

Editorial

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Welcome to the February 2009 issue of *Management, Procurement and Law*. It is hard to believe that it is two years since the publication of the first issue. We hope that you will have found at least some of the articles of interest to you. As it covers a wide spectrum of the construction process, the journal will inevitably contain some material of more interest to some readers than others in any given issue, but we try to maintain a balance. We hope this issue achieves that.

In the past few months, it has been impossible to avoid the almost constant media coverage of the financial recession. It is sometimes said that construction is both a mirror and a barometer of the economic state of affairs. If money is tight, investors put projects on hold. As a result, people are made redundant and companies are forced out of business. This time around, it seems even some of the investors, such as large banks, are vulnerable.

For many construction people, it is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid some of the consequences of these events. However, wherever possible, it is incumbent on those of us with any kind of influence to use our talents and imagination to do our best to minimise the damage to the industry and those who work in it. The contents of this issue are interesting in this respect, as they show how some of our contributors want to see some aspects of the construction process approached, and, no doubt, improved.

In their briefing article, which was commissioned by the ICE information systems panel, Mark Peat and Anna McCrea¹ address head-on the management of the supply chain, advocating change and looking at the ways in which information technology can help. If anything is going to influence the economics of construction, this subject will. Done well, of course, it is very helpful. If not, we all know the results. It leads one to wonder why more is not written on the subject.

That article has a close relation to the one by Sam Wamuziri and Shalu Madan² – on the way in which the supply chain in facilities management should be handled. This is specific to a sector, but just as relevant. It is interesting that both articles take a strategic look at procurement. Maybe this reflects our mood in times of economic difficulties. Perhaps we need to look at the whole picture to make sure we have it right.

Hank Fogarty³ comes from Ireland, a country which has seen the best and the less good times recently. His paper presents a

welcome perspective from a contractor, looking at the fairly new suite of contracts introduced by the Irish government. One might say their reception has not been altogether warm. In regard to new contracts, one is inclined to say *plus ça change*. No doubt the subject matter of the article will continue to exercise the minds of all parties to the process and the many in the disputes industry.

Talking of disputes, Peter Chapman⁴ writes on dispute boards in infrastructure projects. You may think disputes are the bane of construction and a dreadful waste of time and money, especially in hard times. That may be true, but dispute boards were introduced some years ago to try to prevent disputes. It is the case that some disputes do arise, but the record of dispute boards in resolving them, on very large projects, too, is pretty good, so it is not all bad news. If you read the article, you may see why dispute boards came into existence, which is instructive.

We have a couple of book reviews which are also interesting, as they look at new books, as opposed to revisions of exiting ones. One is on construction law generally, and the other is on mediation, a method of dispute resolution attracting an increasing amount of attention.

Each article invites comment, so feel free to let us have yours. In a way, the readers provide us with a barometer for the reception of the journal. Thank you for your time and we wish you well for 2009 and hope you will weather the rough times ahead.

REFERENCES

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