

THE ONTARIO LAND SURVEYOR - "PROFESSIONAL OR TECHNICIAN"

by E.O. LaFontaine

At our recent Annual Meeting there was some discussion concerning our professional status as Ontario Land Surveyors and the need for greater ceremony in welcoming newly-commissioned Land Surveyors to our ranks. It was remarked that this would tend to impress upon the new surveyor the importance of his newly-acquired professional status. It might also be said that there is an urgent need to have this impression of our professional status made upon us all.

We are in very great danger of losing our professional status - if, indeed, we have not already lost it. These are harsh words. They are fighting words, but they are awfully close to reality. Let us review the situation.

A true professional is one who constantly strives to improve the service which is offered to the client while at the same time seeking to protect himself and his client from malpractice, imposters, etc. He has sought and received governmental protection in the form of legislation which accomplishes the latter, and the onus is on him to police the members within his professional association while at the same time promoting the technical advancement of his profession. It is a two-way street. The government will protect his exclusive right to practice his profession provided the professional will accept the burden of responsibility of maintaining that professional status. Surrender of any part of this burden to any other group or governmental agency, therefore, is not compatible with true professionalism.

And yet, what is happening to the Ontario Land Surveyor today? Consider a few of the areas of endeavour.

Town Planning

This should be the Surveyor's greatest field. This is where he should excel and be recognized. But what is happening? It is being taken over by architects and "Town Planners". What has happened to us? Where were we not the original Town Planners when we laid out the Province of Ontario? Where then have we failed?

We failed when we did not study and promote this vital area of surveying to a greater extent. We failed to teach our new surveyors enough about this important field - population trends, the changing scene, buying habits, transportation changes, the changing popular attitude, the growth of suburbia, the shopping centre etc. etc. etc.

Now, too often, we are handed a draft plan and hired to calculate the curves and closures, to drive the stakes and iron bars and to draw the final plan which must be done to a certain size in a certain way. We are no longer professionals in this field. We are punch-drunk calculator operators, hammer-happy stake drivers, and barely more than junior draftsmen. Unfortunately, we have been too busy concentrating on plans that would be easy to survey and calculate instead of promoting good town planning and subdivision design for better living.

Land Surveying

This is our business - or is it? In some areas nearly everyone gets into the act. First of all there is the imposter putting stakes in the wrong place for half price. Then there is the "conveyancer" drawing descriptions that go nowhere and selling properties on top of each other. We also have some lawyers doing their own surveying from their offices, or asking the surveyor to draw a description without

a survey. And on and on. But what is done about these little things which threaten our profession? Too often, nothing.

Professional Conduct

Here we can show our true mettle, but is this always the case? Do we maintain a high ethical code in our conduct? Do we have the courtesy to check with another surveyor before disagreeing with his survey? Do we take our fair wages and not something less? Do we have the educational background which will permit us to take our place among the other professions? Can we communicate with a sound knowledge of the English language? Do we maintain a high standard of service? Do we freely exchange notes, knowledge and ideas among our fellow surveyors? If we fail in any of the above matters, we are not true professionals, we are just skilled technicians.

What, then, is the answer to this cloud of gloom? It lies in our developing a real pride in ourselves and our profession. It begins when the new surveyor is welcomed into the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors with a real fanfare. It continues when we seek the advancement of our profession and reclaim those areas of endeavour which we are losing because we have not concerned ourselves about them. It will remain as long as we can maintain high ethical standards with the courage to defend them.

NEWS OF THE REGIONAL GROUPS

South Central Chapter of Ontario Land Surveyors

The Toronto and District Guild of Ontario Land Surveyors is no more! On January 17th, the former Guild called a meeting attended by more than a hundred surveyors to organize a Regional Group under By-Law 51. After a general question and answer period, the meeting resolved itself mainly into discussion on two items, a name and organization procedure.

An organizing committee composed of B. J. Haynes, D. S. McIntosh, J. W. L. Monaghan, K. Mucklestone, R. A. Smith, C. E. Stauffer and G. W. Wadsworth was elected to set up a draft constitution and appoint a Nominating Committee. Suggested names for the Group were to be sent to Mr. Monaghan and were to be selected by vote at the next meeting.

The Organizing Committee held two meetings and drew up a draft constitution. A nominating committee composed of F. H. Mucklestone, Chairman, R. H. McBain, W. F. Weaver, and W. H. Williams prepared a slate of candidates for offices under the proposed constitution.

On March 14th, another well-attended meeting was held. First item was voting for one of the six proposed names submitted resulting in the choice, South Central Chapter of Ontario Land Surveyors.

The draft constitution was then discussed article by article and approved with minor revisions.

The first Board of Directors for the SCCOLS was elected as follows: By acclamation, President, J. W. L. Monaghan; Vice-President, W. J. G. Wadsworth; Secretary, J. M. Leitch; Treasurer, S. B. Panting.