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Autor: Golay, A.

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Dialogue

A number of challenging conferences are under preparation in IABSE. In addition to the regular annual Symposia, other smaller meetings will take place in the coming months. The themes of these conferences show that the interests of the profession and of the membership are changing over the years. Doubtless this is natural and welcome:

«Remaining Fatigue Life of Steel Structures» Lausanne, April 1990:

It is not many years since Universities started teaching students that structures were not built forever and that they would need maintenance, rehabilitation, repair and even demolition...

«Mixed Structures, including New Materials» Brussels, September 1990:

After decades of «philosophical separation», it has now become evident to almost everybody that construction materials may join in a «teamwork» in order to offer their respective advantages to the joint venture...

«Structural Concrete» Stuttgart, April 1991:

The time has now come to bring all kinds of concrete applications under one heading: «structural concrete». For decades specialists have investigated down to the last detail different rules and applications for concrete structures: reinforced, prestressed, posttensioned concrete, with «conventional» or «new» materials. It seems now that they all could be considered as varieties of a construction material: «structural concrete»...

«Interaction between Structures and Environment» Nyborg, May 1991:

This conference is a good example to show that the engineer cannot design perfect structures that will be only beneficial to society. Engineers have eventually realized that their constructions do have an impact – positive and negative – on the environment. They have to learn better to evaluate the consequences of their projects...

When IABSE was created 60 years ago, the main questions were to better understand the behaviour of steel or concrete structures and to make progress in structural design and analysis. The situation has changed, new problems have arisen, new solutions have been found. We must not be afraid to adapt to the needs of society, today and tomorrow, not only in Central Europe where the IABSE was founded in 1929 – but all over the world.

This is the challenge, that we all are trying to meet, the members of IABSE concerned with the Long Range Planning and of all other Committees.

From time to time, we get enquiries from members who do not know how to get actively involved in IABSE activities. Naturally, at an international level, opportunities to meet personally with colleagues are limited. Our committees meet once or twice a year, normally preceding Symposia or Congresses. This tends to result in a slowing down of our activities. Publications, however, remain a means of communication of great value: and we would like to invite you to submit a paper if you feel that it would be a worthwhile contribution to the development and exchange of international knowledge in the field of structural engineering: this is exactly the reason for the existence of your association. Get in touch with the Publications Committee or directly with us at headquarters.

In the last Bulletin – and also in a press release that we mailed to technical journals and societies – we cited the conclusions of the Chairman of the Scientific Committee of the IABSE Symposium on the «Durability of Structures», in Lisbon September 1989. One of the points in a long list was the following:

«Concrete structures in a harsh and hostile environment are superior to steel structures with respect to durability and structural longevity provided the concrete is properly designed and placed.»

This seems to have been interpreted by a reader as a general statement of IABSE of the type «Concrete is good and steel is bad»! The IABSE does not exist to promote one construction material rather than another. IABSE wants to improve the use of all construction materials, as well as the cooperation of specialists of different fields, countries, linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Our columns are open to a dialogue...

The IABSE staff joins me in wishing you a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

A. Golay
Executive Director