



REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Professional knowledge and skill retains its value in spite of stock exchange fluctuations. Rapid technological development forces us to widen the scope of vocational training and to constantly update skills. Knowledge once acquired is now subjected to evolution and is thus often outdated in a few years. It therefore surprises no-one that trades constantly deteriorate and that very often not even five years after completion of final exams, only half the acquired skills and knowledge can be correctly used. To give an example : let's take the advance of micro-electronics as compared to the motorcar. If the development of automobile techniques could be compared to that of micro-electronics, you would get something like this :

A motorcar should now cost only SFR 10 instead of SFR 10,000.

A motorcar should be able to cover 100 km in 5 seconds.

A motorcar should be able to seat 5000 people and need only one liter of petrol per 1000km

This state of affairs is particularly preoccupying. Nevertheless worldwide economic development, in spite of constantly shelved problems, deserves a rather subdued enthusiasm. Whilst employment is on the rise in the USA and unemployment could be reduced, the increase of unemployment potential in Europe causes headaches and, which is sadder still, creates indifference. Even Australia has had to face a curbing of recent expansion and in South America devaluation is a real plague. It is only in Asia, at least in the land of the four dragons, that expansion flourishes as before , even though certain limits can now be seen.

Our organisation interests others as never before

It may well be the conviction that sound vocational training is the highest asset of any economy or perhaps the need to solve unemployment problems, which has led many people from all over the world to establish contact with our organisation. This can undoubtedly be ascribed also to the genuine efforts of my predecessor during recent years. During the year under report, the following countries approached our organisation :

Bermuda (application for membership pending), Belgium (re-admission), Denmark, India, Sri-Lanka, Macao (admission pending), New Zealand (discussions took place in Zurich), Peru, Sweden, Saudi-Arabia, Singapore, Uruguay.

President Albert had personal contact with South America, where he participated in the South American Skill Olympics at the invitation of the SENAI, Brazilian organisation. An opportunity to reaffirm connections also presented itself during the Iberian competition, organised by Portugal. On the other hand, contacts with the official representation of Venezuela were broken off and much to our regret, organisational difficulties in Spain have not yet been solved. In the latter case, it is hoped that an appropriate solution will be found. Nothing has been heard from Luxemburg after the Linz competition.

Admission of new trades

The waiting list for possible new trades is once again getting longer. No effort or expense was spared by the International Metal Union to put on an interesting demonstration in Aarberg (CH) for the benefit of technical delegates, in the trades metal construction and agricultural machinery mechanic.

The secretary-general was invited by the European Butchers' Union to participate in the European competition in Laax (CH) and registered interest for collaboration on a medium-term basis.

Discussions were held with representatives of trade associations regarding the possible admission of the following trades : heating apparatus mechanic, heating draftsman, florist, interior decorator, the latter as successor to the recently eliminated upholstery trade.

Challenging our objectives

This generally positive development has resulted in voluminous correspondence. It has also led to a refreshing exchange of ideas with the standing commission, when it met in Taipei, at the invitation of the Republic of China. The hospitality extended by Taiwan was very impressive and encouraged standing commission members to make use of this opportunity to give some thought to the organisation's objectives in a broader sense. In this connection, various points are still to be discussed in the different committees. All the same, the wish was clearly expressed that membership of our organisation should not be limited and that the corresponding organisational problems should rather be solved through a limitation in the number of competition trades.

There is no doubt that for the young competitor, the competition itself is of major importance. However, the IVTC is more than just a race after medals and distinctions. Through careful observation, differences in behaviour, techniques and processes, as well as machines, tools and the use thereof, become apparent. These observations often lead to interesting conclusions. For this reason, it is important that observer participation at a competition be encouraged and that observers are given special attention and duly integrated in this exchange process. These contacts and experiences allow each and everyone of us to progress, everyone for himself as it is impossible to treat everyone on the same basis. Training systems are far too divergent to be easily copied. Different people see different advantages and are fully justified in retaining what seems interesting to them.

In this connection, thanks to the president's initiative, a subcommission meeting was held with Dr.Cech (D) and Mr. Segaar (NL) to discuss the possible organisation of a world congress on vocational training. Over and above the topical nature of the congress themes, this event could

attract a lot of publicity for our organisation. After preliminary discussions in the administrative committee, it can be said that there is basically a positive attitude towards the whole idea, even though decisions have yet to be taken.

Committee business

Both committees, as well as the member assembly, met in September in Bern (CH). Details of the proceedings are recorded in the relevant minutes. The standing commission had one meeting in Taipei and two in Bern. Parallel to these, subcommittee meetings took place in order to prepare committee proceedings, a.o. for the revision of the constitution and by-laws. Financial problems related to the end of the 1983 financial year were solved satisfactorily. Outstanding matters will be settled before the end of 1985.

The publications initiated in 1978 were revised and prepared for republication in a less costly form. Thanks to the computer, they can henceforth be more speedily brought up to date. Appropriate folders have been purchased for the dispatch of information material.

The president and the secretary-general had 3 meetings in Zurich, in order to discuss current business, some of it still related to the transfer of the general secretariat from Madrid to Zurich.

At the end of the year, a meeting was held in Zurich with Mr. de Haan, to prepare the March 1985 meetings in Amsterdam. A further meeting took place with representatives from Japan to coordinate interpreters' problems during the 28th IVTC in Osaka.

Personal affairs

Members regretfully acknowledged the death of former technical committee president Mr. Harry Hamer, who passed away after a long and painful illness. His personal contribution to IVTC will be remembered.

With equal regret the member assembly took note of the retirement of Mr. S.C. Wang (ROC), president of the administrative committee and first vice-president. Professional changes forced him to reconsider his priorities. Members greatly appreciated his discreet ways and owe him sincere thanks.

Mr. H. Bertelsmann (NL), vice-president of the administrative committee, retired for health reasons. Members wish him a speedy recovery and thank him for the many years of service in the interest of the organisation.

On account of serious illness, Mr. W. Thorpe (GB) was unable to attend meetings. Members wish him, as well as Messrs Segaar and Nigsch (bedridden in the meantime), all the best and patience on the long road to recovery.

The secretary-general would like to take this opportunity to thank all delegates for their kind cooperation, especially the second vice-president, René Gonthier (CH) and the third vice-president, Mr Kuwahara (J).

A special vote of thanks to president Albert who, as a personal friend and authority on competition matters, readily and willingly gave every assistance. The secretary-general is furthermore indebted to Miss Erika Moser, Zurich, Mrs Rebecca Galeazzi, Ste-Croix and Mrs Elisabeth Becker in Madrid, whose expertise, especially in translations, was of great help to him. In spite of the great distances, communications by post, telex and telephone were efficient.

Prospects

The aim of this report is not to record in detail all contacts and correspondence. It is more important to consider the results, even though the evaluation

thereof often takes time. The volume of work carried out by the general secretariat was greater than originally estimated. However, the work was interesting and performed in a friendly atmosphere. This latter fact does not seem obvious when taking a look at the map of the world, where war and unrest rules in over a dozen different regions, or when considering internal strife in other international organisations, for example the Unesco.

The reason for this friendly cooperation within our organisation can no doubt be found in the fact that the IVTC does not meddle in politics but rather puts all emphasis on the promotion of vocational training for youth. This fact in itself justifies the necessity to open up this peaceloving organisation and to adhere very rigidly to existing principles.

The outstanding video show on the 1988 competition, presented by our Australian friends, the prospects of holding the 1989 competition in Great Britain and the negotiations in view of a possible competition in the Netherlands in 1991, confirm the organisation's unfailing enthusiasm and its faith in the future. In my opinion, it is precisely this confidence in the future, besides our ambitions in the field of vocational and further education, which needs to be shared. Young people of today want more than examples, they want something to look up to, they want to innovate. These are forces which lie dormant within every human being and which can be awakened. We have no cause to fear the future. Training is more than just a transfer of knowledge and skills, training means showing a new generation the way to independence and to self-realisation. Allow me to conclude by quoting a Chinese proverb :

- if you want to prepare for the next year,
then sow corn
- if you want to prepare for the next ten years,
then plant trees
- if you want to prepare for your whole life,
then educate people

the secretary-general:

James Toomey

Zurich,
7th January, 1985