

**Zeitschrift:** IABSE reports of the working commissions = Rapports des commissions de travail AIPC = IVBH Berichte der Arbeitskommissionen

**Band:** 3 (1969)

**Artikel:** Comments

**Autor:** Flint, A.R.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-5013>

#### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

#### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

#### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 25.01.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## Comments

Commentaires

Erläuterungen

**A. R. FLINT**

B.Sc., Ph.D., F.I.C.E., M.Cons.E.

Traditional procedures used in the synthesis of structural schemes have inherently guarded against an unacceptably high, but undefined probability of failure and have afforded satisfactory performance. Acceptance of statistical reasoning has been hindered by lack of reliable data. Moreover the designer must allow for factors not yet amenable to mathematical treatment - for example inaccuracy of calculation, errors in communication, variability of workmanship and inspection, and prediction of future usage. Recourse must therefore at present be made to hybrid bases of design, employing empirically assessed load factors against attainment of limit states.

A statistical approach is leading to more rational specification of "characteristic" strength and may currently be used to treat certain types of loading, such as that due to wind. The margin of safety to be provided between design load and strength remains chosen to maintain the standard of performance provided by traditional methods.

Limit states, other than that of collapse, are seldom clearly defined owing to inadequate "feed-back" from users. It is the responsibility of the designer and user jointly to establish the performance requirements and the design life.

Analytical methods adopted should aim to represent the behaviour of a statistical sample of identical structures both under service conditions and up to the stage of loading at which collapse occurs. Idealized "elastic" treatment may provide lower bound estimates of strength but may seriously waste potential capacity of ductile

structures. Plastic theories may be applied to simple systems but prove intractable in many instances where premature instability may govern safety. The statistical distributions of structural strengths and serviceability limits can at present only be assumed to be similar in form to those of the material of which the structures are composed.

In an attempt to translate recent thinking on safety matters into workable directives for designers the Study Committee on Structural Safety of C.I.R.I.A. has published guidance to Codes of Practice committees and others in the use of limit state procedures. While not explicitly commanding a probability basis, the recommendations include the variation of load factor with nature of collapse and with accuracy of calculation, and characteristic strengths of materials are statistically defined. Both the new unified Concrete Code and the new Code of Practice for Bridges, currently being drafted, are adopting these procedures. Design studies have indicated that significant economies in amortized cost may be expected to result from the more rational approach.

Major users are actively studying the limit states to be considered for their structures and are accepting the principle of design on a probability basis. The climate of opinion is therefore favourable to change. It remains for the designer to be provided with the data he needs to put into effect the philosophy under discussion.