

(Part 3 the Building Control Act 2007)**LEGISLATING FOR TASTE?**

In this paper we wish to counter the proposition that an explicit assessment of design skills is necessary for the reinstatement of 'Grandfathers' as architects in the State.

You will know that explicit assessments of design are attempted within the present Technical Assessment (TA) process for architects.

Our contention is that those judgements on design are inevitably made *ad hominem*.

Technical Assessment is conducted by a small number of part-time and inexperienced appointees. As we do not live in a totalitarian state, no such group, no matter how distinguished or favoured, can lay claim to being the arbiters of architectural design - most particularly when personal livelihoods hang in the balance.

Nor can the task be likened to an academic design appraisal (which can claim legitimacy).

Our projects are not studio assignments which are conducted within the declared parameters and objectives of the teaching world.

These are real-world commissions where a far wider audience is needed in order to consider the question "Is it badly or is it well designed?".

We ask you to consider these points:-

- First, and on the broadest of fronts, the Act refers to a Technical Assessment, not to an Aesthetic Judgement. This distinction gives specific meaning to the word 'quality' in S.22.7.b of the Act viz 'technical quality', which is of course open to impartial assessment.
- Second, just a moment's thought reveals that the very idea of an objective design standard in architecture is ludicrous.
- Third, any notion that there exists, nonetheless, a reliable and relevant Royal Standard to guide the lay assessors is disproved just by looking around, wherever you might be in the country.
[Also see 'The Destruction of Dublin', Frank McDonald, Gill & Macmillan 1985:-
ESB p.22; Hawkins House p.41; BIM HQ p.183/4; Merrion House p.190]

Surely it can be agreed that TA was intended as an inclusionary route for professionally-trained architects - for those who studied on-the-job and had already achieved lawful market acceptance before the new, exclusive legislation existed.

We certainly do not believe that the Oireachtas enacted registration as a Statutory means for burying us good and proper.

In any new, viable solution, the Minister should not continue to allow a tiny group of part-timers to sit in judgement on the adequacy of a person's architectural skills.

Certainly examine the extent of an applicant's design work, at the number of clients, at client referrals, at independent references, at the number of successful planning applications and also at the absence of litigation, at tax or insurance records, at relevant alternative qualifications or accreditations, etc.

Those are all relevant matters for the purpose of assuring the public that we should be reinstated. Whereas, *the ability to create architectural designs that satisfy the Article 46 aesthetic (and technical) requirements* is implicitly demonstrated through each person's extensive record of tangible achievements drawn from many years of actual work and success in the profession.

Non-Irish EU 'Grandfathers' have the right to automatic registration in the State.

They achieved their National registrations and then EU recognition through inclusive and realistic assessments, uncoloured by vested interests.

We, Ireland's hugely experienced 'Grandfather' architects, are all the State has for preventing a monopoly in architecture - and a monopoly is the ultimate expression of a "sheltered profession".

- Restore competition and diversity in architecture. Support innovation. Amend the Building Control Act 2007 -