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INTRODUCTION

The IABSE Colloquium on Advanced Mechanics of Reinforced Concrete, June 1981, in Delft included a site visit to the Eastern Scheldt Storm Surge Barrier currently under construction. A large project employing advanced mechanics, a large project balancing both safety and environment.

In 1953, the South-West of the Netherlands was ravaged by terrible floods. The Delta Plan, which was conceived in response to the disaster, was regarded as an effective way of making sure the same thing never happens again.

But as memories of the 1953 floods receded, an awareness developed that such a massive undertaking could have unacceptable consequences particularly in the light of the growing concern for the environment. After lengthy, often emotional, discussions – in which the safety aspect and environmental issues were weighed against one another –, the original plan was democratically modified. The flexibility which enabled this to happen was in itself a highly positive factor. The original Delta Plan conceived after the 1953 floods was a national achievement of the highest calibre and

so too is the plan in its modified form with a storm surge barrier in the Eastern Scheldt.

The Eastern Scheldt barrier project was started in 1974. Now the preliminary studies are over, the design has been finalised and construction has started. It is a hydraulic engineering project of tremendous sophistication involving a workforce of hundreds. The technical and organisational problems are enormous.

In 1986, when the barrier will be completed, it will be possible to look back on a huge achievement which can be summarised in four key words: flexibility, perseverance, craftsmanship and cooperation.

The completed barrier will protect the countryside surrounding the Eastern Scheldt from flooding and preserve the estuary's unique marine environment.

Let us hope that the know-how and expertise gained as a result of all the work on the storm surge barrier will also be of great value in other parts of the world.

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Note from the Editor

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