

EURO Bulletin

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 Season's Greetings  Season's Greetings  Season's Greetings 

FROM THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

Dear O.R. Friends of Europe,

In the previous issues of the Bulletin, ably I may say edited by Phillipe Van Asbroeck, there have been a number of leading articles by my colleagues. I am continuing in this vein, but in a sense beginning anew, because this is the first of a series of regular spots in which each of the new officers of EURO will talk about those enterprises which she or he is undertaking on behalf of the member societies of EURO. I just happen to be first in the series.

This time I would like to start by quoting a former president of IFORS, Heiner Mueller-Merbach who guest-edited OR Insight of March-June last year. He said, 'We prefer to offer algorithms for mathematically appealing structures instead of sitting with the problem owners and considering their real concerns'. He very kindly notes that one country is different. However even this country is not immune from the

question-posing reported in yet another country in the April 1992 issue of OR/MS Today, 'what role should OR and MS play in a changing world'.

It appears that in the USA as in European countries these are tough times for O.R. employment in both industry and academia, and it is not unnatural that the perennial question of 'synergy between academia and industry' is raised again. To many it is an important one, in particular to those who believe that OR and MS are a priori about practice; the first label includes 'operations' the second 'management'. 'We are not', they say, 'just acting as a branch of applied mathematics'. Bernard Roy said this strongly too in his speech at Helsinki on accepting EURO's Gold Medal. He said that to call OR a branch of mathematics is reductionist and cuts off OR from the milieu which nourishes it. I must say that I agree with him and from the emotional point of view we know the extreme personal satisfaction that solving a real-life problem can bring and with it the hope that this solution can help other people to repeat it in the future. As a demonstration of past successes one need look no further than to inventory control and the fact that computers in companies buying goods now talk directly to computers in companies selling the goods to them, thereby linking production schedules as they link forecasts and payments. This is something which 25 years ago leaders of the automotive industry among others declared to be impossible! It was possible then as it is practical today.

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