

THE PROTEM COMMITTEE



by Dato' Ir. Pang Leong Hoon

BACKGROUND

In the public service before and even some years after Merdeka, there was a requirement under the Terms and Conditions of appointment for civil engineers as below:

“You will be required to pass the Professional Interview of the Associate Membership examination of the Institution of Civil Engineers within three years of your appointment as an Assistant Engineer. Failing to obtain this qualification within the stipulated period will render liable to loss of seniority up to a maximum of two years which would also affect your chances of promotion to a superscale grade”.

The above was also applicable to engineers of other engineering disciplines. It was not easy then to be admitted as an Associate Member of the Engineering Institutions of United Kingdom.

While the constitutional negotiation was being finalised for Britain to grant independence to Malaya by 31 August 1957, there was a parallel move by Malayan engineers in public service and private sector to form a national body for engineers in the country, in conjunction with the anticipated independence of Malaya. They strongly felt that we should have our own national engineering institution and regulations for Malayan engineers. Thus, a handful of interested engineers got together to form the nucleus for the founding of The Institution of Engineers, Malaya.

THE PROTEM COMMITTEE

The 1st Meeting of the Ad-Hoc Committee (the Protem Committee) was held on 3 April 1958 at Mansion House (2nd Floor), High Street, Kuala Lumpur (the office of Mr. Lau Foo Sun). The members present were En. Yusof bin Hj. Ibrahim, Mr. Michael Ting Kuok Negie and Mr. Lau Foo Sun. The main issues discussed and decided upon were on the name of the society, the objectives, the qualifications for memberships, and the classification of memberships. The meeting also discussed the composition of office bearers for the Society and the subscription rates per month (ranging from \$1.00 to \$3.00 per month) for the various grades of memberships. It was also decided that the Ad-Hoc Committee (the Protem Committee) be expanded to five members who would organise the Society.

At the following three meetings, the Committee had formed a few Sub-Committees to carry out specific tasks, namely:

- a) Constitution (4 members)
- b) Secretarial (3 members)
- c) Finance and General Purpose (4 members).

The drafting of the Constitution was carried out by:

1.	En. Yusoff bin Hj. Ibrahim	Public Works Department
2.	Mr. Philip Chow Yeong Wai	Steen Sehested
3.	Mr. Lau Foo Sun	Lau & Partners
4.	Mr. Chan Peng Khuen	Malayan Railways

The drafting of the By-Laws was carried out by:

1.	Mr. Philip Chow Yeong Wai	Steen Sehested
2.	Mr. Chew Kam Fok	Telecommunications
3.	Mr. Chew Kit Lin	Public Works Department
4.	Mr. Lau Foo Sun	Lau & Partners

It was at the 4th Meeting held on 6 June 1958 that the heading of the minutes had been changed from “Engineers Society” to “Institution of Engineers”. This was indeed a very significant change although it was not recorded in the minutes.

The 5th Meeting was held on 4 July 1958 at 5.00 p.m. at No. 23, Perak Road, Kuala Lumpur (the residence of Mr. Lau Foo Sun). The members present were:

1.	Mr. Ow-Yong Hong Chiew	Drainage and Irrigation Department
2.	Mr. Philip Chow Yeong Wai	Steen Sehested
3.	Mr. A.S. Bhatt	Petaling Jaya Authority
4.	Mr. Chew Kit Lin	Public Works Department
5.	Mr. Chew Kam Fok	Telecommunications
6.	Mr. Lau Foo Sun	Lau & Partners

The main discussion at the Meeting was on the By-Laws. More time was needed to finalise the draft and thus, the meeting was adjourned at 9.00 p.m. The drafts of Constitution and By-Laws were further refined after the 5th Meeting of the Protem Committee. Eventually, the draft of Constitution and By-Laws were finalised and ready for the Inaugural Meeting to be held on 1 August 1958. The Inaugural Meeting was held as scheduled on 1 August 1958 at the residence of Mr. Lau Foo Sun. ■

Y.Bhg. Dato' Ir. Pang Leong Hoon was formerly the Director General, Department of Irrigation and Drainage, Malaysia. He was also the Past President of IEM for Sessions 1984/1985 and 1985/1986.