

## **BAPE Annual Dinner 2006**

### **Presidents Address**

Master of Ceremonies – Eng. Peter Thompson

Specially invited guest Justice the Honorable Leroy Inniss

Secretary General of the Council of Caribbean Engineering Organisations – Eng. Tony

Gibbs and Mrs. Gibbs

Members of the head table

Fellow Engineers

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me begin by extending a warm welcome to all of you, and in particular our guest speaker, Justice The Honorable Leroy Inniss. I consider it a great honor and privilege to address you all tonight.

I am very grateful to have been given the opportunity to serve as president of the Association this past year, and would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of my thoughts and observations regarding the engineering profession in Barbados.

From the dawn of the Industrial Age all the way through to today's Age of the Knowledge Worker, engineering and technology has underpinned the economic and social development of countries across the globe. Past President of the World Federation of Engineering Organisations, Dr. Jose Midem, appropriately describes engineering as “the bridge between science and society, turning scientific breakthroughs into practical tools for the welfare of mankind”.

From our roads, buildings, electricity and telecommunications infrastructure to the microchips embedded in almost every device in our homes, products of engineering pervade virtually every aspect of our lives and are essential to our personal and national economic well being.

It is within this context that I would first like to comment briefly on the National Strategic Plan 2005 to 2025, recently debated and approved by Cabinet.

BAPE endorses the Vision articulated in the National Strategic Plan for a fully developed Barbados by 2025, and compliments Government on what is a generally well crafted plan.

I am particularly pleased with the objectives and strategies articulated for science, technology and engineering in section 1.14 of the report, as it is only through building capacity in these areas that we will achieve sustainable development and enjoy full participation in the global economy.

I am however concerned over the disproportionate reliance on the services sectors and the somewhat unambitious vision for manufacturing and industry.

While it is indisputable that there are tremendous opportunities to be realized in the development of our services sectors, the evidence from all of the successful developed economies around the world shows that healthy manufacturing and industrial sectors are crucial for long-term and sustained economic prosperity.

Service industries do not create wealth, they redistribute wealth. They are essential to maintaining high standards of living; however, it is the industrial and manufacturing sectors that create a nation's real wealth. Stated another way, services redistribute the wealth created by manufacturing.

We should also recognize that the intangible products of services are often quite easily duplicated by competitors and very difficult to protect. Our tourism product, financial services, our art and music – these are all important and every effort should be made to exploit their full economic potential, however in this rapidly expanding and intensely

competitive Knowledge Age, the competitive barriers to entry in these sectors can be eroded almost overnight.

Our long-term economic success and attaining the goal of developed status, is therefore contingent on the development of a sound manufacturing and industrial foundation; and engineering is the main plank on which this will be achieved.

I am not suggesting that physical assembly and production plants necessarily have to be located here in Barbados, but we should be developing technology here, carrying out the design and engineering here and managing the entire manufacturing process from production to sales and marketing here. And this will only be achieved if we build and strengthen our capacity in the areas of science and engineering.

Engineers therefore have a vital role to play if Barbados is to achieve its development goals, and I see BAPE is a key stakeholder in the process. Some of the strategic priorities for our profession will include:

### **Strengthening of the legislation that governs the practice of engineering in Barbados**

The Engineer Registration Act, legislation which is unequalled in the region, was enacted in 1974 and has served the profession and island well over the years. However, updated international standards and new approaches to the education and development of engineers, as well as the advent of globalization and trade agreements like CSME necessitate the revision of this Act. BAPE has written to the Minister of Public Works and Transport outlining some of the shortcomings in the existing Act, and will continue to seek his assistance in having these important changes implemented.

### **Engineering education**

Another strategic priority will be in the area of engineering education. At the tertiary level, the University of the West Indies has been producing engineering graduates of world class quality since 1962. In the past few years, the international accreditation body which accredits UWI engineering degrees has updated their requirements and has advised

that 3-year undergraduate degree programs will no longer be accredited for Chartered Engineering Status. Unfortunately, UWI has taken a decision to continue with their 3-year program and therefore their engineering undergraduates will very soon not enjoy the same level of recognition as that of their predecessors over the last 44 years. This is of grave concern to many of the regional professional engineering Associations, and a position that both BAPE and the Association of Professional Engineers of Trinidad & Tobago have urged the UWI to reconsider.

At the secondary level, we need to ensure that our education system is structured in a way that encourages the production of skills in areas most critical to achieving the development goals of the country. Local skills in areas such as science and technology should be of the utmost priority. We cannot depend on an “outside-in” approach to solving our technical or engineering problems. Sustainable solutions that integrate seamlessly with our island’s development strategies will only be achieved through the development of local engineering capacity capable of adapting technologies to our specific needs.

BAPE plans to intensify its promotion of science and technology in the schools and will soon be announcing plans for a competition aimed at generating excitement and passion for the sciences among students.

### **CCEO**

A third priority will be the coordination and streamlining of the profession across the region. This is particularly important with the emergence of CSME, and is one of the objectives of the Council of Caribbean Engineering Organizations (or CCEO).

Due in large part to the significant effort of Immediate Past President Lt. Col Trevor Browne, and the astute leadership of its new Secretary General Eng. Tony Gibbs, I am pleased to report that after several year of relative dormancy, the CCEO has begun to take shape once more. The last annual general meeting of the CCEO was held here in

Barbados during October and several initiatives are underway for advancing the development of engineering practice in the region.

Finally, I believe that there is a need for BAPE to direct some of its focus on establishing a clear vision for the engineering profession in Barbados. A vision that is anchored firmly in the traditional values established by the Association's founding members. Those of:

- Adherence to the highest ethical standards of professional conduct
- Regard for the safety, health and welfare of the public
- Promoting the advancement of engineering sciences

...and some other more recent but equally important values like:

- Environmental stewardship
- Innovation and creativity
- Ensuring continued competency through Continuing Professional Development and lifelong learning

In this regard the Executive Committee will be engaging members over the coming months in a strategic planning exercise aimed at charting the future of the Association and engineering in Barbados.

I look forward with great anticipation, to working with the Executive Committee and all of you over the coming months in developing this new vision and strategy for the profession.

Thank you.