



# International Bauxite Association

*Interview by RMR*

In this interview Henry O Bovell, Secretary General of the IBA, gives his views on the achievements of the IBA, its role in the present economic crisis for the bauxite exporting countries in the "Third World", and on the future of the organization.

**RMR:** This year, IBA is celebrating its tenth anniversary. What are the most important achievements of the organization so far?

**The Secretary-General:** The most important achievement of the IBA since its establishment is general recognition in the industry of its position as an authoritative source of information on the world bauxite/alumina industry. This recognition is due largely to the work of the Secretariat which disseminates valuable information on various aspects of the bauxite/alumina industry. Much of this information appears in the IBA Quarterly Review and in various technical publications on the industry. The IBA also serves as a focal point for the exchange of relevant information among Member Countries and with various industry analysts and institutions concerned with the industry.

**RMR:** The major bauxite/alumina consuming nations and the leading transnational aluminum companies reacted with varying degrees of hostility when the IBA was founded. How have your relations with them developed since then?

**The Secretary-General:** The hostility of consuming nations and companies resulted largely from misguided perceptions about the intended role of the IBA. Given that the IBA was formed at a time when OPEC was flexing its muscles and developed countries were traumatized at the prospect of supply disruptions of strategic raw materials, the attitude of these groups was understandable. Since then, the IBA by its responsible policies, has demonstrated its concern for the health of the aluminium industry as well as for the interests of its members. In order to understand the industry better and to be informed about the legitimate concerns and interests of consumers, the IBA has initiated dialogue with interested transnationals and has participated in efforts to promote dialogue between producing and consuming nations. Cases in point are the Ocho Rios Conference on Bauxite

*The symbol of the IBA.*



(1980) which was sponsored by the IBA, and the UNCTAD Preparatory Meeting on Bauxite convened within the framework of the IPC.

**RMR:** How has the present global economic crisis affected the role and work of IBA? What is your most urgent problem today?

**The Secretary-General:** The global economic crisis has impacted adversely on the industry in terms of a fall off in the growth rates of aluminium consumption, significantly higher energy prices and unprecedented costs for greenfield facilities. These developments have occasioned moves on the part of interested transnationals to restructure the industry along lines compatible with the changed realities. The restructuring taking place in the industry is likely to involve the mothballing of old high-cost facilities, the relocation of greenfield facilities to cheaper energy surplus areas and the introduction of new technologies to reduce production costs. These developments have influenced the direction of traditional bauxite and alumina flows with varying effects on the industries of Member Countries. And the most urgent problem facing the IBA today is to assist Member Countries to adjust to this new situation with minimal

The interview was submitted to RMR by the IBA in September 1984.

*Henry O Bovell, Secretary General  
of the IBA.*

adverse impact on their domestic industries.

**RMR:** What are your relations with other producer associations such as CIPEC and APEF?

**The Secretary-General:** IBA maintains relations with most producers' organisations including CIPEC, APEF and OPEC. These relations take the form of exchange of information on matters of common interest and exchange of visits by officials of our Secretariat as occasion demands. IBA officials have also attended meetings of CIPEC organs as observers. As one of the older producers' associations, the IBA has assisted newer producers' associations like APEF and ATPC in elaborating their basic constitutional instruments.

**RMR:** What are the relations of IBA to IPAI?

**The Secretary-General:** The IBA has working relations with IPAI which include the use on a reciprocal basis of statistical data prepared and published by these institutions. Where appropriate, the IBA has sought advice from IPAI on the development of relations with interested transnationals.

**RMR:** What are the main problems facing the IBA in a longer perspective?

**The Secretary-General:** The main problem facing the IBA in the longer term is to assume the role of catalyst for the development of the bauxite/alumina/aluminium industry in Member Countries. Successful discharge of this role would require changing external perceptions of risk in Member Countries with a view to developing indigenous energy resources for resource based down-stream development of the industry. The difficulty inherent in this role is aggravated by low levels of technical education, inadequate infrastructure and external debt burden of most Member Countries which militate against them as candidates for new investments.



After graduating from High School, I joined the Guyana Public Service in 1952 in the Magistrate's Department and rose to the rank of Clerk of the Court for the West Demerara Magisterial District. I later served in the Ministries of Trade, Health, and then in the Office of the Prime Minister as an Administrative Assistant. In the Prime Minister's Ministry, I served as Secretary of the National Defense Board, and in 1967/68 pursued a Management Certificate Programme at American University in Washington D C. In 1969 I was transferred to the Ministry of Finance and left there as an Acting

Principal Assistant Secretary for the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources where I was confirmed and promoted as a Permanent Secretary in 1978.

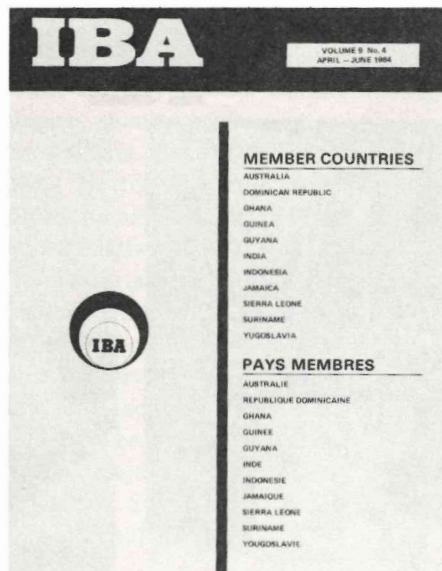
During my public service with the Government of Guyana, I undertook several training programmes. In 1976-77, I studied Public Administration at the University of Guyana and graduated with a Diploma in Public Administration in 1977. In 1980 I attended a programme of transnational studies at George Washington University in Washington D C, followed by short internships at American mining and mineral Corporations to strengthen my appreciation for corporate management and to become more conversant with corporate ethics. I also pursued a senior management programme at the University of the West Indies in 1981.

It was at the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, now the Ministry of Energy and Mines, where I was exposed to the IBA, becoming a member of the Board in 1979. In 1981, I was elected Chairman of the Executive Board and served in that capacity for the year 1982. I was elected Secretary-General in 1983.

My hobbies are swimming and gardening. I have a deep interest in agriculture and cultivate a small farm as well.

I am married and have four grown children, equally divided among the sexes.

*Henry O Bovell*



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