

COMMITTEE REPORTS

THE COMMITTEE ON PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

*Editor's Note: This report was prepared for and presented to the meeting of the South Central Group of Ontario Land Surveyors, at the Skyline Hotel, Toronto, October 20, 1962.*

To introduce this subject, let us differentiate between the two terms which have been incongruously linked together in the discussions and conversations which have been held at meetings, and in various places. These are "professional status" and "professional practice." We will deal with them in their natural order: Professional Practice then Professional Status.

Professional practice starts the day when the young man sets out to acquire for himself the knowledge and experience in the practice of his life's work. It never stops, and is continual until the day that he retires. I think you will all agree with me that we never stop learning. Progress is always being made in new developments of methods and improvements of recording which, if we are not abreast with them, will soon leave us behind in an out of date, and ineffectual type of practice. We must strive however to perfect all of the mechanical tasks which we are called upon to perform.

As students, our methods of plumbing, chaining, and reading the tape should be constantly under scrutiny, not only by those who are responsible for our education but by ourselves and improvement made whenever and wherever possible. As an instrument man, one should strive to learn to operate and maintain to the best of his ability as much survey equipment, or as many instruments as is possible. It has not yet been possible to be over-educated. We will never find out all there is to know about anything that we do, no matter how long we work at it. It has been wisely said that "we learn something new every day".

As Ontario Land Surveyors, graduated and with a certificate to hang upon an office wall, we should be ready to enter upon a life of activity and service in the profession which we have chosen. We should be ready to sit down and discuss with each other the merits of survey evidence, the pros and cons of using one point or one line as against another. We should be able to discuss man to man, colleague to colleague, not always with heated tempers and raised voices across a meeting or across a table. The Land Surveyors Act stipulates that a man must be of the full age of twenty-one years in order to qualify for his certificate. By this, we should all realize that we have to achieve an intelligent maturity at least, and should no longer act like children.

"Professional practice" is the business of every man who graduates as a surveyor and receives a certificate to practice in the Province of Ontario, regardless of whether he is in private practice or is an employed surveyor. It is up to each of us, as individuals, to make sure that we carry out measurements of length and of angles, interpretation of evidence, searching for the best evidence of which the case admits, and finally reporting to our client or to our employer, in the clearest possible way, by plan or written report, the results of our survey in the field. Also it is necessary for each of us to recognize that we all owe at least, some small service to the Association which has granted us the privilege of being members of the profession. Just as there are some members of the Legislature and of the Senate, being elected or appointed, attend the sessions and sit and listen throughout one session after another without being heard, there are members of our Association who attend meetings of the parent body and of the local groups and sit and take no active part in these meetings. It is granted that, with the establishment of regional

groups within the past few years, the tendency to do this has been greatly decreased, and more and more of our members are taking an active part in the operations of these groups. (This is a step on the way to achieving professional status.) Each of us should remember that in our behaviour the public will see a reflection of the Association and of the profession as a whole. Therefore, each of us is responsible for the image which is given to the layman in our community.

I have noticed, and I am sure that I am not the only one, that there has not always been the best of relationships between the members of our Association and perhaps I might say between the members of this group. This is one thing that more attention to professional practice would help to overcome. We have a responsibility to each other as well as to the Association and to the public. Too many of us like to take the attitude "well, I have my way of doing things and he has his so let him go ahead. I don't care." This may or may not be just an easy way of getting out of responsibility. It certainly is not one of the ways to achieve harmony within the profession. We may think it is the easy way out, the lesser of two evils, but is it really? Would it not be perhaps better for the profession as a whole if we were to go to Surveyor X and say, "Now I can't quite agree with what you are doing. Perhaps you could explain the method and show me exactly what is behind it". After all, you really can't understand something when you don't have all the facts. It is not just enough to assume that you are right and the other man is automatically wrong. Another way in which we might further advance ourselves and put a little more effort into professional practice is our manner of reference toward each other. This brings up a few thoughts on expressions which we have heard very often in ordinary life. As an example let us take the man who has got himself into difficulties with the law and in conversation with a friend he has explained the situation and the friend says "What you need is a darn good lawyer". Now it's not exactly the fact that this man is differentiating between good lawyers and bad lawyers, for if he was then the point of the story has been lost altogether. The differentiation here is between a lawyer who is experienced in handling the type of situation in which the speaker is involved as against a man who is experienced in handling other forms of litigation, or perhaps real estate. I think this same differentiation or shall we say specialization could be applied to surveyors. There are some of us who have gone into municipal or corporation service and our work is more along that line. There are others who have specialized in subdivision design and layout, and are able to effectively take an open area of ground and using proper planning, ethics and ideals turn it into a subdivision of modern homes, pleasing to the eye and an asset to the community. Then again there are others who are specialized in the establishment of highways, or the laying out of mining claims and other surveys for mining operations. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of any of our work is the retracement of lot lines and street lines and the re-establishment of corners to which the title of land now existing in the Province of Ontario has been referenced. I don't need to remind you, I know, that this network is fast disappearing, and that unless strict measures are taken that our lot corners and street intersections will all be gone and the establishment of title will prove a difficult and costly operation. The task of retracing old lot lines and street lines, and establishing lot corners has always required more patience, diligence and searching of records than perhaps some of the other aspects of our work. Nevertheless, the practice of retracement surveying and the ultimate satisfaction of knowing that a line or point has been established as closely to the original as possible gives a satisfaction to the individual. A continued record of outstanding work in this field gives a man experience which aids him in other fields, and in no small way will raise his reputation among his colleagues.

These are some of the specializations which have come to mind. No doubt during the last few minutes you have thought of others. There will be many more. But let us now return to the thread of our discussion. When we are approached on the matter of a survey which is not completely within our scope, would our client not be better satisfied if, rather than turning in the result which was possibly not up to expectations due to inexperience, he was referred to a surveyor with the proper experience who could give him, perhaps more economically, a better result. An alternative to this would be that the surveyor himself should engage a specialist. These things have a habit of advertising themselves and often we will find that a client in conversation with a friend will be asked for information regarding a surveyor and may say, well why don't you go and see surveyor Z? I know that what you are looking for is in his line of work. This would be better than having at a later date Surveyor X cursing Surveyor Y all over the place because of something that had been done through inexperience. This brings up another question. How many of us have ever stopped to realize the amount of damage one disparaging remark about a colleague can do to the whole profession of surveying, not just to the individual about whom it's made. The world has become used to a certain amount of violence in its daily life and it seems to be part of our makeup now that we have to inject a little sharpness, annoyance, or impatience into our conversations and daily contacts with people in order to emphasize our opinions or our point of view. Is this really necessary? Surely as land surveyors in contact with other professional people and with the general public, we should be able to assume a dignified attitude. This will never hurt any of us even though it may be trying at first. Let me ask a very simple and straightforward question. How often do you use strong language even in a mild form in your office or when you are out in the field? Is it often enough to be called too often for a professional man? One of the marks of the professional man, and something which we all should practice, is the use of good English whether in writing a report or in conversation. These are points to which we take for granted that as professional men, we would not lower ourselves, but it is my firm belief that men can never raise themselves, in any manner, unless they learn to speak properly whether in reporting on a technical matter, in referring to one another, or just in casual conversation. It is amazing how much of an adverse impression an individual can make on another individual or a gathering just by unwittingly dropping a few words or phrases which are out of place. I may have done this myself right here. Who knows? I would like to quote from Professor Mervyn Woods' article "A Professional Outlook" as printed in the booklet "Legal Principles and Practice of Land Surveying" where he says:

"I believe it goes without saying that it is the responsibility of every professional man to have both a sense of loyalty and a sense of responsibility towards others in his profession. By a sense of loyalty I do not mean that he should condone failures to measure up to the standards of the profession, but I think we will agree that among professional people there should be no cut-throat competition. He should see that it is to his interest as well as to that of others to keep the standards of the profession high. He should take an active interest in his colleagues, particularly the younger practitioners. He should give assistance to bring them along so that they may develop in the proper way. They will have a background from both precept and example that will enable them to further enhance the standards of the profession. In other words, the professional man should be far sighted with his professional interests in view." Later on in his article, Professor Woods quotes as follows "However, if his ambition is to please his fellow practitioners he can never be misled. As Lord Sharswood has said, "Their good graces are only to be obtained by a real learning, by the strictest integrity and honour and by attention, accuracy and punctuality in the action of business." I believe these words of wisdom could

apply as much to surveyors as to any other professional people for whom they might have been specifically written.

"Professional status" is an intangible acquisition, with which none of us was endowed, but, for which we must work, and which must be developed consistently from year to year.

There has been much discussion in the Association and in the Regional Groups about "regaining our Professional Status." After hearing some of these remarks I began to think about the "regaining" part of it. Reading through some of the old Annual Reports, I began to see a glimmer of meaning, a reason to "regain". From the tenor of the papers, Reports and discussions of the meetings of thirty and forty years ago, it seems fairly obvious that Ontario Land Surveyors were held in fairly high esteem by others with whom they came in contact. The legal profession particularly, had a much better opinion of us as individuals then, than they do now.

It is my opinion that the Surveyors, up until the year 1929 which heralded the Depression of the Thirties, enjoyed a real "professional status." It was the unfortunate link between surveyors and the building industry which threw many of those in practice at that time into other occupations, and even labouring jobs, to support their families. This was a blow under which the surveyors staggered, but maintained the fortitude necessary to make the long haul back to their former position.

The War years did not help very much, as many students and graduates alike, went off to serve King and Country. With Peace in 1945 came an era of expansion in almost every field of endeavour. Not the least of these was the building boom which pointed up the shortage of qualified land surveyors. Graduating classes were large for several years as many men turned to surveying as their life's work. When, in the thirties, "Too Little" played havoc with professional status, similarly "Too Much" during the Boom years also made an indelible impression upon the status of, and the degree of respect in which a surveyor was held by those who engaged his services. Suffice it to say here that surveyors are still fighting to regain professional status.

On April 18, 1962, an amendment to the Labour Relations Act was signed into law by the Honourable Mr. Keiller McKay. This amendment excluded surveyors from membership in Labour Unions, and was the climax of many years work. In the eyes of the Law, we are now Professional, but I think you will agree with me that a man cannot be legislated into professional status. It is not so much a status as an attitude. It must come from within. A man or woman who is, or wants to be, classed as "professional" must feel that he or she really wants to take on, not just possibly high-paying professional work but a way of life that can be more demanding than usual. The life of a professional person in any field of endeavour should be one of Service, with a readiness to assume responsibility, and to discharge that responsibility in such a manner so as to provide the most benefit. This means that the attitude of humble dignity, charity and loyalty must pervade all aspects of our lives. It does not necessarily mean that we must work like slaves for a pittance, but it does mean that we are to earn our fees, not command them.

I would venture to say that there is only a handful of men in our Association who have achieved real "professional status". They might well be called the "Deans of the Surveying Profession."

One of the important foundation stones of any profession is its history or tradition. The history of the Surveying Profession in Canada dates back to 1608, when Samuel de Champlain, Cartographer to the King of France, established the first permanent settlement at Quebec.

In 1764, Samuel Holland who had fought under Wolfe at Quebec became Surveyor-General for all of the British Colonies on the Atlantic Coast, North of Virginia. It was under his direction, that the first Townships were laid out in the wilderness west of the Ottawa River which later became Upper Canada and still later the Province of Ontario. Since then, nearly 200 years of surveying practice has built up a tradition and a heritage of which we may be justifiably proud. The pioneer achievement of carving out homesteads, then villages growing to towns and cities is no mean accomplishment. The early surveyors were diligent, industrious, and adventuresome. Little did they realize, as they opened up township after township for settlement, the heritage which they were leaving for those who were to follow.

They instituted the Association of which we form a part, and through which we may serve our communities, as well as each other, in many ways, not directly relating to the earning of our daily bread. These men never knew the term "professional", but in their high personal standards of life and work reached the status for which, today, we strive.

What is it then, this status or standing, for which we are fighting? It is a standing which an individual achieves through years of work and service to the public, his firm or corporation, and his profession. It is something which younger men should always strive for, and which we will find, in most cases, the older and more experienced members of our profession and of our society wear like a mantle. It becomes men, but, often can be abused or misused.

In closing, the question "What can we do to achieve this goal? Some of the answers lie in the perfection of each facet of professional practice. Others are more at the group level, rather than the individual.

I would submit these recommendations to assist in the solution of the problem:

1. That each of us strive to discipline himself where he finds it necessary and to assume a greater share of responsibility toward the profession and his colleagues.
2. That a recommendation be sent to the Association that more emphasis be placed on the Traditions and Background of the Profession, insofar as the training of future surveyors is concerned, even to the allotment of time to it in the Lecture course, and a written examination in the background and development of the Profession.
3. That the surveyors of this and other regional groups sit down together and decide to mutually agree on certain corners and lines in each area so as to give a consistency of basic work, even if these matters cannot be confirmed by law.
4. That a greater effort be made to establish a Central Registry of Field Notes and Plans, under the supervision of each Regional Group. Progress has been made on this last recommendation, which is a step in the right direction.
5. That an appropriate dignified recognition be given to graduates as soon after graduation as possible, both before and after the start of the University course.

Gentlemen, I believe it is time for us to take a long and searching look into ourselves, our relationships with our employees, and clients, and each other, and also into our attitudes toward our work, and the Association. What we find, and the action which we take for the improvement of our findings, should be done not only as a source of self-satisfaction, but with the realization that to prevent something now, even though it is late in the game, will be a lot easier than to re-organize, or shall we say to cure, something at a later date.

Our President and the Council of Management, in the July 1962 issue of the quarterly The Ontario Land Surveyor stressed the subject of stricter adherence to the code of ethics. I can only echo these words and thoughts and say that in professional practice we must include, not only the mechanics of the work but also all the attributes and necessities of men of dignity, forbearance and service.

W. C. Yates, Chairman

## THE EDITOR'S PAGE

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### No More Delay

With this issue, "The Ontario Land Surveyor" will have completed its 6th year of publication. Looking back over those years, a lot has happened. Possibly the most significant for the Association has been the raising of the standards of education to university level, a step which to many serious and responsible Land Surveyors, seems a long time overdue. Possibly the second most significant single event has been the long and painstaking procedure of revising the Surveyors Act. Unfortunately, the implementation of the higher educational standards is concomitant with the revision of the Surveyors Act.

The passing of the revised Surveyors Act by the new legislature is an urgent matter. It has been delayed too long. To delay the revision of the Surveyors Act beyond the next session would be most unfortunate because of the implications for the future of the profession.

### U. of T. Surveying Degree Course Commences

With this session, the new survey option in the Civil Engineering Degree Course is now being given at the University of Toronto. As the Association was influential in getting this course set up, (it was no easy matter, as any university person will tell you) we have a most solemn obligation to provide encouragement, training and employment to the students who are taking this option. Let there be no mistaking this point. If we fail in this responsibility, we may as well give up any claims to professionalism. We will degenerate into a bunch of technicians, forever quarreling over "regulations".

### In The Saddle

In step with the progressive "new look" of the Association's publications, - the cover of the 1963 Annual Report - "The Ontario Land Surveyor" will be published in 1964 with saddle stitching, instead of staples, as at present. Many members have mentioned this improvement which will aid in filing or binding the journal. With the recent installation of the larger Xerox format, we are taking advantage of this technological process with the January 1964 issue. We hope our members will appreciate this effort and feel inclined to contribute more articles, especially articles on the art and science of surveying.