

## **AMBSC Meeting: Barry Potter, the Chairman's addendum**

The proposed Duplex code has been seen by some as a convenient excuse to discredit Les and me. They have spread unsubstantiated doubts about the suitability of Duplex for miniature boilers, and have deliberately ignored the science and metallurgical evidence presented in its support. To the best of my knowledge some of these people have had little or no practical experience with boiler making or Duplex steel, and yet they have claimed to know more about it than the scientists and professionals that have had years of experience with the material.

It was stated to Vic Work safe that a model locomotive boiler had been observed with red hot firebox walls, and with model firebox temperatures being that high Duplex would be working well outside its safe temperature range. This is an obvious untruth as any boiler with red hot firebox walls would have contained pressures well in excess of 2000psi and at these temperatures any copper boiler would have failed dramatically. This, along with deliberately planted doubts, of the competency of the AMBSC executive, has resulted in many months delay in the acceptance of our codes within that department.

I must stress to this meeting that had it not been for the dogged determination of Les Irvine, all Victorian clubs would have been out of the steam business for a long time to come. It was not just Duplex boilered engines that were banned but all copper and carbon steel ones as well. I repeat. The interference by members of the miniature railway fraternity to deliberately derail the introduction of the Duplex code, has resulted in many months delay in the reinstatement of all of our boiler codes in the state of Victoria.

The panic merchants have been never ending in their efforts to spread doubts about the suitability of Duplex steel if used in model fire boxes, stating that after some use they would crack and explode in a shower of duplex shards. This is complete and utter nonsense and has been disproved time and time again by the people that know this material.

If the supposed danger of duplex cracking inside the firebox makes the material unsuitable for the purpose, and should be outlawed, then the same should be the case for Briggs boilers as there *have* been several failures with circulating devices with some resultant injuries. When this failure occurs it sometimes blows a portion of the fire out through the fire hole door.

There have been statements that Les has only developed the Duplex code to create a business for himself. Les has spent a good deal of his own money and a great deal of time on the development of this code. It is unlikely that he would ever recoup the many thousands of dollars that he has spent so far.

How many among us would be prepared to do the same?

It has also been stated that any person engaged in the commercial activity of constructing boilers for gain should not be eligible for election to AMBSC executive positions.

If Les is a commercial builder then what am I? I have made about 60 copper boilers ranging from about 3 to 107 pounds in weight and have also built over 50 engines to go with them. Building steam locomotives was my main means of financial support for over 30 years.

Between us, Les and I have had more experience with model boilers than almost any other AMBSC boiler inspectors. Surely it is better to have experienced builders in executive positions than inexperienced people that can't handle the issues with practical knowledge.

Some insist that only a professional Engineer should be in any AMBSC executive position. This would greatly restrict the number of people available for executive positions and if the professional engineers were not experienced model boiler builders, how could they help when practical advice was needed?

A good deal of the work performed by the executive is in helping boiler builders with their queries and assisting boiler inspectors when difficulties arise.

It has been very distressing to see the way that Les has been maligned and treated with suspicion when he has worked so hard on a code that will ultimately be of great benefit to the hobby.

In my opinion Les is an ideal person for the position of AMBSC secretary. If there is a need for some obscure technical information Les will track it down and he has a real knack for finding the right person to contact whether in industry or government.

So far about all the thanks that he has got for his efforts as secretary and the developer of the Duplex code have been insults. While there has been a good deal of private support for his efforts, the great majority of noisy public and internet comments have been negative. We both don't need, or appreciate the amount of stress that has been forced onto us.

While the recent situation in Victoria has largely been as a result of a departmental oversight, the AMBSC executive has not been entirely blameless. It seems that for many years there has been little or no contact with some of the state departments since the codes were last updated. The revising of all of the codes and the introduction of Duplex has resulted in all of the state departments being contacted and reminded of our existence. It is a lesson for the future. Keep in touch.

I personally took on this thankless task to give something back to the hobby that has been so good to me. From day one I have been treated with suspicion by a small number of the model engineering fraternity. It was even suggested that past AMBSC records should not be passed on to me as I was not to be trusted.

I deeply regret standing for the position of AMBSC Chairman, but unfortunately the steam side of our hobby cannot operate publicly without a governing body such as the AMBSC. Our recent experience with Victoria Worksafe has highlighted this.

If the experience that both Les and I have had over the last 5 years is replicated with incoming board members, the steam hobby will have a very bleak future. Any person standing for an executive position will have to have a very thick skin and be prepared to face a vicious onslaught if they propose any real progressive changes to the hobby. The vast majority of club members are reasonable and fair people however the majority must stand up against the small minority that are having such a disruptive influence on the hobby. Failure to do this could end up with the state Worksafe departments revoking our pressure vessel and amusement device exemptions. Things are no longer as free and easy as they were in the past.

If any of the people that have been involved in the above mentioned undermining of both Les and I, are present at this meeting, and have the courage of their convictions, please stand up and move a motion of no confidence in the current AMBSC committee. If such a motion is successful, I would take great pleasure in vacating my position of AMBSC chairman immediately.

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