And while he was specifically talking about selling your products or services, it made a great impact on how I think about steel and AISC. When we compare steel and concrete, we often talk about cost—but we probably shouldn’t bother. Instead, we should be talking about value.

We should be talking about the value of using an AISC Certified Fabricator or Erector. We should be talking about the value of using a material with known and predictable characteristics. We should talk about the value added from a simple and clear Specification and Code of Standard Practice.

Talking about cost is too limiting—and frankly, often irrelevant. Comparing the cost of a framing system isn’t enough. How does that frame impact the speed of the project, how does it impact the foundation, how does it impact the construction process and how does it affect the total cost of the project?

And value starts with knowing the quality and capabilities of your fabricator. When I talk with members—whether they’re fabricators, erectors or structural engineers—I mostly hear about AISC’s great programs. But I also hear two major complaints.

The first is that one party to the contract too often wants to modify the Code of Standard Practice. And the second is that the contractor tries to waive certification requirements.

And whenever I hear about the latter, I realize that we’re dealing with a contractor more concerned with cost than with value. AISC’s Certification program is designed to provide value through quality to both specifiers and program participants. If you’re a structural engineer, I urge you to read Chapter N of the AISC Specification and Chapter J of the Specification for Structural Steel Buildings. As Charlie Carter, AISC’s vice president and chief structural engineer, stated: “Clearly, observation of bad practices will result in increased inspection. However, Chapters N and J go further; they require measures that are intended to prevent poor work in the first place. The requirements for written procedures and qualification of workers result in more uniform and effective quality control and assurance practices.”

And what’s the best way to ensure your fabricator has the written procedures and worker qualification to complete your project? Through specifying AISC Certification—and refusing to allow contractors to waive the requirement.

Want to know more about Certification (either as a specifier or a program participant)? This year’s NASCC: The Steel Conference (March 25-27 in Nashville) offers a Quality Track. Check out one or more of the sessions (they’re listed under Q in the program). To register, simply visit www.aisc.org/nascc. Or visit www.aisc.org/certification to learn more about the program.

SCOTT MELNICK
EDITOR