ILLINOIS ARBORIST CERTIFICATION[1]

by John R. Hendricksen

The Illinois Arborist Association, chapter of I.S.A., has within the last twelve months established a certification committee, established a start up fund of $2,000 and adopted conceptual policies directing the committee's activities with regard to certification. It is the intention of this presentation to review the circumstances leading to the decision to support a certification program and the problems and solutions encountered along that path. Please bear in mind, the Illinois Chapter is the newest chapter of ISA being less than two years old.

Background. The state of Illinois has had a licensure law governing the examination and issuance of "Tree Expert" licenses since 1957. This law was administered by the same state agency that licensed numerous professions from horseshoers to C.P.A.'s to physicians.

The law provided for a written examination given by a board consisting of five persons: two commercial Tree Experts, one municipal representative, an entomologist, and a plant pathologist. This board gave the examination, reviewed the qualifications of applicants and was to hold hearings regarding the suspension, revocation, or refusal to issue licenses.

The law provided for Class B misdemeanor penalties for violations in addition to injunctive relief.

This law was repealed in July of 1983. This repeal was greeted with mixed reviews within the arboricultural community. Some license holders were happy to see it go because of a perception that it had become a political football outside the control or influence of the industry. Some didn't care, others were sorry to see it go as it did offer some level of measurement of a person's arboricultural knowledge at some point in time.

All of this is history. I relate it to hopefully prevent the same failure and frustrations occurring in other areas. The law was fraught with faults and had been amended on numerous occasions attempting to correct previous oversights. Each amendment seemed to raise as many problems as were solved. The arboricultural community never seemed to be properly involved to get these questions answered. Political expediency seemed to be the rule.

The major disillusionment within the profession with the law stemmed from the following:

- Lack of enforcement. The act did not give any authority to the licensing agency to control unlicensed individuals or companies. The local state's attorneys felt they had much more pressing issues to prosecute than who is working on what tree. Complaints were usually dealt with by a cease and desist letter and nothing more.
- Difficulty by practitioners to pass the test. Often more than 50% of the applicants would fail the examination. Some questions were controversial and the impartiality of the board was questioned. The industry was rarely consulted.

There were a number of other provisions within the law that bred contempt within the arboricultural community. One was a blanket, automatic issuance of a license to a degreed forester. Another was a company license that allowed a license holder could "sell" his license to allow someone else to operate.

This disillusionment grew to the point where there was discussion within the Illinois Commercial Arborist Association, a group of approximately 35 commercial arborists, of establishing a certification program outside governmental control. The law was repealed as a surprise to us last summer. We managed to put together a two day quickie testimony in favor of keeping the act but it failed to sway the legislators or the governor.

The law was repealed because it served as a sacrificial lamb to the concept of deregulation,

1. Presented at the annual conference of the International Society of Arboriculture in Quebec City, Canada in August 1984.

was uneconomical and difficult to administer, and someone individually complained to his representative.

Certification. The loss of the law lit the fire under the certification idea. The formation of the new chapter gave us the broad base of commercial, municipal, and educational arborists for support. The new board questioned policy but never the concept of certification.

All of the usual hopes are held that certification will improve professionalism, raise our image, develop better credibility, create standards, etc.

At this point our program has borrowed heavily from other people's work. We have borrowed concepts from Texas, Penn-Del, Kansas, and heavily from a study on certification funded by the Illinois Landscape Contractor Association. Professor Bill Nelson, with the University of Illinois Landsape Architecture department, spent several summers and many miles travelling, interviewing, and researching certification. This report (of several hundred pages) has been of enormous help.

We expect to hold our first examination next spring. The examination is to cover two levels of certification, Tree Worker and Arborist. The experience requirement will be one and two years respectively.

The first examination is expected to be administered in spring of 1985 following the conclusion of our annual Arborist Skills Workshop. This class has been held in the evening for approximately twelve weeks during the winter. This class will be restructured to be more in line with the certification test.

The test itself will be approximately 300 questions, multiple choice or true false. These questions will be drawn from a pool of 1200 to 1500 published questions. The idea for this came from the FAA and their approach to the written portion of pilot testing. This will eliminate questions raised about the impartiality of the examiners and/or the integrity of the examination. Our feeling was that if someone would go to the trouble of memorizing that many questions and answers, they would have found it easier to study for understanding.

Question review and administration of the certification process would be through an independent certification board consisting of seven members representing commercial, municipal, educational and outside interests. The entire certification procedure will be voluntary with no review of working standards. It was felt that the review of other arborists work would be counterproductive and a terrific opportunity for subjectivity and controversy.

We addressed a number of controversial issues. They were:

- Grandfathering. It was felt that as this program was voluntary and to give the certification away without qualification would diminish the credibility of the program, there would be *no* grandfather certifications.
- Insurance. The committee left insurance *out* as a requirement, feeling that it would be difficult to verify coverages after certification. Proper limits and coverages would not be within the board's expertise and would be a matter of opinion.
- *Membership in IAA.* This issue has not been resolved but the current tendency is to leave it out as a requirement. The potential for restraint of trade would exist if membership became a limitation to practicing a trade.
- *Pesticide training.* It was felt as this was already administered and licensed through an existing agency, it would *not* be a requirement. However, technical questions about pesticide applications and pest control would be part of the examination.
- *Renewal.* Continuing education *was* established as a renewal criterion. Exact guidelines are yet to be developed.

Our entire process has leaned heavily upon Mr. Jim Fizzell of the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Office. Other chapters considering certification would be wise to utilize cooperative extension and interested horticultural schools as much as possible.

The committee's course of future action includes the establishment of administrative procedures, review of testing procedures, assist in the development of appropriate training programs widely available, and the promotion of the program and concept both to the industry and the profession.

In conclusion, I believe certification will be successful if it is taken to be a positive benefit of

belonging to this profession. If it is to be used as a control or restraint on competition, it will doomed to failure.

The concept of certification should be considered as a milestone of achievement and not as a "loftier than thou" attitude. The purpose is to upgrade the ability of practitioners. Good competition will widen the market. Exclusion of bad competitors will never occur as a result of certification.

Public awareness is a necessary ingredient and a publicity campaign should be a simultaneous effort. This again should be positive in approach.

The ISA should take the leadership role in promoting consistent certification that can be regionally administered. The more broadly based the program, the more credible it will become.

Hendricksen Tree Experts, Inc.
2131 S. Foster Ave.
Wheeling, Illinois 60090

DEVELOPING ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS[1]

by Dennis L. Lynch

Abstract. Arboriculture in the public or private sector consists of more than tree care. It includes the administration of all services provided by a company or agency. These services are a combination of the technical, human, and conceptual skill resources of the employer and employees. These skills can be identified for arboriculture activities and obtained by recruiting formally trained people or can be developed through a variety of training programs.

If someone outside the professions of arboriculture and urban forestry asks you, "What type of work do you do?" you probably have a ready response. It may be, "I provide tree care for clients," or "my company provides total landscape care," or "my agency assists citizens with urban tree management and planning." Those and similar responses might describe in a very brief way what you do, but, if you think about it you really do much more than that. You most certainly coordinate people, equipment, materials, and resources to provide useable services and products. That requires a great deal of administrative skill if you are to be successful. When you invest in a piece of machinery to improve tree care, you carefully investigate its construction and performance to make sure it can do the job safely, correctly, and efficiently. Have you ever examined your administrative skills or the skills of your employees in the same way? After all, it is not just machinery that insures success, but its proper use, its coordination with other operations, and the way the whole job is accomplished.

Categories of Administrative Skills

In the management of a private business or the administration of a public agency there are three categories of skills that are important to recognize. Katz (1974) identified these as

1. Presented at the annual conference of the International Society of Arboriculture in Quebec City, Canada in August 1984.