

## The President's Column

Summer is traditionally a quiet period with most people on holiday for some of the time, though only the lucky few will have found any real holiday weather this year. Summer 2008 has been true to tradition with very little happening since the events reported in the last issue (UKAPE's BDC and the FPA Sector Conference). For me the two main items of unfinished business were the Parliamentary Inquiry into Engineering, and the ongoing efforts to find a suitable place for the FPA Associations in the UNITE structure.

The first of these is really outside our control, the politicians will talk to whoever they wish, and will ignore whoever they wish. So far, out of those who made submissions, UKAPE is in the 'ignored' category.

The place of the FPA Associations, and UKAPE as part of the FPA, is still developing, but slowly. I found the most disappointing aspect to be the inability of the FPA activists to organise the meetings necessary to co-ordinate our lobbying activities inside UNITE. In spite of this, we still have realistic hopes that the UKAPE officers and members will find the final outcome acceptable. In the end I believe there are two basic requirements:

1. Members have access to experienced and professional support when they need it.
2. Both members and prospective members see that the UNITE family is wide enough and flexible enough for them to feel a part of it.

Peter Everitt, President

## Editorial

It is now my first anniversary as editor of this magazine and for me this has proved a most interesting venture. I hope that you, the readers, have found my efforts equally interesting.

This edition includes a report on the issues that were outstanding following the June Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC) and the subsequent Executive Committee (EC) meeting. We are also resuming the earlier debate on the definition of an engineer, something which has exercised the minds of a number of readers. Following the change at the top of the London Assembly I have been thinking about the effects of politics on good engineering practice and how green issues should be addressed by the professional engineer. In addition we have covered the latest details to emerge from the Parliamentary Inquiry into Engineering.

Finally, your editor has managed to tease his way into the 2008 TUC as part of the press corps, so there is a short report on this event.

On a completely different tack, the officers of the Association have decided to reduce the numbers of Engineer Today to be printed in future; this will not affect the readership in any way but simply reduce the number of spare copies. These are available to send to new members, potential members, etc., and the thought occurred that they could be put to other good uses. Spare copies can be left in schools, libraries and even workplaces for potential members to read, so if you have access to places where free copies could be placed please contact either Michele Smith at Hayes Court or me. Both our details are on the back page and we would be delighted to hear from you.

As always we would be pleased to hear your comments, observations and views on any of these topics or any other matters of interest to the readership.

Bob Simpson, Editor

## BDC 2008 Continued

Following the Biennial Delegate Conference in June, the Executive Committee at its subsequent June meeting decided to defer a number of action points to the September meeting. The decisions taken at this meeting are detailed below:

Motion 4 and its Amendment – The EC was unable to agree on the question of extending membership to holders of the Eng Tech qualification. It was, however, agreed to explore a number of areas of recruitment and see what emerges.

Motion 5 – It was agreed to defer any action for 6 months until the final merger arrangements were in place.

Motion 8 – It was agreed to defer action for 6 months as the economic situation had changed dramatically since the motion was presented.

Motion 11 and its Amendment – It was agreed that letters to the Secretary of State and the ETB would be drafted by the President and the Assistant National Secretary for further discussion with the proposer of the motion.

Motion 12 – It was agreed that this motion was of a political nature and therefore outside the remit of the association.

Motion 13 – Research undertaken indicated that these proposals were already being dealt with by Government and that further action was unnecessary.

Motion 15 – It was agreed that this motion was also of a political nature and therefore outside the remit of the association.



*For me the two main items of unfinished business were the Parliamentary Inquiry into Engineering, and the ongoing efforts to find a suitable place for the FPA Associations in the UNITE structure.*

## TUC 2008

The Trades Union Congress this year was held in Brighton and it was agreed by the UKAPE Officers that your editor be sent to observe as part of the press corps. This gave an interesting new slant on TUC matters, to say the very least.

I will not dwell on the points that were discussed and the various political speeches that were delivered, which have already been well covered in the press and on television, other than to refer to the address by John Denham (Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills). He spoke on the necessity of having a properly trained workforce and the work that is being done to provide trained people in the construction industry. He went on to outline the public funding that will be made available for training up to level 3 qualifications. He indicated that there are plans to make time off for training a right for working people. All of this must be good news for our members.

So why did the officers think that UKAPE should have a presence at this gathering? We reported in the June edition that the Federation of Professional Associations (FPA) was not to be included as an industrial grouping under the new UNITE arrangements. This means that whatever small influence we in UKAPE may have had within the main union will be removed. It is of course a matter of opinion as to whether or not this is relevant to our members; it is the view of the Officers that members of any club should have some say in the direction in which that club is going, and that is why I went to the TUC in Brighton.

It gave me the opportunity to see both our General Secretaries in action, to obtain information from the UNITE office, to

obtain other information from the various exhibitors around the main Congress and to report this back to the EC. It also enabled me to speak to former AEEU executive colleagues and to the one FPA delegate present. These opportunities will become few and far between in the future unless there is a change of heart at the top of UNITE.

For anyone interested in the topics covered at the TUC, they are all available on the TUC website [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk) then follow the links to Congress 2008.



## Parliamentary Inquiry into Engineering

The Parliamentary Inquiry continues and we reproduce a shortened version of the very welcome and somewhat surprising verbal submission from Andrew Ramsay, the Engineering Council UK Chief Executive Officer.

Giving evidence to the Inquiry, Andrew Ramsay, called on government to introduce statutory recognition of the professional titles Chartered Engineer (CEng), Incorporated Engineer (IEng), and Engineering Technician (EngTech). Addressing the wider issue of engineer status, he also argued that statutory protection of the titles would demonstrate that government was fully behind the registration of suitably qualified and experienced engineers and technicians. It would also, EC<sup>UK</sup> believes, make it much easier to deter misuse of title.

The EC<sup>UK</sup> CEO, however, made clear that he was neither advocating government regulation of the engineering profession, nor proposing registration be made mandatory

for everyone wishing to work as an engineer, a practice he believed employers would regard as anti-competitive. He added that legal protection of the title "engineer", which many have advocated, would prove very difficult. In contrast, statutory recognition of the three registered titles would be simple to achieve and could do much to lift the status of engineering professionals. EC<sup>UK</sup> says it is also concerned that, every year, many new graduate engineers embark on career paths unrelated to engineering. One possible reason, it believes, may be the reported lack of good post-graduate training prospects.

Its submission, which supports the joint evidence prepared by the UK's 36 professional engineering institutions, also suggests that engineers' role in society is less appreciated than work done by scientists, despite the fact that it maintains that the former profession usually requires a greater range of skills.

Ed: All the submissions to the Inquiry can be viewed on the UK Parliament website on: [http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary\\_committees/ius/iusevidence.cfm](http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/ius/iusevidence.cfm). If that doesn't work go to: [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) and follow the links to committees.

*Statutory recognition of the three registered titles would be simple to*

## An Engineer or not an Engineer – Continued

Continuing the discussion started in March we have received the following two letters; there are more which we will publish in the next edition.

A W Griffin, Member and I Eng, writes on the topic of Incorporated Engineer versus Registered Engineer:

*With regard to the matters raised in the March 08 Engineer Today, the proposal of Registered Engineer as an alternative to Incorporated Engineer does appear to be an improvement, but both Chartered and Incorporated Engineers appear to be Registered Engineers by virtue of their inclusion on the Engineering Council Register. Also RE is often taken to mean Resident Engineer and R Eng could possibly lead to confusion.*

*Personally I would prefer Professional Engineer (P Eng), however this may mean that the name of our Association would need to change; but perhaps this may be coming in any case.*

Michael Tong, Member and C Eng, writes on the use of the title Engineer:

*I read with interest the article in the March 2008 issue. It is a subject that is close to my heart as I think it is crucial to the improved status and prestige of the Professional Engineer in this country and all that follows from that.*

*As to the basic question implied in the article I am very much on the side of having the term "Engineer" protected in law. Regarding the minimum qualification to be so classified, I am inclined towards the French system and I have the impression that "Engineer" is used as a title in most continental countries.*

*I do have the experience of working in Canada for close on 6 years in the late 50s, and there only qualified members of the Association of Professional Engineers of the respective Province could describe themselves as "Engineers". Yes, there was the exception of the engine driver, but that distinction was obvious to all – and there are not many left in North America! I have no reason to think that the situation in the US was any different, except it was the States rather than the Provinces.*

*I think simplicity is the key note as far as the general public is concerned; they won't take on board all the variations and nuances referred to by your correspondent. It should be Engineer solely and others must describe themselves as they see fit, e.g. technician, fitter, machinist, mechanic etc.*

*I don't know why this cannot gain ground in his country, others seem to manage it. It does seem incredible that we haven't achieved this yet; it does seem to be the usual British compromise and hesitancy – like our approach to metrication. Of course it could be helped by the Institutions but it sounds as if they are still as sniffily disinterested as in my day.*

## How Green is the new London?

It is just possible that you may have missed that there was recently an election for the London Mayor which resulted in Ken Livingstone being ousted by Boris Johnson. I should perhaps reassure our readers that UKAPE is still proudly apolitical and I am in no way venturing into the realms of politics here.

A recent article in the Guardian followed by others in the Technical Press indicated that the order for "hydrogen powered" buses, apparently placed by Livingstone, had been cancelled by Johnson. Now, whatever your views on Johnson and/or Livingstone we all know that neither would know a hydrogen fuel cell from a rice pudding if it hit him in the face, so we must conclude that an engineer or engineers working for Transport for London have provided the information which guided the two illustrious leaders in totally opposite directions.

No doubt most of us will know that the hydrogen cell is by no means a new concept; it was in fact first produced in 1845 and buses powered by the fuel cell are operating in Amsterdam and a number of cities in the USA. The point is that this idea is not new. Nevertheless, there are technical problems with hydrogen powered vehicles which largely relate to the production of the hydrogen in the first instance and then its subsequent compression and storage. It is possibly this that caused the engineers to rethink, but despite asking the Green Party members on the London Assembly, Transport for London and the Mayor for an explanation for the cancellation, I have had no sensible answer.

The Mayor's official response to this change of heart was: *TfL is focusing on the project to deliver 10 hydrogen buses to the fleet by 2010, but are not proceeding with initial batches of hydrogen cars and vans while they consider wider options for promoting innovative cleaner vehicles within the TfL fleet. I believe TfL is better placed to influence the commercialisation of hydrogen buses than cars and vans at this time; and development of the hydrogen economy will be monitored to see if the aspiration of five per cent of the fleet could be powered by hydrogen by 2015.*

Clearly UKAPE should support innovation although we should not support profligacy in the public arena, but to cancel an order for 70 buses and an undisclosed number of cars, vans and motor cycles cannot happen without a cancellation charge and this has not been revealed anywhere that we have found.

The reason behind this report of events at Transport for London is to ask whether professional engineers should be persuaded to change their advice on the basis of a change of the political direction of an employer. It is easy to take a very high-minded view when one is not affected, but should not engineers adopt a similar position to the medical and legal professions and simply provide the best possible technical information available irrespective of the consequences?

Your views on this would be welcome.



## UKAPE WEB SITE

The initial phase of the website update is now complete and the site went live on 8 September 2008. The members' area will remain dormant for the immediate future, but it is hoped to activate this area as a quarter night discussion area shortly. The members' area will then be developed as a full discussion area after a short trial period in the quarter night format.

There have been various comments from the EC members and these should now be incorporated in the new site. Feel free to contact me if you have any further comments or suggestions.

There are several back copies of the ET which have yet to be tracked down, if you have old copies of the missing editions (see archives) please let me know.

John Gallen

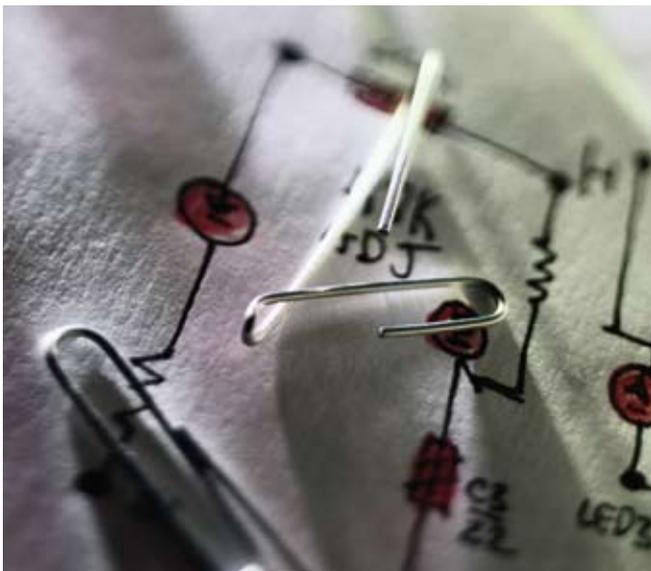
Ed: John can be contacted by email on:  
webukape@btinternet.com

*Feel free to contact me if you have any further comments or suggestions.*

John Gallen

## Know Your Rights

As a member of UKAPE you are entitled to legal advice in connection with your rights at work. The TUC Know Your Rights line is: 0870 600 4 882 and the lines are open every day from 8am to 10pm.



## UKAPE Contacts

If you have a home email address where we can contact you, please email the details to either Dick Hegerty or Peter Everitt. Updated information is also posted on the UKAPE website at: [www.ukape.org.uk](http://www.ukape.org.uk)

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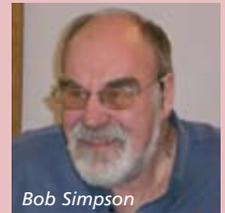
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