

Annual Report for 2004/05

1. Introduction

1.1 The Council was elected on 11 June 2004 at the 25th AGM. During the 2004/05 term, the Council convened six (6) meetings to discuss and administer the affairs of our Association. The Council also had meetings and close liaison with other staff associations concerning affairs affecting the common interest of the civil servants.

1.2 In the past year, the Council received valuable ideas and suggestions from our members on matters concerning the civil service and the civil engineering profession. Close contacts were maintained with our Hon. Advisers, the Hon. Ir Dr Raymond Ho Chung-tai and Ir Prof Lau Ching-kwong to seek their advice on civil service matters and the civil engineering profession at large. The Council also had meetings with representatives of the "3+3" Engineers, Civil Engineering Graduates, and Contract Engineers/Assistant Engineers to help relieve their concerns with their career prospect.

1.3 One of the Council's key tasks is to serve as a channel of communication between our members and the Administration as we believe communication is the key to fostering relationship and finding solutions to issues. As usual, Council Members took every opportunity and occasion to exchange views with the Administration on professional issues and grade management matters. Besides, the Council maintained informal contacts with the Permanent Secretary (Works) and Works Directors throughout the year.

1.4 Although the local economy has been improving, the construction industry still suffers a high rate of unemployment. Civil servants are still subject to pay cut and the impact of civil service

reforms. There remain uncertainties and changes around us. The Council has the duty to lead our members to face these changes and uncertainties. In the past year, the Council devoted much attention to the subjects on "Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism", "Promotion Opportunity", "Manpower Plan for Civil Engineer Grade", "Performance Appraisal", "Review of Policy on Post-service Employment of Former Directorate Civil Servants" and 'Continuous Employment of the '3+3' Engineers and Contract Engineers/Assistant Engineers'.

2. Civil Service Issues

Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism

2.1 On 9 December 2004, Council Member (Ir Bok Kwok-ming) and I attended CSB's staff consultation forum on the consultation paper on the proposals on the methodology of the pay level survey and the application of the survey results. We voiced out our views and comments at the forum and, subsequently we wrote to CSB to confirm these views and comments.

2.2 In essence, we do not consider that a pay level survey should be conducted prematurely in 2005. The local economy has been improving, but still not yet reached a steady state. It is recommended in the paper that the pay level survey shall adopt a broad comparison between the public and private sectors. We doubt very much how this principle can be adopted convincingly and practically in the interpretation of the survey findings, in view of the completely different objectives and work nature between the public sector and the private sector. It is arguable that at what level the civil service pay and benefit should be positioned when making a comparison with the private sector.

2.3 *We propose to scrap this pay level survey as it will simply open the wound that the society needs not suffer again, once the survey findings are made known and disputed by the staff side.*

Promotion Opportunity

2.4 *In November 2004, together with the Association of Local Engineers of the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department and Government Waterworks Professional Association, we wrote to ETWB to propose a change to the present confirmation arrangements of the multi-disciplinary professional posts in the Bureau with a view to opening up more promotion opportunities for our professional colleagues in various disciplines.*

2.5 *We proposed that the multi-disciplinary posts in the Works Branch be made confirmable under specific disciplines and without the need for the posts to be held against posts in the respective parent departments. Bureau post holders can return to their parent departments by staff swapping/posting via suitable arrangements. By these arrangements, more promotional opportunities can be created as a result.*

2.6 *We received the response from the Bureau, which was not too encouraging. The Associations will keep the dialogue with the Bureau on this matter, as the lacking of promotion opportunity at the senior and D1 ranks is one major factor affecting the moral of colleagues.*

Manpower Plan for Civil Engineer Grade

2.7 *In February 2005, we wrote to the Head of Grade to seek clarification on a hearsay that the management had completed the manpower plan review and had identified over 100 surplus Civil Engineer posts. We were worried that some Civil Engineer colleagues, particular the “3+3” and Contract Engineers/Assistant*

Engineers, would be subject to the threat of unemployment. We received the response from the Grade Management saying that the manpower plan is yet to be concluded and the rumour is unfounded. The Council will keep an eye on the development.

Performance Appraisal

2.8 *In view of the increasing number of complaints from members against the quota system adopted for performance appraisal, particularly worsened by the bunching effect of the no-promotion situation, we wrote in February 2005 to request the Grade Management to waive the quotas imposed on the other performance rankings, except to retain the 10% quota for “Outstanding” performers. Since its introduction, the quota system has been criticized as being arbitrary, inflexible and not conducive to keeping staff morale. We believe our proposal is a workable and simple measure to help boost civil service morale. The number of “Very Effective” and “Effective” performers should be left to the decision of the departments.*

Review of Policy on Post-service Employment of Former Directorate Civil Servants

2.9 *In April 2005, we wrote to CSB giving our comments on the review proposals. We are against any proposals that are going to introduce harsher control than the existing mechanism. We are of the view that there is nothing wrong in principle with the existing mechanism and it is human right for any person to seek a job after retirement or leaving his/her former employment.*

2.10 *Instead, we proposed some improvements to the present mechanism in respect of the control over the general and professional grades directorate officers to make the mechanism simpler and streamlined.*

3. **“3+3” Engineers**

3.1 *We always take pride of the Government’s graduate training scheme whereby it has, for many years, provided a major source of highly competent young engineers to serve the government and the community. The Council has been fighting hard in the last couple of years for the permanent employment status of this group of young engineers.*

3.2 *With the unfailing effort of these young engineers themselves, the work of our Hon. Ir Dr Raymond Ho, and an understanding attitude of the Permanent Secretary (Works) and the Works Directors, the future of this group of young engineers now looks brighter than the dim situation in the last couple of months. We are given to understand that the grade management is trying the best to help these young engineers. Hopefully, the future of these young engineers can be positively and timely concluded.*

4. **Contract Assistant Engineers (CAEs) and Civil Engineering Graduates (CEGs)**

4.1 *The leaving of the CAEs from the civil service upon completion of their training as the CEGs has always been a major concern of the Association. These young engineers are amongst the best graduates whom the Government has recruited over the years. The construction industry still has a high unemployment rate. These young engineers, after leaving the civil service, are unlikely to secure a civil engineering job in the private sector. Once they change jobs, they will be lost to the civil engineering discipline forever. In the long term, the construction industry will suffer due to the failure in retaining quality young successors. Furthermore, such happenings*

will make high caliber school students shun themselves from joining the civil engineering discipline. We are of the view that the discontinuity with the employment of our CAEs is a failure in human resources management and a waste of public resources. We have written to the Administration a number of times on this issue and will continue to urge the Administration to change this very bad human resources strategy.

5. Liaison Office of Central People's Government in HKSAR

5.1 We have maintained regular and close dialogue with the Liaison Office of Central People's Government in the last 12 months through various activities.

5.2 In March 2005, with the assistance of the Liaison Office, we organized our second visit to the Mainland. We visited Hangzhou and Ningbo from 11.3.2005 to 15.3.2005. This visit enhanced participants of the recent developments on the Mainland and provided an opportunity for participants to meet and exchange views with the Mainland unions.

5.3 In April 2005, our Hon. Treasurer, Ir Victor LAI Kuen-lap, represented the Association to attend a study course in Beijing. This course was co-organized by the Liaison Office, the All China General Trade Union and the Hong Kong & Macau Office of the State Council. The course enhanced participants' understanding of the political and administrative systems on the Mainland, which is very beneficial for promoting collaboration and harmony between the unions in the HKSAR and the Mainland authorities.

6. Logo

In 2003 members approved the change of the name of the Association. This time, we have a logo designed. We have to express gratitude to our former Hon. Secretary and the former Director of Territory Development, Ir WONG Hung-kin, who has kindly written the Chinese calligraphy of the words '土木' to form the core of our logo design. The logo together with its design rationale is attached at the back of this report for members' information.

7. HKIE Activities

7.1 The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the HKIE has been scheduled for 23 June 2005 (Thursday). The election for the post of Elected Ordinary Members (EOM) for the 2005/06 session will also be held on the same day. The Council appeals to all members to show your support by attending the AGM and casting your votes.

7.2 We always hope that the civil servants' voice can be heard in the HKIE Council. Our Immediate Past Chairman, Ir CHEUNG Kin-keung and Council Member, Ir BOK Kwok-ming, will run for the election for the post of EOM. Ir CHEUNG and Ir BOK have served the civil engineering discipline with hard work, enthusiasm and commitment over many years. They participated actively in both the activities of the Association and the Institution. The Council appeals to all members for giving your strongest support to them.

7.3 Your vote really matters. The fact that several past Council Members were successful in the past EOM elections speaks volumes for the importance of your vote.

8. Membership Drive

Given the uncertainties, we need a strong and united Association to cope with the changes and uncertainties surrounding our profession today. However, the growth of membership is limited due to the downsizing in civil service. Once again, we appeal to members to encourage more fellow engineers to join our Association to boost our representative power. Please contact the Hon. Secretary at st.ip@housingauthority.gov.hk or your department's representative in Council for membership application.

9. End-Piece

9.1 *In accordance with the Rules of the Association, I have to step down from the Chairmanship after 3 years' service. I like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support, and wish to thank the Council Members for their hard work and devotion to the affairs of the Association.*

9.2 *I am however disillusioned to witness the dim prospect of our Contract Engineers/CEGs/Contract Assistant Engineers. Hopefully, after I hand over the reins to the new chairman, better changes can be accomplished for our next generation of engineers.*

9.3 *Lastly, my best wishes go to all members for a better future. I look forward to seeing you all at the AGM on 10 June 2005 to make it a memorable event.*

香港特區政府土木工程師協會

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By Order of the Council



(Ir Stephen CHU Kin-hong)

Chairman

3 June 2005

Hon. Advisers : The Hon. Ir Dr Raymond HO Chung-tai, Ir Prof LAU Ching-kwong

Hon. Presidents : Ir CHING Kam-cheong, Ir Peter CHAN Pak-fong

Immediate Past Chairman : Ir Martin CHEUNG Kin-keung

Chairman : Ir Stephen CHU Kin-hong **Vice Chairman :** Ir LAU Wing-kam

Hon. Secretary : Ir IP Shing-tim

Hon. Treasurer : Ir LAI Kuen-lap