

**USA NEEDS TO TAKE MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN
INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS***

The US approach toward the development of standards in the international arena needs to be improved and unified. The American Society for Nondestructive Testing (ASNT) is predominantly a volunteer-driven professional organization with approximately 10,000 members engaged in the engineering discipline of nondestructive testing (NDT). In the area of standards development, ASNT's mission includes the development of personnel qualification and certification standards. We are active in the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in this area, and we formulate the USA's position for the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) through ASTM's Subcommittee E07.91, which serves as the ISO Technical Advisory Group for the USA.

In the 1960s, ASNT developed *ASNT Recommended Practice No. SNT-TC-1A* for the qualification and certification of nondestructive testing personnel. This recommended practice has been adopted by several codes and standards groups here in the USA, including ASME's *Boiler and Pressure Vessel Code*, and is widely used today, particularly in the nuclear industry. It is also referenced in many military standards. On the international scene, SNT-TC-1A became the model for many other countries to develop their own national NDT personnel certification standards. In fact, it is the single most widely quoted and referenced NDT personnel certification document in the world. Last year ASNT completed the work on a new consensus *ASNT Standard for Qualification and Certification of Nondestructive Testing Personnel* (Document No. ASNT-CP-189). This standard has been submitted for approval as an ANSI standard. We are also presently developing a system for the accreditation of NDT programs.

Since the late 1960s, ASNT has been involved with the international harmonization of NDT personnel qualification and certification programs. These efforts have been centered in ISO. The USA (i.e., ASNT) held the Secretariat of ISO Technical Committee 135, but gave it up to the USSR—quite frankly because in the mid-1970s there was not a lot of interest here in the USA to support our efforts. The formation of Subcommittee 7 (SC-7) on Personnel Qualification was initiated by the USA (i.e., ASNT) and we held the Secretariat, but relinquished it to Canada, again due to the lack of support here in the USA.

The USA is in a very weak position in the international standards arena because, alone among the major industrialized nations of the world, the USA provides virtually no centralized support for American participation in ISO technical activities. Hence, American efforts to achieve international standards which are consistent with the best domestic practices frequently fail. A volunteer society like ours cannot fill this immense gap alone. We need the support of others as well as the support of the government.

We believe in the voluntary standards development process in which all participants have an equal voice. Standards development must not be dominated or directed by any special interest group or

* From ASNT President George Morans testimony at hearing on Improving US Participation in International Standards Activities (sponsored by NIST, US Dept. of Commerce), Washington, DC, April 4, 1990.

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by the federal government. However, we need the support of the US government. For example, we need the government—in particular, the Dept. of Commerce—to promote the use of US standards. The government needs to “market” our efforts and to use its influence with foreign governments to promote US interests. We could also use tax relief related to our international standards development efforts. Why not use this as an incentive to demonstrate government support?

The often-cited rationale for not providing government support is that industry should support these efforts because industry is the potential beneficiary. This rationale is faulty because American industry, by and large, has not been cognizant of the process of standardization, its benefits, or its role in trade. Even among enlightened companies, company support for standardization activities is often available only for standards that pertain directly to the companies’ own products; as a result, support is neglected for the test method standards, personnel qualification and certification standards, laboratory accreditation standards, and the like, without which product standards can accomplish little.

To achieve a “level playing field” in international trade—which is crucial to the nation’s economy in the 1990s—it is necessary that government, industry, and societies like ASNT support international standardization activities. It is the entire nation, and not just the industrial sector, that will benefit.

It has been suggested that a US organization similar to the Canadian Standards Council be formed. I am not sure we need yet another governmental entity to provide assistance as much as we need government to properly support the efforts presently under way. It would seem that entities presently exist within the government, within industry, and within technical organizations like ours that, if properly focused and if given proper long-term incentives, would promote the use of US technology worldwide.

With increased US attention being given to the European Economic Community, and with the rapid changes (and opportunities, I might add) taking place in both Eastern Europe and Asia, the importance of international standards is finally becoming evident to many who in the past just didn’t care or who just considered the short term.

ASNT applauds the efforts of the National Institute of Standards and Technology and the US Dept. of Commerce to seek better ways to provide international harmonization of our standards. This, in turn, will benefit US industry and the US economy. As we all know, the USA needs to maintain its position in the world marketplace. The active cooperation and support of government together with that of industry working toward established and clear long-range goals while harnessing the full energy of the voluntary standards development system is needed to position us for the 1990s and beyond.