

**REMARKS AT THE PRESENTATION OF
AWARDS BY THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
(TASMANIAN DIVISION)
BY
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GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
BLUNDSTONE ARENA, BELLERIVE- SATURDAY 16TH JUNE 2012.**

Thank you for once again inviting me to the annual Australian Institute of Architects Tasmanian Chapter Awards dinner. This is the third time I have been asked to take part in this very pleasant function and I am very flattered. However, whenever I am asked to attend and speak at a dinner I am put in mind of another such dinner not so long ago, that didn't work out quite as I had planned. This dinner was held at one of those up market, rather posh hotels. It too was a black tie event and the hotel one of those places with a lot of different glasses and a bewildering array of cutlery set out at each place. The main course was roast beef, vegetables and an Idaho potato. Now I don't know about you but I am rather partial to Idaho potatoes especially when they are covered in melting butter. So after the very tall, distinguished and aloof waiter put a pat of butter on my Idaho potato I asked - very politely, "Please may I have another pat of butter on my potato"? The waiter looked into the distance and said "I am sorry sir but I have orders from the kitchen to put only one pat of butter on each Idaho potato." "Please, Please" I said, "I would really like two pats of butter on my Idaho potato." Implacably the waiter intoned, "I am sorry sir, but my orders are only one pat of butter on each Idaho potato. Suddenly, my customary good manners and humility deserted me and I shouted at him, "Look my good man, do you know who I am?" "No I do not know who you are" he said

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without batting an eyelid. So I retorted, "I am the Governor of the State of Tasmania. I am the guest speaker at this dinner and I want another pat of butter on my Idaho potato." "Are you sir" said the immovable waiter. "And do you know who I am?" "No" I snapped. "Well", he said, staring at a far distant point over my left shoulder, "I am the man who puts the pat of butter on the Idaho potato."

As some of you may know my background is the law so of course this Awards dinner started me thinking about connections between the professions of law and architecture. When a graduate is admitted to practice by the Supreme Court he or she becomes an officer of the Court and his or her ethical duty lies first to the Court and second to the client. Although the lawyer has a duty to act in accordance with the client's instructions to the best of his or her ability the lawyer has a duty not to mislead the Court and to make a full disclosure to the Court. So for example, if the client tells the lawyer that he is guilty the lawyer cannot make a case to the Court that the client/accused is not guilty. Similarly if the lawyer knows of some precedent that is unhelpful to his client but the opposition has not drawn the precedent to the Court's attention the lawyer has a duty to draw it to the attention of the court even though it is against his own client and so on.

So, what of the duty of the architect? Of course the architect has a duty to the client but is that all? This issue was discussed at a

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session of the Ditchley Foundation¹ a couple of years ago. The issue was “the value and functions of architects for advanced democratic communities”² and it led to a discussion about the nature of architecture and about the difference that good architecture can make to the human habitat. The Ditchley Foundation discussion reached two conclusions with which I expect most will agree, firstly that there is a “link between buildings and the overall spirit and health of a community,”³ and secondly, “what matters to a community is the nature of a building in its space, within a specific locality as part of town or city within a community territory in which people lived, worked, travelled and expressed their freedom while also requiring a response to the needs of an increasingly fragile planet.”⁴

It seems not surprisingly, that there was strong support for the argument that architects are no more than servants of the clients and practised their profession without any obligation to society in general. Those who took that view accepted that good architecture did make a difference to the human habitat and that the nature of a building in its space was important, but said those, albeit important matters, were the concerns of politicians, town planners and others; not architects. But is that right? A different view of the architectural

¹ The Ditchley Foundation was established by Sir David Wills in 1958 to advance international learning and to bring transatlantic and other experts together to discuss international issues. Sir David’s original objective was to promote Anglo-American understanding. American and Canadian sister Foundations, set up in 1964 and 1981 respectively, remain the most active partners. Since then Ditchley conferences have broadened to include the concerns and participation of nations all over the globe.

² How do Architecture and Society Relate? <http://www.ditchley.co.uk/page/346/architecture.htm>. Accessed 8th June 2012.

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*

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profession was taken by others who said that architects had a duty to practice their profession not only in accordance with their client's instructions and in compliance with the regulatory authorities, but also with regard to the importance of aesthetics, functionality, sustainability and the feel good factor. All easy to say of course but these are areas in which there is plenty of room for differing and disparate views. But I don't think that it can be denied that those architects who accept that responsibility and who strive to have regard to aesthetics, functionality, sustainability and the feel good factor as well as the client's instructions have an opportunity to make an important contribution to their community.

As this year is the Queen's Jubilee one cannot help but think of Prince Charles when embarking on this debate. Now I know that he is not as photogenic or charismatic as Prince William, and sometimes taken for a fool, but closer examination will show that he has, over the years, made important contributions to this debate, especially through the work of his Foundation for Building Community.⁵ As you know he has been very critical of the work of British architects in modern times and excited the ire of the British Institute,⁶ but he is clearly of the view that an architect has a duty much wider than that he or she owes to the client. In the introduction to his book⁷ he frankly admits that his criticisms of modern architecture which, in his

⁵ <http://www.princes-foundation.org/>

⁶ However it may be that he has recently been forgiven by the RIBA because he was invited to deliver the address at the RIBA Trust Annual lecture on 12th May 2009!

⁷ A Vision of Britain – a personal view of architecture by HRH Prince of Wales. Doubleday 1989

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opinion often resulted in buildings that were at odds with their localities, were directed at the architects because, and I quote him“.... It was the architectural establishment, or a powerful group within it ... who set the cultural agenda.”⁸ He wrote that it was not the local councillors or developers who persuaded the architects to adopt the modern ideas, that the Prince claimed had no regard nature of the building in its space within a particular locality, but it was the architects who “deliberately staged a revolution within their own organisation and their own system of government.”⁹

Well, I find it an interesting debate; one that can occupy hours of discussion, but this evening’s gathering is to celebrate the best of the work in this State of the architectural profession and there is much to celebrate. I thank all those who nominated the 27 projects for an Award. I know it takes time, money and effort to do that but without the competition there would be no Awards. I congratulate all the winners and thank the jury for what I am sure was a very difficult task. And although last, by no means least, I thank all those sponsors who have made the Tasmanian Chapter of the Institute’s Annual Awards possible.

⁸ Ibid page 9

⁹ ibid.