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The President's Thoughts



Syd Croft

While watching the TV, I often hear politicians and sundry 'pundits' referring to 'The Economy'. Unfortunately, I, and presumably many others, do not know what they mean. Just exactly what is 'The Economy'? When you think about it, this is not an entirely unreasonable question. Indeed, it is a question I have put many times to people who ought to know, and failed to receive a satisfactory answer. It is tempting to think that there must be a definition somewhere. If there isn't, then there needs to be.

For the sake of this article, I will assume that 'The Economy' can be represented by a mythical pot of gold, somewhere in the Midlands. Money from this pot will be used to pay for our imports such as food, raw materials and luxury goods. However, the amount of cash in the pot will run out unless it is regularly topped up. If it isn't then we will be in deep trouble. Furthermore, our society can be divided into two groups, those who add to the country's wealth and those who don't. The function of this latter group is at best only supportive but they frequently earn more than the wealth creators.

I would like to think that the wealth creators must include Engineers, but I am under no illusion that it will also include such diverse people as pop singers whose music is sold globally and, believe it or not, bankers who perform international financial services. The problem is, we don't know the value of their contributions. It is high time that we did. The subject should be debated by MPs in Parliament in a transparent fashion, so that we would at least know where we stood. Moreover, as a result of their analysis, we should be supporting these groups in proportion to their wealth creating ability. If, for example, my gut feeling is incorrect and manufacturing industry comes way down the list, then why are we paying to churn more and more Engineering graduates? Let us save a considerable amount of money by closing Engineering faculties in Universities and re-investing it in whatever is earning the most money, even if it does mean recording studios on each street corner.

Whilst I am using flippant hyperboles to make my point, it is nevertheless a very serious point that I am trying to make. I really do think it is very important that the subject of how we pay our way in the world is discussed at the highest level. Maybe it is, but if it is, then it is not made known to the general public. On this score, it is a sobering thought that something like 90% of the country's wealth is owned by 3% of the population and it should come as no great shock to learn that it is this 3% that actually rules the UK.

Much use is made of the phrase 'the Dunkirk Spirit'. It should not be forgotten that this came about when the country's population pulled together because they had a common purpose in trying to ward off invasion. Could it be that if we all fully understood the importance of wealth creation, and what brings the most money into our country, then we would all pull together again? Who knows what we could achieve then?

Syd Croft
24th June 2011

Editorial

First of all we must apologise for the late production of the Summer Edition. This is due almost entirely to problems we have encountered with our broadband connection. When it was finally diagnosed as a problem external to our computer and router, France Telecom came to our rescue with its usual alacrity, for which we are most grateful.

UKAPE appears to have turned its attention to the economy, which under the present circumstances is hardly surprising. The problem, if problem indeed it is, is that there appears to be no consistent understanding of what "The Economy" actually is, everyone has their own preconceived notion but we are not as one.

As we all know engineers love definitions, specifications and all manner of other classifications, so with that in mind I contacted an old friend of mine who until fairly recently spent his professional life as an economist. Between us we came up with the following definition of the economy:

An economy consists of the structure of production, allocation of economic inputs, distribution of economic outputs, and consumption of goods and services of a country or other area, the labour, capital and land resources, and the economic agents that socially participate in the production, exchange, distribution, and consumption of goods and services of that area. A given economy is the end result of a process that involves its technological evolution, history and social organization, as well as its geography, natural resource endowment, and ecology, as main factors.

Whilst that may very well serve as a working definition, we came to the conclusion that when the pundits, journalists and other armchair experts refer to "The Economy" they actually mean the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or perhaps the Gross National Product (GNP). Again everybody has their own version of what this is but to be precise the definitions are:

GNP is the market value of all products and services produced in one year by labour and property supplied by the residents of a country. Unlike GDP, which defines production based on the geographical location of production, GNP allocates production based on ownership and includes production located abroad.

I doubt this actually makes anything any clearer but perhaps now we all know what it is we are talking about.

Casting my mind back to the days when I was a student, I was among the first group who took the Engineering Council exams. Part of this included a subject designated "The Engineer in Society". This was intended to make the new batch of engineers "more rounded", so we would be equipped to participate in discussions that did not consist entirely of gearboxes and High Voltage distribution systems. Part of this included a short study of economics and here I discovered a subject which was even more boring than The Theory of Structures. Nevertheless I recall the concept that there are three sectors to an economy:

Primary sector of the economy: *Involves the extraction and production of raw materials, such as corn, coal, wood and iron.*

Secondary sector of the economy: *Involves the transformation of raw or intermediate materials into goods e.g. manufacturing steel into cars, or textiles into clothing.*

Tertiary sector of the economy: *Involves the provision of services to consumers and businesses, such as hair dressing, entertainment and banking.*

The main problem with the UK economy would appear to be that for the past twenty years or so the primary and secondary sectors have been in steady decline so that all that remains is the service sector. There are of course reasons for this and I am sure there are many theories just waiting to be aired.

President Croft initiated the economy as a topic for discussion at the recent Annual Members Meeting and continues with this theme in this edition. Keith Armstrong also contributes his take on the subject.

We must say goodbye to our long-time administrator Michele Smith, who has done sterling work for many years and we also say hello to her successor Bernice White.

As ever we would be pleased to hear from you on any of the topics raised in this issue.

Bob Simpson
Editor

A History of UKAPE 1969 to 1988 Part 4:

In the last Engineer Today we took the history up to 1971. This continues the story to the early 1980s with the transfer of engagements into the EESA and the EETPU.

By 1973, recognition had been granted to UKAPE by some individual members as individuals. Indeed a High Court judgment for UKAPE under the Industrial Relations Act had established that an employer was obliged to allow representation of an individual in a personal case by his union whether it was formally recognised or not. However, the failure to make headway in EEF companies and the protracted discussions with the profession had stemmed recruitment and membership was declining. The office premises in Victoria Street jointly occupied by the Engineers Guild and UKAPE had to be vacated due to the building being internally rebuilt. Ken Peplow, who had been General Secretary of both organisations, resigned in mid 1973 and the two organisations decided to separate. While the Guild stayed in London to be wound up two years later, UKAPE emigrated to the Surrey headquarters of its friends ASEE. UKAPE's new General Secretary was John Sampson who had chaired the original Formation Committee. Charles Hickling was appointed Deputy Secretary and a new team of local staff was employed. It was a new look UKAPE facing up to a daunting situation. Finances were brought under control and the membership drain was reversed by a massive mail-shot recruitment drive which brought in some 1200 new members.

The Wilson Labour Government, after repealing the IR Act, created a new system for legally claiming recognition in Sections 11-16 of the 1975 Employment Protection Act. It looked simpler. So UKAPE submitted claims for recognition at Aliens of Bedford as a test case in the EEF area and in the water industry and at Sir William Halcrow, covering the public and consultancy sectors respectively. One year later ACAS reported on the WH Alien case and rejected the claim on the grounds that present arrangements in the industry would be damaged. UKAPE's lawyers recommended the unprecedented step of taking ACAS to the High Court for exceeding their discretion. The High Court declared the ACAS report "a nullity and of no effect", but ACAS took UKAPE to the Court of Appeal. Once more UKAPE found itself before Lord Denning and in a resounding judgment he quashed the appeal. It was a famous occasion but ACAS would not be beaten and took UKAPE to the House of Lords where their Lordships declared that the Act gave ACAS the right to be wrong. That ended the Alien case which had been going on for four years. During these proceedings the other two claims were considered by ACAS. In the water industry ACAS once again were against disturbing the existing machinery. The Halcrow case was overtaken by the next change in Government. The relevant Sections of the Employment Protection Act were repealed in 1980 by the Thatcher Tory administration. Since then there has been no statutory route for a union to claim recognition by an employer and UKAPE's staff have devoted more time to dealing with the personal cases of members.

In 1978 UKAPE led a campaign for better pension benefits for early leavers. It was the only union to make a presentation to the Occupational Pensions Board and this oral evidence bore fruit. Recommendations from the Occupational Pensions Board went to the Government as a result of which there is now up to 5% inflation protection for "frozen" pensions.

The frustration of claims to obtain recognition by a statutory route convinced UKAPE in 1979 that it must join up with another organisation. This decision was taken in spite of one or two minor successes and the developing track record of successfully representing members as individuals. The purpose of any such linkage was to assist with obtaining recognition. One main need was believed to be membership of the CSEU and UKAPE therefore considered all the CSEU staff unions. However, only one had any understanding of the needs and aspirations of professional employees and a satisfactory scheme for a Transfer of Engagements to the EETPU/EESA was approved in 1980.

New opportunities for recognition via the TUC machinery were explored in GEC Leicester, the Health Service and Aerospace. Recognition at both GEC and in the NHS was achieved. UKAPE had, for many years, been active in both B.Ae and Rolls Royce, particularly in Bristol, and there had long been close contact with other staff unions such as the Rolls Royce Management Association (RRMA), BACSSA AND BADGEA. As a result of the activities of UKAPE's Rolls Royce members and Charles Hickling, the RRMA transferred engagements to the Union and became a self-governing section of UKAPE in 1983.

The family of professional staff unions which UKAPE had joined within EESA grew rapidly in the 1980s with SIMA, BTOG and our old colleagues AMP5, all following into EESA.

Since the merger UKAPE has, apart from the collective agreements, developed its support for the individual. Engineers and managers in engineering organisations often find themselves unfairly treated by their employers and do not know how to deal with the situation. In these circumstances the advice available from UKAPE and the Officials in the FPA is invaluable. The members who have used these services or had the benefit of UKAPE's legal costs insurance have all expressed their gratitude, indicating that without this assistance the outcome would have been much less satisfactory.

Letters

As we are all well aware, UKAPE is justifiably proud of its apolitical stance and despite the very clear political overtones in this letter we have decided to publish in the interests of balance. Ed

Dear Editor,

You invited comment on Roger Sabido's article about the march in London recently.

That Roger is sincere is not in doubt but I suggest that he was less than wise to join such a controversial event. People gave a variety of reasons for attending the march but it is obvious that some had not looked carefully enough at the government's proposals. There was some considerable confusion as to the purpose of the march and a number of people seemed to think that the national debt was all the fault of investment bankers.

Britain has a serious debt problem that has nothing to do with banks or bankers. We pay interest enough to run the whole health service for a month. The previous "government" created nearly a million jobs, many of them unsustainable and many were non-jobs from the start. Most were paid for by seeking international loans. The crunch had to come sooner or later and it was always the public sector that would bear the brunt of the claw-back. Government and local authority empire building must now come to an end.

Whether the government proposal will succeed will be known in time but to take part in mass marches seems futile. Even should you believe the government to be totally wrong it does nothing to put people back into real jobs or get the country back onto its feet. Better to use our brainpower and influence to replace jobs, maintain public services and to find acceptable ways of saving money.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Bravington

Several interesting points are raised here not the least of which is the assertion that the debt problem has nothing to do with the recklessness of investment bankers but is due entirely to the previous government. Is this analysis correct? All comments and observations will be most welcome.

Letter on the Economy

Somehow we need to get Government to appreciate who makes the goods that provide the tax that pays for all public services. However good and necessary these "services" may be they have to be paid for by directly productive workers as they themselves produce nothing.

The directly productive workers are the following and associated occupations. I doubt if I have listed all of them.

Productive

Farmers
Fishermen
Miners
Textile workers
Builders
Factory workers
Energy companies that provide heat, light and power.
Engineers who design and make the equipment and machinery on which all others rely.

Public Services

National and Local Government and their pensions
Armed Forces (essential but expensive)
NHS
Education, Schools, Universities
State Research Establishments
Local Councils

Private Services

Medical Research Centres
BUPA, PPP etc.
Railways
Bus Services
Taxi Services
Entertainment
Leisure facilities
Holiday and travel companies
Road transport
Rail transport
Sea transport
Air Transport
Pensions
Water and sewage treatment companies

There are "grey" areas like DIY, decorators and home improvements that produce something but probably destroy something serviceable but not fashionable in the process.

The higher the life style the more "services" are likely to be used but someone has to earn the money to pay for them.

Our balance in the economy is wrong because we are trying to provide more services than we can afford. We also have to compete with China, India, Korea and others. This may mean our prices and hence wages having to go down instead of up.

We are living longer so have to work for longer to make eventual retirement affordable. This will mean working longer and also paying in more. Not popular but unavoidable.

We need to work out how to deal with these issues and preferably quickly.

When the BBC and others talk of the "economy" they only mention retail sales in London usually. They never mention what has been produced or by whom. Many of these sales are of imported goods. It is UK products made and sold that count. Napoleon must have been right when he called us, "A nation of shopkeepers". The question is, "Who supplies the shops?"

A very critical issue is that all defence equipment should, "ideally" be home-produced so that supplies can be increased quickly and reliably when needed, e.g. Hurricanes and Spitfires in 1939.

Keith Armstrong

Ed: Some interesting ideas, although I am not convinced that the concept of wages going down is likely to be popular, particularly when we seem to be continually convincing ourselves that all Engineers are underpaid. Your comments and observations are as ever most welcome.

Michele Smith

Any one of our members who have had reason to make contact with Head Office will undoubtedly have had the pleasure of talking to the ever cheerful and totally unflappable Michele. Unfortunately as we know all good things come to an end and with the changes being implemented within UNITE; Michele has taken the opportunity to accept voluntary redundancy. She wrote to all the members of the UKAPE Executive Committee and I have taken the liberty of reproducing her email below.

Dear Colleagues,

As you all probably know by now I will be leaving Unite at the end of the month. I've been with the Union for 23 years. You also probably know there are lots of changes taking place within Unite and when the opportunity came to apply for a voluntary redundancy package or relocate to the office in Holborn I choose the VR option. Hayes Court sadly will be closed by the end of September.

This email is really to say to all of you that you have all been a pleasure to work with. UKAPE is by far the best and nicest FPA association to work for and I have been very lucky to be able to do that. May I wish you all personally the very best for the future and I also hope that UKAPE continues for many more years. I really am glad that you retained Kevin O'Gallagher as your Officer.

Kevin moved across to the Holborn office a couple of weeks ago and his new Secretary is called Bernice White. She will be your new contact for everything UKAPE. I have already provided to her notes in relation to everything I do for UKAPE.

The Holborn office address details are below as well as Kevin's and Bernice's email addresses:

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bernice.white@unitetheunion.org

Dick Hegerty has very kindly written to me and invited my husband and I to dinner at the Imperial Hotel on 17th June to say 'goodbye', I have written back to Dick to accept and we both look forward to seeing you all then.

All that's left for me to say now is thank you all for being so nice to work for and I do sincerely wish you all the very best for the future.

Best wishes to you all,
Michele

Unfortunately I was unable to attend Michele's farewell dinner, but I am grateful to Bob Douglas who was able to be there and has provided the photo of President Syd Croft presenting Michele with a handsome bouquet.

Bob's reflections following the dinner have also been included.

On the evening before the Annual Members Meeting the Executive Committee invited Michele Smith to a dinner to honour the work she had done in the past for UKAPE.

As part of the reorganisation of Unite following the merger and the closure of Hayes Court, Michele has decided to stop working for the union.

Anyone who has contacted the UKAE office by telephone would have been welcomed by the cheery voice of Michele giving helpful information and support to all our members. This is a great loss as she had a wealth of knowledge of UKAPE from more than two decades of working for the Association. Michele has now left Hayes Court and is working with her husband Andrew.

To celebrate the magnificent work that she has done Michele and Andrew with 13 members of the EC attended a dinner in the Hotel President which was enjoyed by all.

Bob Douglas

It only remains to wish Michele and Andrew all the very best for their new venture and to welcome Bernice as our new administrator and fount of all knowledge.

Bob Simpson
Editor



Report on Annual Members Meeting June 2011

The second Annual Members Meeting (AMM) was held on 18 June 2011 at the Imperial Hotel, Russell Square, London. At 1:30pm more than the requisite quorum was in attendance so the meeting began.

Apologies were also received from 8 members.

A brief opening address was made by Syd Croft (SC), the President.

No amendments to the Agenda were requested but an emergency motion was presented. This was to create the post of Information Technology and Communications Officer as a member of the Executive Committee (EC). Kevin O'Gallagher (KO'G) explained the reasoning for this appointment, the precise wording of this rule change will be developed and ratified (or otherwise) at the next AMM. There were questions on the need for this appointment which were accepted. The motion was voted on at that point and passed unanimously.

The Minutes of the last meeting were then considered and approved without amendment.

On "Matters Arising", a question was raised, asking if progress had been made following the emergency motion from last year's AMM on records and communication with members. KO'G replied that records are being updated with all UKAPE members in a single Sector which will improve the situation.

The report from the EC was then presented. There was nothing contentious in the report but it confirmed the Hayes Court and King Street offices were to be closed. The President suggested that the report should be more up to date and not only refer to 31 December the previous year as at present. Bob Douglas proposed a change in the reporting period to be the financial year (April to March) which was accepted. A question on recruitment was raised. Derek Longford (DL) recounted his experience in the oil and gas industry and an example of dissatisfaction at a workplace. A small number of UKAPE members encouraged others to join the union to contest changes in terms and conditions that were to be made. As a result about 500 members were recruited (not all to UKAPE, the majority to Unite) and the changes made were less than originally proposed. Another member said that he worked at a smaller company and considered that Unite was not active enough at these employers. As 25% of the workforce has been lost and union membership is actively discouraged, it was considered that if organising the workplace were attempted means would be found for their dismissal as well. KO'G said that various methods are employed to recruit members and ways could be found to improve the situation in that workplace. The vote in favour of the EC Report was carried with 1 against.

Brian West (BW) gave the treasurer's financial statement. This was for 1 January to 31 December 2011. As most financial information comes via Unite it is not possible to have complete details more up to date. BW explained the accounting system used and costs involved. UKAPE made a surplus on the estimate for last year and the quandary is finding suitable projects on which to spend our funds.

Three questions were asked on the report, which were answered. The report was then voted on and passed unanimously.

The two motions on the Order Paper were considered. These were to clear up possible anomalies in the Bye-Laws on the composition of the EC. They were presented by Mike Gibson who explained the significance. Both motions were passed unanimously.

We then came to the topic for discussion; "Do we need to increase manufacturing as part of the UK economy? If so how should the UK go about achieving it"?

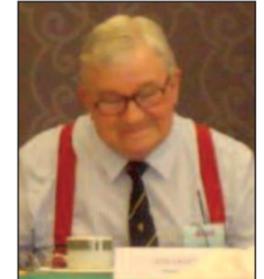
The President (SC) started by asking, "What is the economy"?

Klaus Armstrong Braun, who proposed the topic, opened the discussion by explaining the situation in his area and efforts to make children more interested in engineering in schools.

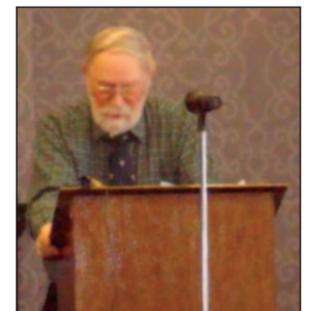
Other speakers came to the rostrum and discussed various factors in the situation. Then a general conversation arose around the room! People spoke one at a time and made pertinent comments and made suggestions for ways to go forward. This general discussion continued for the rest of the meeting. The discussion was summarized by the need to identify the market and how it could be filled, including communication, financial information and training to cover all aspects of the engineering process.

SC said he had still not had an explanation of what is "the economy".

The AMM closed at 4:30pm.



President Syd Croft Presiding



Hon Treasurer Brian West presents his Report to the AMM