Børge J. Ramboll's speech at Ramboll & Hannemann's 25th anniversary celebration on 15 October 1970

Somewhere in our company magazine I have noticed that for our young capable draughtsmen there is no difference—almost no difference—between the gray times on earth and the time when our company appeared in the light—they are only two movements in infinity before their time.

Other of our employees at that time were babies, small children, older children, some have been adults.

Most people love to tell stories, and it can be very funny, especially for themselves. Here I have the opportunity to tell not only stories but history - for the then unborn, for the babies, for the little ones and for the older children.

I have succumbed to the temptation to say a few words about the days when our company was born – without expanding it too much like some Saxo Grammaticus [Danish historian and theologian, author of the Danish Chronicles, ca. 1150-1220, red.].

It was a strange time in 1945, the enemy - it is a word that many here only know from history books - the enemy was on his way home on foot, slowly crawling along, out of the country. On May 5, when the Germans capitulated, I was inside the Polytechnic University, and the city was in an excited, in an agitated state.

Still, it was a day among other days, as usual I went down to Østerport Station to take the train home. Shots sounded from the harbour, some gunboats were sunk, the capitulation had not yet been enforced completely. The train was stopped on the stretch past the Frihavn area, where they were shooting, I walked out to Hellerup Station. Freedom fighters came honking in their cars, two men lying with machine guns on the car bonnets, one man was killed just outside Østerport Station, apparently by a German who had not yet surrendered. The informants were chased and then taken with hands tied behind their backs through the street on the bed of trucks to the ridicule of all the people. At a radio shop I stopped, King Christian X's voice sounded out into the street, he had begun his freedom speech for his people.

And there I went, while history was being made around me.

I had, as I said before, been inside the Polytechnic University, where Hannemann and I had for some reason gone up on the flat roof - probably to look out over the liberated city. I don't know if you remember, Johan [Hannemann, ed.], over there in Odense, that we stood there on the roof and talked about the company that we wanted to form.

Don't think that we saw big visions, we didn't imagine that we would sit in a large circle like today, we hardly called it a company, just talked about how it could be fun to try to design a little on our own. While the history of Denmark was forming around us, a very small local history of our company began to sprout.

I could take another step back, both in the history of Denmark and in a way also in the company's history. On 9 April 1939, when Denmark was occupied, I was employed by Professor Nøkkentved, who, among other things, designed the radio masts here in Denmark. We had just dug a hole for the very first guy rope foundation for some masts in Herstedvester. When Denmark was occupied, all non-vital work was immediately stopped. But so optimistic or unrealistic were those in the group around these radio masts that they imagined the war would soon end and that in the not-too-distant future we could move on with the other foundation holes. A far-sighted man, or perhaps just an animal lover, remarked that no matter how long it took before we could move on, a cow could fall into the hole and break her legs. With this motivation, we decided to refill the hole.

About five years later, sometime after the end of the war, the Broadcast Engineer Service approached our then budding company and asked if we would be responsible for the completion of the interrupted mast installation. We dug the hole again and all the other holes, cast foundations and the masts came

up. It was wooden masts back then. When the next masts came, and they soon followed in an uninterrupted flood, it was steel masts that Hannemann, who at the time was engaged in building bridges with Professor Engelund, threw himself into the task of designing, and he got the idea to design the masts in solid round bars.

I can see that if I continue this way, it will be a long time before I reach the 25 years to the present day, so I jump, more or less elegantly, right forward to our time, to the current situation.

We started this morning in silence - without the presence of photographers, who are passionate about photographing two people toiling at opposite ends of an envelope - we started by handing over a gift to Terre des Hommes, which is an international movement, whose main mission statement is to bring immediate and effective help to the individual child in acute need. The Danish branch of Terre des Hommes has just bought an old school on Als, which is to become the backbone of an international children's village for disabled children from countries where an acute disaster has made children sick and homeless. We have been involved in looking at buildings for purchase, and the case has caught our interest.

We knew it would be in the press, but unfortunately it has been pushed out too soon. It was our intention to inform all our employees beforehand; We regret that those who should have known it first have had to read it in the press.

The money comes from a small foundation that we secretly founded in 1963, it bears the neutral name Jubilæumsfonden af 1963 [The Jubilee Foundation of 1963, ed.]. In addition to the company's owners, the Foundation's Board of Directors includes Supreme Court Judge, Professor, Dr. Jur. le Maire, who sits next to Jytte Mogensen; I myself have the pleasure of having Mrs Le Maire by my side. The firm's frequently used lawyer, High Court Attorney Jørgen Baden, who sits next to my wife, is also a member of the Foundation, and its business manager, Knud Lauridsen, who is seated next to Mrs. Baden at the table, has secured a favourable position.

The company. What is its position today?

I wish that all our employees could rightly go around and say the words that I heard spoken last week in a company of peers in Stockholm:

> "I didn't say our company is the best, I just said I don't know anyone that's that good."

But it is just wishful thinking or words that you could say if, for example, you were given the task of formulating a sentence about your own excellence.

In the midst of the jubilee rush, I will not hide the fact that it may be difficult times for consulting engineers.

In recent years, I have attended a number of meetings between consultative bodies in other countries. There is a Nordic association called RINORD - it was here that I was at a meeting last week in Stockholm - and there is a worldwide association called FIDIC, which has members from 20 countries. Most of them from Europe, among others Denmark, but the United States is also involved, Australia, South African states. It is a large association, which in total from the 20 countries contains 900 members, i.e. owners or similar from consulting engineering firms, and the total staff behind it is approx. 150,000.

The Danish Association of Consulting Engineers, FRI, is about 60 years old, and many countries' local associations are of a similar age. Consulting engineers are thus a well-recognised and established profession. Nevertheless, the word 'survive' has been used for the consulting engineers many times in the last few years in our own circles.

As an example of a circumstance which may make life more difficult for the consultative profession, I can mention the industrialisation of building elements, which - I think very naturally - means that contractors who know their own element factory and machine capacity better than others organise their own production, including design. A construction company, with which we also work very well, has just

celebrated its 25th anniversary and, among other things, had a well-known architect comment on the future in their anniversary publication. I quote: "The road is being paved for the turnkey contractor, the company that both designs and produces, and the 1970ies must be expected to be the decade in which this form of organisation broke through in our country."

It is not at all impossible that such an arrangement is rational from a social point of view, so consulting engineers should hardly fight this form of organisation.

But consulting engineers must find their place in this landscape. For example, builders who have many systems need to choose an impartial expert to assess them and to make sure that he really gets in scope and not least in quality what is promised to him.

There are other tricky conditions. For example, we are beginning to feel the competition from abroad. Not so pronounced yet, but many manufacturing companies are already under foreign influence.

Not surprisingly at this time of economic crisis, the authorities have begun to take an interest in our fees and therefore also in wages. Before long, I predict, consulting engineers will participate among themselves in tenders, i.e. competitions just like contractors. This may mean that the most rationally run companies will come out on top, but it can certainly also mean that those who do the least with their design will come in with the cheapest price.

Consulting engineers and other liberal professions, where there are no values that can be depreciated with the new tax policy, have received a very emotional blow. When a company like ours and many others are constantly growing, there must still be investment. The investments come from the profits that the owners seem to be raking in. But with the new high personal taxes, which swallow up 60% of the money to be invested, and there is no doubt that the 60% will grow, soon it will be maybe 70%, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to invest enough for a natural growth. In addition, with the introduction of withholding taxes, the money falls due the moment it is earned, whereas previously there was about 1½ years delay.

This development may not be so pleasant to listen to, but it is extremely serious, so serious that we estimate that the company cannot live with it. In addition, there are the incalculable difficulties that will arise in the event of a change of ownership, which sooner or later must come. If new holders have to pay off the previous ones, there will be incredible liquidity problems. No one will probably buy into a company where, at the same time as they have to pay out the old owners, they also have to pay the taxes that fall due with fairly immediate effect, when the internal values of the company are settled. Intrinsic values are partly furniture and buildings, but to a very large extent these receivables are the reason the company can receive money month after month to pay for wages.

For more than a year, the company's current owners have been working on the company's future status, with the help of several accountants and lawyers.

We have come to the conclusion that from the New Year, the company must - i.e. from 1 January 1971 - change its status in the following way:

1. The company becomes a limited company.

2. The company's current owners are given salaried status and are paid with a salary.

3. The company becomes a so-called "Self-Governing Institution". Shares, dividends and profits are owned by this "Self-Governing Institution", which is the company's owner, and the money is primarily to be used to run the consulting engineering company Rambøll & Hannemann.

The main advantages of this scheme are as follows:

Firstly, the profits that the "Self-Governing Institution" receives, and which are to be used for investments, should not be taxed according to the high personal tax rate, but according to the limited company tariff, which is only just over half. That is, there will be more left over for investments.

Secondly, you ensure that there are values in the company itself to run the company for, both now and in the future. The company is independent of a change of ownership, because such a thing does not exist. You can say that the generation that at a certain point is an employee of the company has the values of the "Self-Governing Institution" to work with and possibly expand the company for. But they can't take anything with them. Those who manage the company, so to speak, borrow the money from the company, and can use it for the benefit of this. But also for the benefit of oneself, because the better it is financially for the company, the greater fees the company can bear.

I will not hide the fact that the company's current owners are still the ones who manage t. But we have a responsibility to the Companies Act, and as paid directors, we cannot do as we please. We will try to use our right of disposal so that the company, which is now no longer ours, can live and prosper today and in the future.

