ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS OF
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

MR. LEO C. MARTIN

35TH ANNUAL BANQUET - MARCH 18, 1995

Your Excellencies, the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
and Mrs. Noor M. Hassanali, Honourable Minister of Finance - Mr. Wendell
Mottley and Mrs. Mottley, Honourable Minister of Works and Transport,
Eng. Colm Imbert, President Elect of APETT - Eng. Sam Naranjit,
Representatives of kindred societies, Award Recipients, Colleagues of the
Engineering Profession, Other Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is indeed an honour and a pleasure to address you on this occasion of the
35th Annual Banquet of the Association. I should like first of all to add my
own words of welcome to those expressed by the Chairman of the evening’s
proceedings. In particular, my colleagues on the Council of APETT and I
are extremely happy that their Excellencies have agreed to grace the
occasion with their presence. They have always demonstrated an interest in
our activities and for this we are very appreciative.

We are also grateful that the Honourable Minister of Finance, who the
pollsters say is one the busiest Parliamentary Representatives in the country
and one who is always in great demand - we are grateful that he has agreed
to be with us this evening and to deliver the Feature Address. We all look forward to listening to his words of wisdom later in the proceedings.

Our fellow engineer, the Honourable Minister of Works and Transport is a regular participator at these proceedings and he knows that he is always welcome.

Our only regret is that Mrs. Imbert is unable to be with us on this occasion. We trust that the Honourable Minister will convey to her, the Association’s sincere greetings.

We welcome our great friend, the Chairman of the Board of Engineering and Mrs. Fenrick De Four.

The name of Fenrick De Four has been virtually synonymous with APETT.

He was there when it all started and his contribution to the development of the Association in incomparable. (I dare say that he must have attended every one of our Annual Banquets).

Two other foundation members will be receiving awards this evening for Careers of Excellence in Engineering. We welcome them and their beautiful wives in the persons of Prof. & Mrs. Harry Phelps and Mr. & Mrs. Aldwyn Lequay.
We pay special recognition to MR. Randolph Archbald, recipient of APETT’s Bursary for the 1994/95 Academic Year. We wish him every success in his studies and look forward to his making his contribution before long as a full-fledged engineer.

I should mention at this point that APETT has recently started a Members’ Bursary Fund with a target figure of $50,000. It is anticipated that the APETT bursary in the future will be funded by the interest generated by this Fund.

I should like to extend a special welcome also to our friends of the kindred societies and I refer specifically to

- The President of the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Architects Ms. Rudylynn Roberts.

- The President of the Quantity Surveyors Society of Trinidad and Tobago and Mrs. Leslie Harper.

- The President of the Trinidad and Tobago Contractors Association and Mrs. Lawrence Harrilal.

- The Chairman of the Trinidad and Tobago Chapter of the Society of Petroleum Engineers and Mrs. Ramkumar Ajodha.
- The President of the Trinidad and Tobago Society of Planners and Mrs. Paul De Gannes.

We share an on-going relationship with all of these bodies as we all strive to formulate an environment of healthy industry and professionalism sometimes against great odds - an environment which should redound to the best interests of the country as a whole.

Through the efforts of Engineering Institution (world-wide), there has been growing recognition of the role of Engineers in National Development.

APETT has played its part in this trend and I dare say that over the 35 years of its existence, the Association has gained and continues to gain increasing recognition.

This recognition carries a great responsibility and APETT needs to live up to the expectations of its members and of the Community at large.

Whether we like it or not, a large portion of the burden of National Development will rest on Engineers and with the increasing trends towards Globalization, the Engineers could be from any part of the world.

What this means is that our own Engineers must prepare themselves for provision of services internationally - whether regionally or beyond.
APETT with the limited resources at its disposal has continued to keep abreast of developments with a view to providing guidance to members.

Trinidad and Tobago, for its size, carries a considerable proportion of heavy industry in its economic mix - and of course more heavy industries are on the horizon.

It may already be late but we do need to ensure that our stock of technical and technological skills will match the demands of the future.

It is against this background that I should explain that APETT employs a staff of one person; I note further that, that person, Ms. Noreen Mitchell, has been APETT’s Administrative Assistance for 20 years now - this I think deserves a special round of applause.

The point that I am leading to is that all other work of the Association is carried out by members (and occasionally friends of members) on a purely voluntary basis.

I should therefore like to pay tribute to those scores of members who have given and continue to give of their time and effort to further the interests of the Association.

I refer to the hard-working Members of Council and the Planning Committee, both of which meet at least monthly.
I refer to Members of Committees of the Divisions of Mechanical, Electrical and Civil Engineering (we hope that the Chemical Engineering Division will take its rightful place in the near future).

To the Divisions, a large share of the responsibility for learned Society activities has been delegated and I should like to acknowledge their contributions in the organisation of a variety of interesting lectures, seminars and plant tours.

In addition to these, the Divisions have been involved in a number of Community Activities.

- The Mechanical Division, for example, has been assisting the San Fernando Technical Institute in a Computer Upgrade Project.

The Electrical Division was involved in sponsoring a presentation last year by the visiting President of the Institution of Electrical Engineers, Dr. Alan Rudge. The topic of Dr. Rudge’s address was “Multimedia Communication in the 21st Century”.

Needless to say, the field of Telecommunications is undergoing such rapid development that any presentation in this area is sure to generate a great deal of interest.
Only last month, a panel discussion on “Deregulation of the Telecommunications Industry” attracted an attendance of approximately 150 persons.

Still on the matter of voluntary efforts by our members, we should not forget the various standing committees which deal with matters such as Membership, Continuing Education and Professional Training, Public Relations, Career Guidance, the APETT Journal, publication of our Newsletter, awards, Ethics and Social Affairs.

We need to recognise also those officers who liaise with the Board of Engineering, the University of the West Indies, the Council of Caribbean Engineering Organisations, the Professional Centre, the Association of Consulting Engineers and other organisations with whom we are associated or affiliated.

I refer also to those persons who serve from time to time on National Task Force. Only this past week, two of our members were appointed on a Task Force to look into Technical and Vocational Training.

I refer also to those persons who serve on Organising Committees of our Banquet (to whom we are indebted for this evening’s arrangements) and our Annual Conferences.

The Conference on “Engineering Management” held in November last year was moderately successful.
It appears, however, that we may need to hold a special conference on Conferences in which we might remind our members of the increasing need to continually update themselves on developments in technology.

If I may be permitted a brief ‘commercial’, the APETT Annual Conference is an excellent cost-effective opportunity.

Work has already started on preparation of our 9th Annual Conference which will be held in November this year on “Engineering Infrastructure for Industrial Development”.

Having said all of this and recognising the large proportion of voluntary work carried out on behalf of the Association, I feel sure that the Honourable Minister of Finance would be surprised to known that APETT has tried on several occasions without success, to persuade the powers that be (Specifically the staff of his Ministry) that APETT is a non-profit organisation and as such, should not be liable for Corporation Tax.

A further aspect to this is that Engineers are in general and almost be definition, not among the more opulent members of the society.

But, as with every rule, there may be exceptions and, no doubt, some of our members may wish to enter into Covenants on behalf of APETT. Better still, some may wish endowments to the benefit of the Association. But all of these noble thoughts are stymied by our not being a registered charity.
By comparison, it is worth noting that the Institution of Mechanical Engineers of the U.K. with an international membership of approximately 80,000 and an Annual Budget of over 9,000,000 is a registered charity. I can speak of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers at first hand in my capacity as the local representative of that body, but I have not doubt that many other Institutions of the U.K. and elsewhere would fall into the same category.

I do hope that the Honourable Minister of Finance would use his good office to correct this anomaly.

Finally, a word to fellow engineers:

- We need to show greater confidence in the value of our contribution to society.

- By the same token we must exert every effort to ensure that, that contribution is always valuable.

Our work must be a source of joy and fulfilment. Engineers must enjoy being engineers - and we must share this joy with the new budding engineers - be they students, subordinates or associates.

When funds permits, we should proceed with the second building which was earmarked for the Professional Centre Site. This will enable us to expand
from the small room which we currently occupy and hopefully, provide a venue where members and their colleagues could meet formally to widen their knowledge or simply to recreate themselves.

Let’s hope that this can be achieved within the not too distant future.

Thank you.

LEO C. MARTIN

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