

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

15th OCTOBER 1999

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR YEAR ENDING OCTOBER 15TH 1999

This 25th year of the Institute, in its current form, has seen us truly come of age. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 25th Annual General meeting of the Corrosion Institute of Southern Africa. We are at the watershed where this Institute can become the industry player it richly deserves to be. My annual report this year will focus upon the achievements of the past two years, with specific reference to the current year.

It is fair to say that the Institute stands at a crossroads. We have reached the position where we can hold our heads high. Our education programme is attracting interest from abroad and the 14th International Corrosion Congress showed the world that we are a truly professional body. All these achievements provide a fitting tribute to the founders of this Institute. Without their foresight and tenacity, at a time when world acceptance of this country was at best distant, we would not have been provided with the foundation for today's activities. To those dedicated fathers of the Institute we say thank you and hope that the 25 year old offspring is an achiever. In my Presidential Address in June, I discussed the need for a strong Institute. The more open economic policy framework in which we find ourselves establishes a need for an industry representative body that is able to assist in the development of SABS standards that will encourage exports and cap shoddy imports. In addition, the need for a resource that can provide education coordination and information has never been stronger.

Fortunately, the preparation of this report was carried out after the ICC. In world economic terms, as with politics, a week is a long time. The gold price has moved from its beleaguered range and promises respite for the continuation of the restructuring of the economy. Despite contributing only 8% to export earnings, this recent move should encourage a "feel good" factor. Hopefully, this will result in real investment and a move away from the casino mentality to real growth in our economy. Our engineering industry has experienced contraction over the past two years. Let us all hope that the long awaited economic revival can result in projects that our industry can prosper from.

I would like to now report on the major activities of our Institute for the current reporting period.

In Gauteng, Dr Chris Ringas and Mike Anderson provided a diverse and interesting technical programme for the year. Some 9 presentations were given to an average audience of 25. New ideas on attracting a greater audience are always welcome. In Kwazulu Natal, Dick Elsas kept the average attendance to over 24 with 9 presentations given during the year. Whilst the committee there was disappointed in the reduction in attendance over the past year, one has to bear in mind that for many the past year has seen a shift of focus to economic survival. Time has thus been at a premium for many. In

Cape Town the attendance at technical meetings has improved with an average attendance of 26 for the 9 presentations given. It is encouraging to see that the regional activity has been strong over the past year.

The past year saw the tragic passing away of Vic Earle on January 20th. We again remember his valuable input to the Kwazulu Natal Region and offer condolences to his family and friends.

Unfortunately, the running of the ICC meant that a number of normal activities were placed on hold for the reporting period. However, the number of calls received regarding the running of courses and the corrosion school augers well for the forthcoming year.

Colin Alvey has continued his portfolio as chairman of the Education Committee. Much of the last year has been involved with trying to negotiate the new skills legislation whereby, effective from April next year, a levy will be placed upon employers as motivation to run competency training for employees. If the Institute is able to have its courses recognised, within the new framework, new opportunities arise for the furtherance of the education programme. This will be pursued actively through ECSA, the AS&TS and possibly even SEIFSA. An effort was made to establish an Education Forum through the auspices of the International Corrosion Council. Although this was met with apathy from many of the “established countries” there was interest expressed by a number of African representatives. The possibilities that may arise as a consequence of this will be interesting to watch.

As is usual, encouragement of study of corrosion science at our tertiary establishments was by poster presentations. . In Gauteng a poster session was organised at Wits in November last year and at Pretoria University during May this year. The provision of bursary assistance is considered important as an investment into future membership and industry competency.

The Institute has spent much of this year consolidating its activities. In order to bring greater focus to implementing industry needs and sharing the work load more equitably, the Interest Groups have decided at their respective meetings to suspend independent activity and consolidate their activities into Council. This will be carried out by the creation of a perpetual committee structure similar to the Education Committee. Both of these Interest Groups brought new life into the Institute at a time when specific industry needs were identified. It is felt that current needs will be better served through the new structure. A motion to this effect will be made during this meeting. I encourage those who are interested in these two areas to lobby the Committee Chairmen (Neil Webb on pipelines and Duncan Lewis on coatings). Actions always speak louder than words.

The past 12 months have been quite taxing. Despite numerous meetings and promises, the Institute and Corrosion and Coatings parted company. Primedia as the new owner felt that the Journal was no longer viable in its current format. The timing of this decision was particularly unfortunate as the ICC was just around the corner. However, one has to move on and, due to a couple of years of communication, the decision was made to tie

the knot with Industrial Publications. Through the owner, Gert Muller, a new Journal has been produced under the title Corrosion, Paint and Coatings Industries SA or CPC as it will no doubt be known. The first issue was released to coincide with the ICC and the next issue is currently under preparation. I hope that we can finally cement a relationship with a reliable service provider. I wish CPC well for the future.

The focus on the ICC has restricted seminar activity again this year. However, I am confident that the upcoming year will display a flurry of activity.

The regional golf days always provide the relaxation many members look for. We are indeed fortunate in that our two active gold medalists are keen golfers. Thanks go to Walter, ably assisted by Geoff Harris, for a successful Gauteng golf day. Similarly without Mike Brett's commitment in Kwazulu Natal, their golf day would not be the traditional event it has become. Thankyou both and I know that the receiving charities appreciate it also.

This year has created some difficulties with regard to membership. Every few years, it has been found necessary to review the membership list and clear defaulters from the system. Much administration time is often wasted trying to secure membership fees from recalcitrant members. This was in fact commented upon in my report last year. In an effort to reduce this, a major campaign was made to purge the system. This is always an onerous task and I would like to thank Chris Gross for his assistance in this regard. I cannot, therefore, report that the membership has increased over the reporting period. Indeed at first glance the figures appear shocking. However, I urge you to note that in the Financial Report a significant provision had to be made for bad debt as a result of the reduced membership. However, at best, the figures for the past few years were misleading. As Chris commented, the Institute cannot survive on membership fees alone. This is actually a good situation as it compels the Institute to run events to secure further income. However, with the very recent announcement of the changes in the VAT regulations I would suggest strongly that the Institute reviews its financial operating system in addition to deregistering for VAT purposes. The recovery of invoices for VAT purposes has placed an unnecessary burden upon the administration function.

Returning to membership, the figures as at the end of August are:

Gauteng 223 (297)

Kwa zulu Natal 62 (93)

Western Cape 42 (71)

Much of my tenure in office has been consumed by the 14th International Corrosion Congress. Whilst this activity has resulted in an inevitable reduction in activity in other areas, I would like to report that, using any measure, the ICC has been an unqualified success. As I commented in my opening remarks at the Congress, my championing of this project dates back to the August 1994 Institute Conference. I hope that you will bear with me whilst I share a few figures with you.

Some 400 delegates attended the Congress from 50 countries. Some 141 delegates came from around the country with a high representation from the USA (30), Japan (26), the UK (18) and China (12). On the day some 303 papers were presented in either oral or poster form. There were 6 parallel sessions running all week. A workshop on the problems with Underground Storage Tanks was run on the Tuesday. To give some idea of the scale of the event, there were more papers presented at this conference than any other held to date in this country.

On the social side, delegates were accommodated every day other than Monday and Wednesday. Based upon an African theme, the Welcome Function at the Castle was attended by the Mayor of Cape Town. We were fortunate with the weather on Wednesday morning and were able to transfer 261 people to the top of Table Mountain, and back again in time for lunch and the afternoon session. The Dinner at Groot Constantia was attended by over 400 people.

I would like to thank all those hard working members of Council and the other volunteers who have gone the "extra mile". This has been a particularly tough time for us all but, there is never gain without pain. Thanks to you all.

Comment has been made in the past that the Institute is unable to project a professional image at exhibitions. I can report that through the good offices of Stuart Folkard this is no longer the case. A banner arrangement has been produced which does the Institute proud. Stuart managed this whilst driving the Congress Exhibition. Thanks a lot Stuart. I am referred to as a Past President on the new banner so suppose that it is time to go.

In my Presidential Address in June, I urged Council, and the Institute, to review the role of the Institute and become an active participant in becoming the custodian of corrosion related corporate memory. This presents a whole new suite of challenges for Council but will, in the longer term, provide the foundation for development into the new millenium. Structural changes will have to be embraced in the manner in which the Institute will have to operate. However, if managed properly, these changes will ensure continued growth and member participation.

It is tradition that a number of awards are given at the Annual Dinner. I am pleased to announce that tonight we will be giving the Industrial Award and the Ivan Ogilvie Research Scholarship.

May I, again, thank Council and our secretary, Bev van Niekerk, for the support over the past 2 years and I congratulate Meryl upon her appointment and wish her and the new Council well. I hope that you all enjoy this evening.

Rob White
President: Corrosion Institute of Southern Africa

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