



# The Russell Currie Trust: Opportunities and awards for IMS members

**R**ussell Mackenzie Currie was one of the early pioneers of management services, credited with having first used the term work study.

He was born in Glasgow in 1902, the seventh child of John and Rachel Currie (John Currie was a cotton yarn merchant). After his education at Kelvinside Academy, Glasgow; Fettes College, Edinburgh; and at the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, he became an engineer with the Lukwah Tea Company of Assam where he stayed from 1924 to 26. He then went on to be assistant distribution engineer at the Shanghai Waterworks Company, rising to engineer in chief by 1942. He was technical adviser to the Far Eastern Empire Group Conference in 1940; undertook a special mission to Washington on supplies to the Far Eastern war theatre in 1941; he was interned by the Japanese in Shanghai from 1941 to 42 but was exchanged for a Japanese prisoner captured in Africa. Currie then joined Associated Industrial Consultants and played a part in reorganising companies (mostly shipyards) for war production. Immediately after the cessation of hostilities in 1945, at the request of the UK government, he returned to Shanghai for six months and helped restore the local water supply.

Perhaps his most important role was at Imperial Chemical Industries, where in 1947, as senior assistant technical director, he developed what

became known as work study. Currie's success in this role provided the foundation for his wider professional achievements.

The techniques of work study are important; but just as important, however, is that Russell Currie fostered their fair and proper use with the full force of his enormous enthusiasm and persuasive personality. He insisted on applying all techniques with integrity and honesty and he managed to restore and revitalise approaches which had become suspect due to misuse and neglect. Where necessary, he developed and adopted new techniques to form a complete 'kitbag'.

Underlying all that he did was a strong pride in ICI and a firm conviction that the company should lead the way to national prosperity. He 'sold' the concept of work study on the strength of ICI's own financial performance, citing it as an example of what happens when modern approaches to performance improvement are systematically applied.

In 1957 Earl Mountbatten, First Sea Lord of the Royal Navy sought Currie's assistance in setting up a Naval School of Work Study. Currie also assisted the British Army and Royal Air Force in setting up similar establishments. He also advised governmental departments, some of the nationalised industries, some trade unions, and many sections of private industry. Wherever necessary, he helped them establish their own

work study organisations. His great work in this respect was recognised when he was awarded a CBE in 1957.

Overseas, his enthusiasm infected ICI's subsidiaries and spread beyond them in their respective countries. As a consequence he was invited to introduce work study and national productivity campaigns in India and Canada. He also became the first president of the European Work Study Federation, as well as having been the first president of the British Institute of Work Study a few years earlier.

## The Russell Currie Travelling Fellowship

Following his death, in order to perpetuate his name, the Russell Currie Travelling Fellowship was set up under the control of a Charitable Trust. The IMS agreed to carry out all the clerical work connected with the Trust and an appeal was launched for funds under the patronage of Earl Mountbatten of Burma. This proved successful and has funded the activity of the Trust ever since. This activity has largely been to fund scholarships for young management services professionals to make short visits overseas for study and research. One condition of the scholarship has always been to provide a report on the visit for Management Services. For a variety of reasons the scholarships have been less frequently awarded in more recent years and the trustees of the Charitable Trust have been thinking about ways in which the fund can be more flexibly and more

creatively used.

The Trust has the simple, fundamental aim of 'supporting productivity promotion and improvement. In future, the Trust will make financial grants available to:

- Support management services professionals (who are members of the IMS) to make short visits overseas for study or research. (This is the way the fund has been used so far.)
- Sponsor the IMS Productivity Improvement Award – to be judged by the Trustees and awarded annually to an IMS member. (See later text for more details.)
- Sponsor or commission research furthering the promotion or practice of productivity improvement. Preference would be given to research undertaken by members of the IMS, but funding can be given to non-members at the discretion of the Trustees.
- Sponsor the award of a Russell Currie Medal to be presented to a non member who the IMS consider has made an outstanding contribution to productivity

promotion or improvement in that year. This will be awarded on the recommendation of our president John Thurso.

**How do I make a submission to the Trust for support?**

If you wish to be considered for a scholarship to cover the costs of a short overseas visit for study or research, please send a submission to the secretary of the Trust at the Institute's head office in Lichfield (full address below). This submission should include:

1. Name, membership number and contact details of person making the submission. (These contact details must include an email address via which all correspondence will be made.)
2. Brief descriptive identifier of the activity for which support is requested, including any specific outcomes. (These must include the production of a report/article for Management Services.)
3. Start and end dates for the proposed visit.
4. Proposed costs and specifically the

sum of money being sought from the Trust.

**The Institute of Management Services Productivity Improvement Award**

The IMS Productivity Improvement Award will be given to an organisation to recognise a particularly successful deployment of management services techniques by a team (which includes a member of the Institute of Management Services) to make a demonstrable improvement to the productivity of an organisation (or part of an organisation).

Awards are considered annually and the Trust is now inviting members to submit applications to be considered for the award by 28 April 2006. Full details of the Productivity Improvement Award appear on page 19 together with the address to which applications should be sent.

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