



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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# 26th International Congress of Actuaries

## Closing Ceremony Speech, June 11, 1998

by Jean Berthon

I am very proud to have been elected to wear this chain of office and be sure that I will do my best to maintain the established high standard.

When I started writing this very short speech, I was looking for a concept on which I could base my remarks. I wanted to have something related to professionalism, ethics and so on. Suddenly, I remembered the motto of the city where I grew up. Angoulême is the county town of Charente, a very nice city located not far from the Cognac county on one side and from the Dordogne region on the other. The motto of the city coat of arms is: "Fortitudo mea civium fides: My strength is the trust of my citizens." Don't you think that it could become one of our mottos, by replacing "our citizens" with "our publics?"

Trust was the concept that I was looking for, because trust underlies all of our activities and relationships.

As Professor Penelope Corfield said in her lecture, every profession relies on public trust. Remember that, as the first truly global profession, we aim to serve the public interest. So trust is the cornerstone of our profession.

Trust is gained through values and ethics, skills and knowledge. We had interesting papers and discussions on those subjects during the Congress.

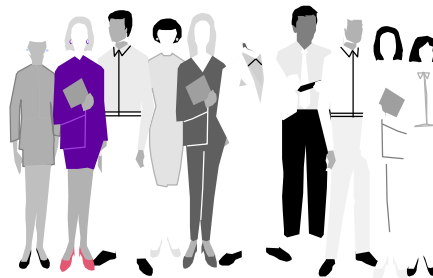
In my view, we have several priorities for the coming years.

Firstly, we have to make every effort possible to gain and develop public trust, not only within our countries, but also at the international level. We should continue to promote high standards of professionalism among ourselves, which means pursue the excellent work already done in the Education Committee to establish a core syllabus. We must also start thinking of elaborating a common framework to establish world-wide recognized standards of practice. In the long term, one of our aims should be to establish the

conditions of mutual recognition among our different associations or countries.

Secondly, we have to expand our presence in the world. We have to promote the establishment of actuarial clubs and associations in countries where there is no organized actuarial body, not only because we would like to see more actuaries throughout the world, but because we think that it is important in order to enhance the welfare of citizens in those countries.

Thirdly, we have initiated good relationships with international organizations like the International Accounting Standards Committee and the Inter-



national Association of Insurance Supervisors. It is very important for us as a profession to keep moving in that direction through the participation in their committees as observers and through our capacity to promote our point of view in those fields which directly concern our profession. We also will have to get in touch with other international bodies to develop the same kind of relationship with the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Bank for International Settlements, and so on. We also should try to improve our status at the United Nations Organization. For that we will need the support of our member associations, as well as the support of individual

actuaries inside these organizations, because we will need to deliver in a very short period of time. Our credibility will depend on our ability to deliver what we are promising.

Fourthly, as we have gained credibility in many fields since the creation of the Forum, we can, in my view, start to be more proactive. I would encourage us to think about covering other fields of activities where actuaries are already involved, like finance, portfolio management performance, measurement standards and so on. We should also look at other fields in which we are not already involved, but where our skills, knowledge and ethics could play an important role.

But all those developments will need to be well-publicized, because information and public image are essential to establish public trust. As you know, actuaries are not known as being very keen to communicate in a comprehensible way. It is very important that we try to do it and manage to improve our image in that field.

I no longer want to hear that joke of an actuary being asked how much is two and two and replying, "What do you want it to be, Mister Chairman?" I would prefer that the joke ends as borrowed from Yves Guérard, "It depends, if it is two plus two it will be four, if it is two over two it will be one, if it is two beside two it will be twenty-two."

Developing the public confidence should be at the center of our concern. But trust is also one of the essential components of leadership. No leadership is legitimate if it is not built on trust.

Then we will be in battle order and in a good position to take up the numerous challenges that we will be facing in the future.

*Jean Berthon is a guest columnist for this issue of International Section News, and is President of IAA.*