

## EDITORIAL

This issue of the West Indian Journal of Engineering has prompted me to focus on a topic which is of some general concern — that of University/Industry partnership. It has become abundantly clear within recent years that much more needs to be done to improve the quality of the partnership between the University (and particularly our Faculty of Engineering) and Industry. Generally speaking, the relationship between academics and industrialists in the Caribbean region is one of relative isolation and widespread misunderstanding. There are, of course, many examples of a spirit of co-operation and a willingness to break down the existing barriers to a more healthy and mutually advantageous relationship. Clearly, however, there must be a greater realization by the University and Industry as well as Governments that a partnership is now vital to economic success, and is in the interests of all sides.

Nonetheless, both the University and Industry are in crisis. Their traditional methods are being constantly threatened by a technological revolution more significant than any change since Neolithic man ceased to be simply a hunter and started an agrarian society. Whole industries, both efficient and inefficient, are being superseded. Within the University itself there are signs that new technology has encouraged interdisciplinary work which is destroying traditional academic disciplines and both sides may therefore need to solve their own problems before the larger question of partnership can be tackled successfully. Another problem is that of perception. Academics are sometimes regarded by industrialists as lazy, impractical revolutionaries working at most for five hours a week for twenty four weeks a year, while industrialists are often seen as philistine, overpaid mercenaries prepared to put workers out of a job in pursuit of more material possessions.

Whereas universities took almost no part in the first industrial revolution, the new one demands much greater interchange between Industry and the University. Today's advances are based entirely on science and technology, to such an extent that knowledge has become the most important commodity in the world. The potential for partnership in the area of joint research projects of national interest is clearly there. However, researchers may have to accept their duty to publish results in a way comprehensible to generalists and should regard it as their fault if their ideas are misunderstood or not taken up by industry.

Finally it should be stressed that partnerships are not pseudo-commercial ventures to sell surplus ideas and products. They are essential to the future health of both the University and Industry, and should not mean the undermining of academic values. There is no single formula for success in the formulation of a programme of co-operation but I believe that the initiatives should come from the University side with the help of receptive industrialists. The University can no longer stand apart from society. The model for the present and future must be the practical and relevant University rather than the liberal or critical one. Our academics must descend from the clouds to place their feet firmly on the ground of the late twentieth-century world.



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