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Engineering Forum

The Technical Committee of IABSE has decided to start a feature called "Engineering Forum". The purpose of the forum will be for an exchange of ideas and information between the Technical Committee and members of the Association.

At each Technical Committee meeting the various members of the Committee give short presentations on matters of engineering interest which are currently significant in their countries. The Committee feels that members of IABSE would be interested to hear these problems and a selection of them therefore will be printed regularly in the IABSE PERIODICA. Those members who are stimulated by the information they see and wish to comment, contradict or contribute like experience are invited to write to Headquarters in Zurich expressing their views. The best of their letters will be printed in the IABSE PERIODICA and, if appropriate, comments will be given by members of the Technical

Committee relevant to the topics which have been discussed.

The first appearance of "Engineering Forum" is presented in this issue of the IABSE PERIODICA and we hope that membership will afford a good response to this initiative. A successful "Forum" will inform members in general terms concerning some of the worldwide developments whilst the Technical Committee in return will receive relevant comments from the membership of the Association.

No doubt, out of the exchange that occurs, ideas for future state-of-the-art reports, publications, symposia and even congresses may arise.

Please support our initiative.

B. P. Wex
Chairman,
Technical Committee of IABSE

No way out?

In several continuous prestressed concrete beams constructed spanwise, cracking has occurred at the coupling joints. This has led to a legal dispute between the Federal Republic of Germany and the building contractor concerned over the costs of repairs. The courts decided that the contractor had complied with all the regulations and directives and had used up-to-date techniques, but must nevertheless bear the repair costs, since he should have produced a defect-free structure.

At the same time, the same owner refused to pay for additional steel which in a similar structure had been used to prevent such defects since, according to the regulations it was not necessary. This contradiction that, on the one hand, a contractor can be forced to comply strictly with the current codes

and regulations and then, in addition to this, make him liable for unforeseen or unforeseeable defects, cannot remain. Total liability and responsibility on the one hand demands complete freedom in the choice of methods on the other.

As for the rest, the concept that a crack in reinforced concrete construction can be considered a defect must be rejected since this contradicts the basic philosophy and definitions of such structures. A clarification lies in the general interest of all those involved in the building process.

Hans Wittfoht
Vice-Chairman,
Technical Committee of IABSE