

Message from the President



Jim Forbes, *President of the fib*

It is indeed an honour for me to be elected as President of the Fédération Internationale du Béton.

It is interesting to note that I am only the second President of the *fib*, or its founding organisations, FIP and CEB, to come from outside of Europe (the first being Ben Gerwick from the United States, who I was delighted to see in attendance at the Osaka Congress when I took over the Presidency).

I thank the members of the Presidium of *fib* for the confidence they exhibited in nominating me for this position, and the support and encouragement given to me by Honorary Presidents, Jan Moksnes, Michel Virlogeux and Joost Walraven.

It is highly significant that I, as an Australian, follow Joost Walraven, a Dutchman, into the Presidency of *fib*. It may surprise many of you to know that the Dutch were the first Europeans to discover Australia, some 200 years before the British, and for many years what we now know as 'Australia' was referred to as 'New Holland'. I trust I will *not* be referred to as 'New Walraven'!

As we move into the fifth year of the formation of *fib* from its two constituent organizations, FIP and CEB, there are many issues facing the concrete industry (and indeed the construction industry as a whole) world-wide.

The construction industry itself has changed rapidly over recent years and is still changing. One of the most important and far-reaching developments in the industry is the method of procurement of major projects. The days of projects being procured by the owner or government department selecting the designer, or team of designers, to see a project through concept to detailed design and then supervise its construction are long gone. This concept is now by far the exception rather than the rule. Economic considerations and the move towards larger contractors/investors, and the propensity of governments to want to minimise risk, has led to a dramatic move away from these traditional methods of procurement.

Simple design and construction contracts of the 1980s evolved into Build Own Operate Transfer (BOOT) contracts in the 1990s, and then to Public Private Partnerships (PPP) in the new millennium. Many parts of our industry have moved rapidly to embrace these new methods of procurement and particularly the changes they impose on the responsibilities for the quality of concrete structures. Engineering and construction organisations world-wide are responding to these changes and it is the responsibility of umbrella organisations such as the *fib* to be the repository for sharing information and steepening the learning curves in

countries around the world. We must all work together to ensure that innovations in construction procurement techniques receive the same scrutiny with respect to construction quality as innovations in design and construction techniques.

Codes and standards world-wide are in a constant state of revision. However, whilst codes, by their very definition, involve technical issues (and quite complex ones at that), the main topic exercising the minds of code writers world-wide in recent years has been the philosophy of codes. The discussion as to whether codes should be performance-based or should be prescriptive has been going on for some time. Should codes be simple rules like the Ten Commandments or should they be detailed textbooks that give a series of recipes to follow to get the desired result? Clearly there is no single answer, and different countries and different cultures tend to have a totally different approach to writing codes. While this may have been satisfactory in the past, the move towards globalisation and internationalisation of our construction industry does dictate a common approach to codes. Although there was a time when there were vast differences in the concrete industry in different countries, we are approaching the time when the only real differences are in the climate, and possibly this is the only area that should be country or region specific in our codes.

The *fib* for its part is embarking on an exciting project over the next few years in the total rewrite of the CEB-FIP Model Code 1990 to produce the *fib* Model Code. For a variety of the reasons mentioned above, this will be one of the major challenges in the years ahead for our organisation.

In this introduction to my Presidency I have only mentioned a few issues regarding our industry, changes to our procurement methods; internationalisation of our industry and the philosophy of codes. It is no coincidence that I have picked these three subjects as they contain a certain synergy. Simply stated, as commercialism becomes more important in the development of concrete and concrete structures, and the players become far more international, there is a real need for standards and codes to level the playing field and to ensure fair play between commercial competitors without stifling the necessary innovation that drives our industry forward.

As your new President I will continue the excellent work of Joost Walraven and his predecessors in maintaining and strengthening the position of *fib* as the leading international organisation for concrete and concrete structures.

In addition, I commit to

- Ensuring appropriate international representation on Commissions and Task Groups; where appropriate
- Increasing the numbers of younger people from our industry involving themselves in *fib*
- Increasing the number of participating member countries, particularly those from Eastern Europe and South East Asia
- Encouraging more people from the construction side of our industry to be active in *fib*

- Making the *fib* more visible in the marketplace, worldwide
- Introducing training programs, as appropriate in our member countries.

Lastly, I thank Joost Walraven for his leadership, enthusiasm and expert guidance of *fib* over the last two years.