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The Feasibility of a Technology Program in Surveying and Mapping

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The greatest deficiency in the education of the land surveyor is in the area of boundary law and land planning. At Purdue University, a teaching position in this area has been offered. As is the policy of most universities, the qualification established was a Ph.D. and training in land location procedures. As yet, the position has not been filled. Quoting from [a paper prepared by Professor Arthur J. McNair and presented at the 24th Annual meeting of the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping, Washington, D.C., March 16-19, 1964]:

“There is a considerable demand on the part of universities in the United States for men with graduate degree in surveying to enter teaching . . . From the statistics given, it is perfectly obvious that there are not and will not soon be prospective professors produced in the United States with Ph.D. degrees, which is what colleges now demand. The one area of surveying which is in the least tenable position is that of land surveying. There is almost no one taking studies or performing research in land surveying in the United States. Those who receive their education in land surveying in other countries have an extremely difficult time adapting to United States’ legal practices, so importing foreigners is not the answer.”

Many explanations are presented for this most deplorable situation. The time for offering excuses and explanations has expired; today we are interested in what

can be done to correct an unacceptable situation. Our concern should be action, not further discussion. It is obvious that the education of the surveyor is deteriorating while the need is increasing. If the civil engineering department cannot adequately educate the surveyor, is it not logical to try to have a separate surveyor four-year school established?

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particularly true with respect to licensed surveyors. Within the United States, there are only four states that have registration requirements equivalent to a college education. Most states require a high school diploma plus passing a written examination. After reading many licensed surveyor examinations, it can only be concluded from their simplicity that the majority of land surveyors do not need a college education to become qualified. Why should the colleges offer training where the practicing surveyors are willing to accept substandard education?

In attempting to change a state law to upgrade the educational requirements of the surveyor, a technical difficulty exists; the registration law cannot say that the education shall be equivalent to a four-year college curriculum in land surveying; no

such curriculum exists. This is like the old argument—which should be first, the chicken or the egg? If the law is changed, colleges will meet the demand.

In general, civil engineering departments will object to granting civil engineering degrees over weighted in surveying subjects, such as geodesy, photogrammetry, cartography and land surveying, at the expense of courses in sanitation, structures, etc. Also, accreditation procedures probably preclude such possibilities. On the other hand, a

School of Technology, which is dedicated to the practical and to the application of theory, would appear to be an ideal solution. Surveying is a long and honorable profession for which no man should have to apologize.

Where a school of surveying is housed is immaterial; the establishment of such a curriculum is imperative. The civil engineering departments by their past performance have decreased surveying education to a negligible point; it is not expected that the trend will be reversed. If it is necessary to have a surveying school created to adequately educate surveyors, let us do so. ■

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