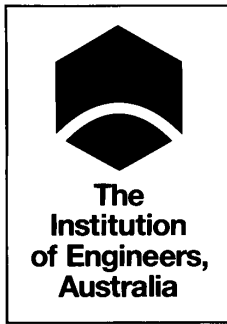


Please distribute widely to Professional Engineers – Pin up on notice boards etc



Victoria Division

Engineering Heritage Branch Meeting and AGM

Engineers and the Political Realities of Major Water Projects

Robert B. Johnson

Thursday 18th October 2001

5:30pm for 6:00pm

John Connell Auditorium, IEAust Headquarters,
21 Bedford Street, North Melbourne

The speaker, Robert Johnson, will discuss the history of some early major water projects. In Australia during the nineteenth century engineers faced extraordinary challenges when implementing major water supply schemes. Unlike similar projects overseas, which were privately funded, almost all Australian projects were funded by colonial governments. Schemes were debated in parliaments in political climates which could change rapidly.

Large scale irrigation schemes were first launched in Victoria, but the magnitude of the problems the schemes encountered was such that they became the subject of two separate Royal Commissions in the 1890's. After Federation and a terrible drought, the irrigation crisis led the Victorian Government to establish a radical Water Commission, headed by three experts free of political influences. Two engineers played a pivotal role in ensuring that this new organisation would become firmly established. George Swinburne steered the controversial Bill through Parliament while Elwood Mead, Chairman of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, succeeded in introducing intensive irrigation and closer settlement despite vitriolic opposition by landowners.

Robert Johnson is a graduate in civil engineering from the University of Melbourne with extensive experience in water engineering and large dams. He spent 19 years with the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission in the design and construction of large dams including Eildon, Eppalock, Nillahcootie, Bellfield and Buffalo. He was with the Commonwealth Department of Works for 10 years, working on hydraulic projects in the N.T., New Guinea and the A.C.T. and review of State water projects submitted for Commonwealth funding. He was Secretary of the Australian Committee on Large Dams. Robert also spent 5 years with the Department of Water Resources, Victoria working on the allocation of water resources of the Thomson River to Melbourne, Gippsland and the environment, and providing advice on dam safety strategy for Victoria.

This activity has been arranged by the Engineering Heritage Branch of the Victoria Division IEAust and should be of interest to all with an interest in Engineering History.

If you would like to receive **Engineering Heritage Victoria** flyers by email, contact:
sandie@primus.com.au

Visit our Engineering Heritage Victoria website:
<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~engherit/>

Also see the IEAust 'Green Pages' for other Engineering Activities
http://www.ieaust.org.au/directory/divisions/victoria/green_pages.html