[LETTERS]

A LACK OF RESPECT

In his letter in September/October's *Engineering Dimensions* (p. 53), engineer David Moffat states that what truly makes the discipline process rotten is *his impression* that council, especially past presidents, believe it is impossible for P.Engs to be incompetent and do intervene or otherwise influence the Discipline Committee. This unfounded assertion sullies our good names as a group and of us as individuals.

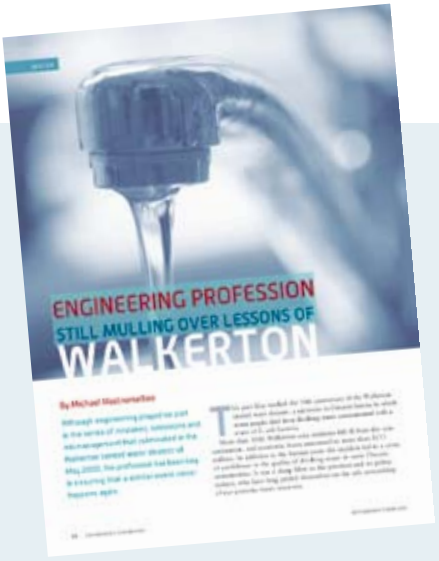
It is this type of lack of respect for our Code of Ethics (there are strictures on dealing with our colleagues), and for the facts (the evidence will show that even in situations that are lose-lose for PEO, there is a fastidious concern for not interfering with anything before tribunals) that is becoming so common in our discourse that it is eroding our status as a true profession. It is perhaps why some people are going the complaints and discipline route rather than put up with such lack of respect, which they see as basically unprofessional.

His reasoning is as unfounded as his impressions–"I do not see how a few cases that were perhaps groundless making it to a hearing makes the whole process rotten" and "I only know two engineers who have [been before the DC], and both cases were groundless"–and is about numbers and not about the integrity of a system. That it is so uncaring about the trauma to innocent engineers appalls me.

"I was employed by a company that was done harm by a P.Eng. who was truly incompetent but we decided the hassle was not worth it" (the hassle being reporting his version of true incompetency) shows a complete disregard for his duty to protect the public. What makes us professionals in the old definition of the word is our willingness to go the extra mile in our service to society.

I regret having to write this public letter, but unless we defend some version of professionalism, we have no defense against what was recently said of us: that we are not a real profession and that no one listens to us. To be a real profession, we have to, individually, walk like professionals, talk like professionals and act like professionals, and call out those among us who don't.

Patrick Quinn, P.Eng., Mississauga, ON
Former PEO president



A PREVENTABLE DISASTER

Graduating from U of T Chem Eng some 50 years ago means I am likely stale-dated so far as performing engineering duties, but I try to remain in the loop wherever possible. Your article regarding Walkerton ("Engineering profession still mulling over lessons of Walkerton," *Engineering Dimensions*, September/October 2010, p. 34) was intriguing–intriguing because I do not believe the parties responsible for the debacle were members of our association. They were citizens charged with the responsibility of sampling, testing, monitoring and providing a supply of properly treated water for their jurisdiction. When the problem arose, the idea of reporting a possible crisis and admitting corrective action may be insufficient apparently didn't cross their alleged minds. Instead, a frantic effort to hide the truth seemed the order of the day–not what a P.Eng. would have done.

G.F. Erwin, P.Eng., Toronto, ON

GLIMMERS OF DISCRIMINATION STILL

While in my last semester of school, finishing up my engineering degree, another student, a woman, came in to class beet-red and angry as hell. When she sat down, I had to ask if everything was okay. She informed me she had just returned from an interview from a prestigious engineering firm and could not believe what had just occurred.

After her interview had finished, her interviewer, a VP of the firm with 20 years' experience, had asked her if she was married (noticing the wedding band on her ring finger). She asked him why he was asking (during an interview, no less), to which he responded: "Just making conversation." She responded in the affirmative that she was married.

The VP then asked if she would like to have children one day. Again stunned, my friend asked why he was asking. The VP then calmly informed her that hiring a woman is a bit of a tricky situation because, typically, five years after a woman is hired, he has to anticipate an upcoming wedding and/or the start of a family, resulting in the VP paying for a female engineer to take a year off so she may care for her newborn.

This happened in 2007 and I can't help but wonder if thinking along the lines of what Mr. Hastings wrote in his letter, "Like it or not, there are basic differences between the male brain and the female brain. This is the basic reason that there are more women in nursing than men, and there are more men in engineering than women" ("President seems to support discrimination," *Engineering Dimensions*, September/October 2010, p. 53) isn't what allowed what happened to my friend to transpire.

My friend, stunned, picked her jaw up off the ground, thanked the VP for his time and informed him that should he choose to call her for a second interview, no one would pick up that call. Now, this isn't a story told from a friend of a friend of mine; this story was told hours after the incident, directly to me. I asked her why she didn't consider filing a claim with the Ontario Human Rights Commission, to which she explained that would result in her name being published (and essentially blacklisted) due to the VP's connections amassed after 20 years of experience.

Mr. Hastings, while you may have been blessed without witnessing a single act of discrimination in your 50 years of experience, I witnessed it before I was even out of university. Our [PEO] president has every right to be cautious of the risks of sexual discrimination facing women who choose to enter engineering.

Discrimination may not be as rampant as it was when you entered the workforce, but glimmers of it still exist today and shape our workforce today.

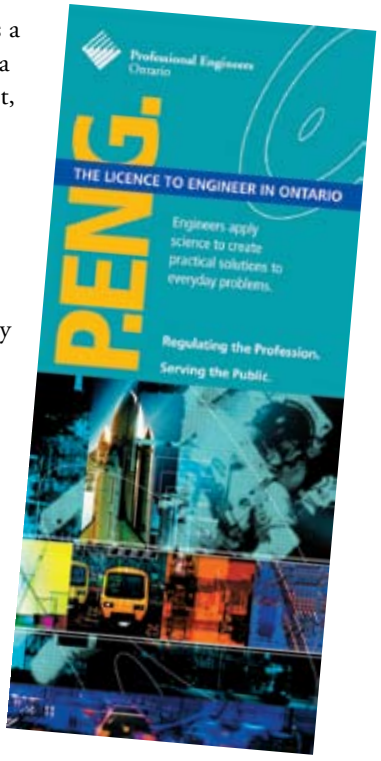
Darek Sobik, EIT, Mississauga, ON

A TRUE ENGINEER

I just received today my copy of the Lake Ontario Chapter newsletter wherein Chair Kim Lewis, P.Eng., stated regretfully that the profession of engineering is no longer recognized by the general populace as one of the top five professions in Canada, and wondered why.

I believe that I have a valid opinion on this critical matter. There are too many careers or job classifications where the title "engineer" is used. To list a few: stationary engineers; railway locomotive engineers; airline flight engineers; audio, video, recording or broadcasting engineers; and military engineers.

So, as a result, when someone says they are an engineer, how does a member of the public differentiate a P.Eng. from all the rest? They don't, and furthermore, they don't care! I have been a P.Eng. since 1970 and I am proud of my profession, and although I'm retired from gainful employment, I am and have been involved in several municipal committees with other P.Engs where my credentials have been recognized and appreciated.



As an amusing example of my observations, I will tell you this little story. My hobby is trains. I have a very extensive library on Canadian railways in which I can study the history of their development. I also have two very finely detailed model railways in my basement. A visitor observing my model railways asked, "What do you do for a living?" I answered that I was an engineer. "Oh," he said, "I have always wondered what it was like to drive a locomotive."

When I corrected him and said I was a professional engineer, he replied, "Isn't driving a locomotive a profession?" At this point, I gave up.

If we want to give professional engineers their proper recognition, we have to do a much better job of explaining to the public the big difference between our profession and all the others that use "engineer" in their job titles. "Engineer" today is too generic a term to achieve much recognition or respect. It will take a lot of hard work to fix this. But it's necessary.

Clayton M. Morgan, P.Eng., Bowmanville, ON

[LETTERS]

BRAUNSHTEIN DECISION

In reviewing the decision on Mr. Braunshtein, I found it quite interesting that Mr. Braunshtein (president of his company) appears to have been an individual contracted by Hydro One (Gazette, *Engineering Dimensions*, September/October 2010, p. 25). Also, it is unclear who submitted the drawings for permit application to the City of Oshawa. The statement, "A permit application was submitted to the City of Oshawa…" appears twice in the reasons. The use of the passive voice is interesting in decisions and is often used to obscure the actor. Assuming Hydro One is a sophisticated procurer of engineering services, they should have been aware of Mr. Braunshtein's engineering discipline (check the membership directory where Mr. Braunshtein is listed as having studied mechanical engineering).

If Hydro One submitted these drawings to the City of Oshawa knowing the limitations of Mr. Braunshtein, why were they not also involved in this process? Also, as this was a pre-engineered metal clad building most likely procured by Hydro One (without a proper Ontario stamp) and then Hydro One needed an Ontario stamp to apply for a permit, one would have expected a pre-engineered building to have had the proper provincial stamps on the drawings when Hydro One procured it. If not, Hydro One may have precipitated these proceedings and should bear the costs, not the members.

D. Flintoff, P.Eng., Richmond, BC

A HIGH-TECH SOLUTION

Regarding the photo caption in "Shifting the system: Harnessing the power of engineering to address poverty," *Engineering Dimensions*, September/October 2010, p. 40, we have acquaintances who are missionaries in Africa and who had bats in their home. They found if they put up CDs, hanging from the ceiling, the discs interfered with the sonar hearing of the bats and it drove them out.

My husband, a retired P.Eng., commented that it was a high-tech solution. Please pass on the suggestion.

Doreen Broadbridge, North York, ON

RINKY-DINK DESIGN

I wanted to send my comments regarding the article "Shifting the System" by Allison Langille (*Engineering Dimensions*, September/October 2010, p. 40).

I am not a mechanical engineer, but I feel compelled to write about this article. My observation is that the manual pump design is rinky-dink. If, in fact, it was designed by a P.Eng., shame on that engineer. Surely, the use of sealed, permanently lubricated bearings and some better choice of materials can make a manual pump maintenance free for at least five years or more. It is not rocket science.

RCFA (Root Cause Failure Analysis), a very powerful but not often used tool, would have indicated pump design weaknesses a long time before the 25 per cent failure rate.

It is great to get third-world mechanics trained and given spare parts, but I suggest the root cause of short life is in the design and materials. The mechanics are just subsidizing the shortcomings, which fail to meet the real-world requirements of the application. Were there specifications or just lowest price tender?

Elio Comello, P.Eng., Camlachie ON

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