely questioned our mental fitness rather than give compelling arguments. We had one letter to the editor, but unfortunately, the writer declined to let us publish it. We will honour that, but we think it is necessary for the Editorial Board to explain our position on this matter. So the following is our response to those who have convinced themselves that the Editorial Board is feeble-minded:

We did anticipate that some members and readers will have an adverse reaction to more aggressive forms of advertising, and we appreciate your concerns. Jacket cover advertisements will not be run every month. We would like to point out that the advertisement did not in any way affect the bulletin's content. It just obscured the lower part of the cover. Also, at no point did it influence the voice of the bulletin. We keep advertising and content separate; we also make an effort to keep everything tasteful and within limits. We aren't perfect, but we hope you understand that we are doing our best with a difficult balancing act. If you are of the opinion that the Editorial Board is in a serious breach of professionalism and ethics, then please do write to us and point our clearly and unambiguously why it is so.

Dear Chief Editor,

Reading the monthly bulletin of The Institution of Engineers, Malaysia (No.7, July 2004), I was impressed with the contents and improvement of the magazine. It has been so many years passing by before we reach this level. So, keep up the good work.

Improvement and improved contents to note are the update of news on IEM, the selection of IEM library books and more interesting articles (e.g. solar car project in UTM and the automotive component parts and accessories feature.) This is particularly of interest since the contents are not too technical. Also, note that we are a multidisciplinary institution which portrays the various fields of technology which affect our daily life.

I hope that IEM will continue to improve on the contents of its publications so that one day, they will not only be read by engineers alone but those in the relevant industries as well. I would like to suggest that we can also learn from top magazines and journals from other professional institutions.

With all these improvements, I believe more engineers will find the bulletin more relevant to their profession and this in turn will attract more to join IEM. Of course, our magazines should have a unique blend of local creative tastes and contents all packed into one.

In all this, I wish IEM every success in helping to bring us towards the new technological era.

Sdr. Ng Keng Peng
IEM Membership: G15739

Dear Chief Editor,

I read with great interest your editorial on 'Automotive Engineering' published in the July 2004 Edition of the *Jurutera*.

Automotive engineering and the automotive industry have played a very active role in the development of the country. Apart from the product that we see on the road, no less important are the spin-offs generated by this industry. These include the consultancy businesses, the die and mould industry, the academia and to top it all the 'Can Do' attitude that drives all these.

The automotive industry must not be seen as churning 'metal' into products but as a catalyst to make Malaysia a knowledge and technology centre of this region. The automotive industry is a national industry and must have the support of all. There is a need to relook at the way we do things and the way we think. There is a need for more engineers, stylists, and project managers, to name a few. Vendors too would need to change. At the end of the day it is not the 'export' of the tangible products that matters but more important is to 'sell' the knowledge and technology that we have. Someone told me that it is easy to pour water into a glass half full but try filling it up to the brim without spilling it out. Think out of the box except now the box is getting bigger and bigger.

Ir. Tajul Zahari bin Abu Bakar
IEM Membership: M06008

The Editor Replies:

*Thank you for your comments. Your thoughts echo our plans for *Jurutera*. Achieving these goals will not be an easy task with our limited resources, but we are pleased to say that we have made solid progress. A consi-*

derable part of the credit must go to our publisher, Dimension Publishing Sdn. Bhd. In a nutshell, we want to make *Jurutera* a publication our members would want to pick up and read every month. At the end of the day, it is about the application of content, just like engineering is the application of technology—what really counts is the value we bring to members, readers and the engineering community at large.

Dear Chief Editor,

I make it a habit to read the President's Corner to gain insight as to how our chosen leader is guiding the Institution, his thoughts and his aspirations. I have to say that our current President commands my deepest respect.

He had shown great courage by bringing out into the open the ills of the Institution, explored possible remedies and earnestly implored the membership to boldly adopt changes and to move forward with him. We should be proud that we have such brave people amongst us – fearless in voicing out their opinions for the good of the Institution.

Alas, I heard that the President had been bazooka-ed by certain members of the Council for his 'IEM is a dinosaur' article and I also heard that there was no real support from Council while the President stood almost alone to fend off the criticisms. I was told he did show great courage, but poor fella anyway.

Among other things, the President was asked to substantiate and justify that there are indeed ills within the Institution. It is akin to a cancer patient denying that he has cancer when the disease is initially

diagnosed. Is the Institution experiencing the same kind of 'denial syndrome'? Is there something more seriously wrong with the Institution? Who asked for the substantiations and justifications, anyway? Is he or she in denial?

The President's article in the August 2004 issue of *JURUTERA* where he re-visited the 'dinosaur' issue, albeit somewhat veiled, shows greater courage. I particularly like the part on 'past office bearers who haunt the corridors of power making it difficult for newly elected ones to innovate.' I will want to add that there are present office bearers who have been in the corridors of power for far too long making it difficult for newly elected ones to innovate and not making way for new blood and ideas to be infused into the Institution.

It is not unlike the current Liverpool Football Club. For the club to be restored to its past glory, something drastic has to happen and, as an ardent Liverpool fan, I am glad to see that has started to happen. What has happened? Change; drastic change; nothing less in order to weed the rot away. But for that to happen, the club had to realise that it is ill and to cure that illness, it has to take some medicine, however bitter and painful. Is the Institution prepared to accept that it has some illness and is it ready for its medicine?

I only have to name one glaring example that, in my opinion, really needs to change.

Our Institution is perhaps the only one in the country where non-practising professionals who have opted to become and practise full-time as members of other professions, are sitting in office and participating in decision making

for the Institution; decisions which will affect all practising members. I am all for these members to remain as members of the Institution because it will strengthen the Institution but it should really stop at that.

There should be a rule to bar non-practising engineers from standing for office in Council. Can one imagine how the Bar Council would react if a practising engineer who has been called to the bar, sitting in its Council? Heaven forbid. What right has a non-practising lawyer to sit in its Council to make decisions affecting practising lawyers? Would it follow that non-practising engineers have no right to sit in the Institution's Council to make decisions affecting practising engineers? Paradoxical, ironical, sad – what else can I say?

Alas, our Institution is one that allows non-practising engineers to sit in Council to participate in decision making. No, sorry, I wish to retract that. I should have said 'to make decisions', for that is exactly what I had observed when I was last a Council member – such is the influence wielded by certain non-practising engineers in Council.

It will be a sad, sad day when the Institution is finally and effectively run by non-practising engineers. Is the Institution sending out the message that there is not enough practising engineers who are fit to run for office in Council that it has to admit non-practising engineers into its decision making body? Why is the membership electing into office engineers who are no longer practising the trade?

God bless the Institution and show it the light and the right path.

lr. Dr Wong Fook Keong
IEM Membership: F08477