

Final comments

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Final Comments

Commentaires finals

Schlussbetrachtungen

Hans WITTFOHT

Chairman
Technical Committee
Frankfurt, FRG

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The days of the 12th Congress of the International Association for Bridge and Structural Engineering come to an end with this session.

I hope that all of you have gained something to take home for the benefit of your own work. I feel that anybody who is willing to learn could get some stimulation - listening to the lectures dealing with interesting theoretical and practical details of the construction business or looking at the wide range of engineering in the construction of bridges, buildings and other structures and taking home at least an impression of what is going on in the arctic ocean or across the inland seas between Honshu and Shikoku. Let us light the candle of innovations which Prof. Pozzi showed us and be aware of the fact that in our day to day business rough winds around us will blow it out. To stay with this figurative comparison, we have to be prepared with a lot of match-boxes to light the candle again and again.

Especially in the last morning session we got an idea about what is really inventive today and what could be expected in the 1990's! I am sure that we will continue to have new ideas and methods in design, fabrication and construction and we will also find more new types of structure. Whoever believes that construction engineering is at the end of its resources is wrong. The foundation of knowledge reached in these days will launch further innovations and improvements, and we are now only at the beginning. From the "innovative impulse" to the "follow up" and the "circulation with modifications and improvements" we have to consider that possibly many years will pass.

The present time is a time of concern - a time which both challenges and holds for the IABSE an innovative future. All are therefore called upon to contribute as much as they can towards a successful future of IABSE, even if the immediate future forbodes a time of increased effort against the economic downturn in many parts of the world. IABSE works for the benefit of civil engineering. At least all those may profit who are interested in its improvement. Let us recognize that construction activity plays an important role in the technical development of the world. Its absence would be unthinkable in our modern world.

Every civil engineer should always be aware of the latest technological developments. Therefore, it is essential to make known quickly our latest findings, pointing out trends for the benefit of our professional activity, even if corrections and modifications might be necessary later. We live and learn, so we depend on perpetual adaptation. We must set ourselves the goal of ensuring the quality of our construction. Mistakes encountered in the past should be eliminated and the experience thereby gained employed for the further development



of engineering. The requirements of quality are concentrated towards the "scientific base", the "construction material" and the "construction method". Simple clear working procedures facilitate control of quality by the construction worker and the engineer. Practical constructions permit and facilitate maintenance and repair. We must particularly direct our efforts towards the increasingly important problem of construction in an aggressive environment and work towards prolonging the life span, either by improving its composition and structure or by protecting it from external attack. Here is an area for future research. Nevertheless, compared with the history of construction as a whole, our modern construction methods are very young indeed. It is, therefore, to be expected that mistakes will be made. With the volume of construction being carried out around the world, the total number of actual construction failures has fortunately been small in comparison with the past number. This is in contrast to the occasional portrayals by the media.

The global exchange of experience made possible by the IABSE has always provided a rapid and effective dissemination of know-how. Our IABSE publications contribute in a large measure to this. Of particular importance in this connection are the commissions set up to investigate specific problems encountered in our constructions and to ensure the dissemination of state-of-the-art know-how. In the future we will publish in the IABSE PERIODICA introductions on the problems encountered. A "problem statement" should be given by the competent commission chairman or another selected author, followed by four short contributions from different experts stating opinions, proposals and solutions. The conclusions may provide a basis for the work of the commission.

The time has come for us to put the image of the engineer in its true light. Engineers are not causing environmental problems by applying their techniques - rather the continually increasing number of people in the world. On the contrary, engineers try hard to solve such problems. Here, it is possible after having solved some problems, that further problems arise. As long as the expansion of the population in our world cannot be stopped, there will always be a succession of new problems. Our only hope is that we will be successful in solving all these problems in good time. A very important part of this operation is assigned to civil engineers and the construction enterprises.

Modern construction techniques have been adopted by almost every country in the world. While those in the industrialized nations have already collected primary experience in the field, other nations, with the number of such applications rapidly multiplying, are looking for suitable methods and solutions. We have to compare the "high-tech" tools available and the needs of each country, depending upon the level of their industrialization or the challenge of specific task. It needs all efforts to have a successful improvement of cooperation between countries of different development, with results from which the construction business can benefit all over the world.

And let us always have in mind:

"Every new day is the first day of the future!"

Let us take up the challenge.