

MFS Speech

Madam President, Madam Chairman of the Jury, Ladies and gentlemen and let me say first of all how pleased I am that I can use the female appellation for both those offices.

In March I received an email from Valerie Belton saying that she wished to speak to me urgently. I pondered - "What could it be about; possibly a question concerning the 20 year history of EURO's agreement for publishing EJOR; possibly some obscure point about the interpretation of the EURO Constitution in international Law, but no; the news was of the award of this medal and it was, I have to say, about the last thing that I had expected. Indeed I had heard of the medal only weeks before from Jakob Krarup, its first, and distinguished recipient.

It is a very great honour indeed to have received this medal, especially since it is only the second in point of time ,and I am happy to say this evening that we are not in Reykjavik and I do not have to 'sing for my supper.'

As I look back to 1976 and the beginning of EURO, I can say that I was of the same mind as those pioneers who are still with us , including Jean-Pierre Brans and Hans Zimmerman, who hoped for great expansions in EURO, but who could not, I think, have foreseen just how far this organisation would grow in size, in influence and in esteem. For example, the number of conference attendees has increased 5 ½ times since 1976.

However, there remains one bastion that OR has yet to conquer - the European

Commission . We are not unknown to that body, I have to say. When the name of the Écu was about to be changed to the ‘Euro’, we wrote to them noting that we had that name already. They replied that they would graciously allow us to continue using it free of charge !

Actually the involvement of OR with the European Commission began as long ago as 1974, when one of my staff at the UK Civil Service Department was seconded to the European Commission. When he returned the following year for his annual review, I asked him how he was getting on. He said, “Fine; my pay has increased by 50%”. He came back next year and said, “Well I am getting on even better; my pay is now bigger than yours”. Next year he came back again and in response to my question said “Even better: my pay is now higher than that of the Prime Minister”. He did not return for a fourth time ! He joined them, but did not recruit anyone else to follow him. That is a true story.

However, many individual OR scientists have participated in EU programmes such as Tempus and Erasmus and in 2005-6 Alexis Tsoukias managed to (I quote his own words) ‘ increase the visibility of [the OR] community in ... the European Commission’ and the words ‘Operational Research’ are now officially registered there.

BUT as far as I know there are no OR scientists working as such in Brussels and no official links between EURO and the European Commission. So perhaps EURO and national societies could think about this - there are professional economists in the EC and professional statisticians. Is it not time to have some OR professionals as well ?.

Finally, I can look back over 30 years and say that it has been a privilege to serve EURO together with so many distinguished scientists , many of whom have had their contributions to OR recognized by the EURO Gold Medal, including those here today.

Operational Research has provided me with a life-long career, but EURO has provided me with something better, that is life-long friends. I hope that I have been able to give something back to EURO in return.

Thank you all again for this great honour and for listening to me this evening.

Maurice Shutler

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