



The Nigerian Society of Engineers

PORT HARCOURT BRANCH



2010 / VOLUME 83

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JUNE, 19TH 2010

Interview with Engr. F. A. Somolu, *FNSE* on Engineering Practice in Nigeria

Engr. F. A. Shomolu was a Vice President of the Nigerian Society of Engineers and the 23rd President of Nigerian Society of Engineers in 2002/2003. He graduated from the University of Lagos in 1970, and joined the then newly started Niger Dams Authority, the operators of Kainji Dam and Nigerian electricity grid at that time;

of course, he came into NEPA when Niger Dams Authority was merged with CCN to form NEPA. He spent 15 years in engineering budget, and that was when NEPA was busi-



Engr. Oluseke A. Somolu, *FNSE*

est; he was part of the team that built nearly everything that NEPA has now. They expanded Kainji, they built Geba dam, they built Shiroro dam, they built egbe, they built Sapele, and so many things NEPA has now. Then after, he moved to operating the system. He became director of Transmission Protection Control and Communications and after then he became the first General Manager of Transmission. He retired in 1997, and went into private practice. Since then, he has been called back twice, first into the Presidential Techno-technical Board when NEPA virtually collapsed in 1999/2000, and they raised generation from about 1500 to 4000 Megawatts capacity; and he was chairman on that committee, Technical board; He was the chairman in-charge of generation; so that raising from 1500 to 4000 Megawatts was actually, under him. Then again after his tenure as president of NSE, he was called back as Senior Special Assistant in power sector reform by Presi-

dent Obasanjo. He remained after President Obasanjo left and worked for about six months with late President Yar'Adua before he left. He is now on his own.

E-Newsletter: *What can you say about The Nigerian engineering practice; Engineering generally in Nigeria?*

Engr. Somolu: It depends on what area you are talking about. In the 1970's and 1980's, the Nigerian Engineer was really kept busy. Like I observed in one paper, again when I was president, when Nigeria had no money, they turned to the Nigerian Engineer, they used the Nigerian Engineer; then as money started rolling, they preferred to deal with foreign engineers; don't ask me why, they don't need you; so they can afford to ignore us now, and everybody wants to be an engineer, so they even made the company law. It was modified around 1985 or thereabout. It was said that anybody can take all engineering jobs, as long as you can find technical partners. If you are a lawyer, you can go and find a foreign partner and do any engineering job; but in countries that are making progress, and know the value of engineering and the engineers, they will give all their jobs to their nationals who are engineers, if he needs help, he will go and get that foreign partner. He knows in what area he wants to get the foreign partner, not just a lawyer, you just go and get an intimidating company, bring wig to come and be quoting to paint small bungalow; of course, they will intimidate anybody to give them that contract, so, Nigerian Engineers, since Nigeria started making a lot of money, have been fighting for relevance, when it should have been the other way round. Sometimes, we seem to win, like when President Obasanjo was president, I think that was our best chance, Nigerian engineers in Nigeria, be-

cause I as president of NSE together with Engr. Osoba, President of COREN then, and Engr. Shagaya then president of ACEN (Association of Consulting Engineers in Nigeria) we met President Obasanjo, and we told him the plight of Nigerian Engineers and there and then he asked us to go and bring him the memo, and we did; in fact, two other weekends, we just stayed camped in Abuja, and we drafted it met him again and presented it, there and then, he called his special adviser on organized labour or something. He formed an inter-ministerial committee and said yes, Strategic plans on Nigerian engineers, go and do this, this this that; and they went round the country working with our memo, they went into all laws, including expatriate quota how they are granted, everything was taken care of, and they submitted the report, they held workshops all over the country, they submitted their report, it was fantastic. The Federal Executive Council issued a white paper, after studying the report and it was gazetted. That was where they included local content, and NNPC and DPR, because the law creating them, gave them the ability to issue regulations in their areas of coverage; so they issued that regulation on local content in the oil and gas sector, but that is not of a general application. For example, the oil companies are now trying to go into power generation, they will build power stations; because they are oil companies, they are bound by the local content regulations, because it was issued by NNPC and the directorate of petroleum resources.

E-Newsletter: *Looking at the local content in engineering in Nigeria, what do you think will be the best approach to implement and monitor it, because one thing is implementation, another thing is monitoring to make sure that this thing is carried out to a large extent?*

Engr. Prof. Y. O. Beredugo *FNSE*, receives The Nigerian Academy of Engineering (NAE) "Life Achievement Award"



The investiture of Engr. Dr. Edet J. Amana *FNSE* as the 6th President of The Nigerian Academy of Engineering (NAE) took place on Thursday, 10th of June 2010, at The Main Auditorium, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos, . During the event, some new fellows were inducted into the academy and some fellows in the academy were awarded with "Life Achievement Award" of the academy. Among those awarded with the 'Life Achievement Award' was Engr. Prof. Y. O. Beredugo, *FNSE* who is a past chairman of the Nigerian Society of Engineers Port Harcourt Branch. The E-Newsletter team was there to cover the event. The E-Newsletter team congratulates Engr. Prof. Y. O. Beredugo *FNSE*.

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Engr. Somolu: Number one, there has to be a law, because those companies want to know if they will be preaching any law or not. I have been a consultant, my colleagues and I, we tried to work with some companies when they want to come and build power projects for IPPs; and when you tell them there is something called local content, they will say where is the law? They will say NNPC, DPR, but we are not working in the oil and gas, so there has to be a law. Then when there is a law, it is now up to the Nigerian engineers to fight to protect themselves; we have not been doing that too well we must say, but that is the synergy, knowing there is that law, then the NSE, COREN and every engineer should try. It is just a simple thing which you ask like Bureau for Public Procurement, to just pass a circular to all government parastatals and everybody that if you want to advertise for a project of interest for anybody to come and do engineering job for you, insert this; I saw a beautiful one in an advertisement by TOTAL, when they wanted to build their own power station, they put it, I think they called it, "**Fatal floor clause**" in their invitation for tender; and that was where they put the local content; that you must show evidence of local participation in your company; and they defined what local content means, not you coming to form a Nigerian company which you can register, and then you use it to cover up, no. It has to be an indigenous Nigerian company that you are working with, and you define what the responsibilities of that company will be, up to the limit that the local content law states; if it is thirty percent, you must show how thirty percent of your tender is



Engr. Somolu & Engr. Otuneh

being taken care of by your Nigerian partner who will be an indigenous engineer; so they call that 'fatal floor clause', that will show evidence that you have the local partner; and failure to do that, nullifies your entire tender, no matter how good it is, that is why they call it fatal floor. So it will compel anybody who is advertising for any engineering job to have that in their advertisement; and it is the responsibility of every engineer if you just see an advertisement, and you don't see a fatal floor clause that confirms local content, raise a flag, write, do anything, embarrass that person, they will comply; and of course, once you pick on a particular case, all you need to do is just take an example you can't fight everybody. If you have somebody who advertises and he doesn't have that fatal floor clause or whatever, and you write and they continue, then you have to get somebody inside to be monitoring what they are doing. If you ignore the thing and they go ahead and use that, if the **Due Process** office does not catch them, to say "Not approved" because you have not done it, when they move to site, COREN and NSE should be ready to embarrass them because there is a law of the country that they have gone against, you can match a group of engineers and go and stop their work at their site; get the newspapers, they will come and cover it. You create some confusion there. We have to fight for whatever we want, we can't just carry on; so Nigerian engineers must fight for what is ours and what we want. Like the ERM (Engineering Regulation Monitoring) team, it didn't work because of various things, various interpretations of who an engineer is. So it is up to COREN, they are the custodians of that law, they know who an engineer is, they can just pick an example, get their lawyers, and prosecute, and make an example of somebody; so Nigerian engineers have to fight for themselves. We cannot keep on keeping quiet, and everybody is taking our job.

E-newsletter: *Thank you very much sir, we are grateful for the time you have shared with us.*

Engr. Somolu: Thank you.

NIEEE PH CHAPTER ELECTS NEW EXCO

In the last General Meeting held on Saturday 29th May 2010 at the NSE PH Branch Secretariat, the under listed officers were elected to pilot the affairs of NIEEE Port Harcourt Chapter.

1. **Engr. Bentley T.D. George** *FNSE* - Chairman
2. **Basil Manafa** *MNSE* - Vice Chairman
3. **Minafuro Senibo** *MNSE* - Secretary
4. **Sunny Ayah** - Asst. Secretary
5. **Fidelis Nwaduwa** *MNSE* - Technical Secretary
6. **Engr. Victor Onwuasomba** *MNSE* - Asst. Technical Sec.
7. **Egere Tetenwi** - Treasurer
8. **Engr. Otuneh, Otunte John** *MNSE* - Publicity Secretary

Sign:

Minafuro Senibo *MNSE*
(Secretary)

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NOTICE! NOTICE!! NOTICE!!!

All members of NSE PH should pay their **Annual Branch Dues** of N4,500 for **Corporate Members** and N6,500 for **Fellows** to **UBA ACC. NO: 0234-031-0000962 (Port Harcourt Main Branch)**. Also pay **National Annual Subscription** of N7,500.00 for **Corporate Members** & N9,500 for **Fellows** directly to **AFRIBANK ACC No. 1420202215613** & forward all tellers to the secretariat for reconciliation. All payments should be made at the Bank