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NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA

DIVISION OF BUILDING RESEARCH

No.

397

TECHNICAL NOTE
RESTRICTED CIRCULATION

PREPARED BY R. F. Legget

CHECKED BY

APPROVED BY

DATE May 1963

PREPARED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

SUBJECT CANADIAN COMMENTARY UPON RILEM

"R. I. L. E. M." are the initials of an international organization in the building field, its full title being La Réunion Internationale des Laboratoires d'essais et de Recherches sur les Matériaux et les Constructions. It was founded in 1947 at a private meeting in Paris (held at Les Laboratoires du Bâtiment et des Travaux Publics) which was attended by some twenty European research workers.

The start of RILEM was one of the many reflections of the sudden increase in civilian scientific research work following the end of the second world war. It was also an indication of a desire to renew the personal contacts of those with interest in the testing of materials used in civil engineering that had been effected in pre-war years through the International Association for Testing Materials.

This body was formed in 1882 and held regular international conferences, throughout Europe, until 1937 when its last meeting was held in London, England. Efforts to revive it after the war were ineffective and RILEM really took its place. It is of interest to note that an American section of IATM was formed in the United States in 1898. This arrangement did not suit American needs, with the result that this overseas section of IATM was replaced in 1902 by the American Society of Testing (and) Materials, now very widely known as ASTM.

The stated purposes of RILEM are the promotion of (1) exchanges between members of scientific publications for laboratories; (2) common investigations to prepare unified testing procedures; and (3) exchanges of research workers between laboratories (official RILEM leaflet, undated, p. 3). Its activities, in addition to regular meetings of its governing bodies, consist of the holding of Symposia (or Colloquia) on specific technical subjects. It also operates a number of Technical Commissions, and publishes a journal.

Full members are persons having "management functions in testing or research laboratories" of whom there are now about 230 from about 37 countries. Associate membership is open to any interested individual.

The governing body of RILEM is called its Permanent Commission consisting of the appointed national delegates. It meets once a year, usually in the home city of the President. A small executive (called the "Bureau") consisting of the President, General Secretary, and three other members, elected for overlapping three year terms, guides the affairs between the annual meetings of the Permanent Commission. In each country RILEM has a permanent delegate appointed by the Permanent Commission to represent RILEM in that country. This delegate will normally be present at the annual meeting among the members. In each country is each year elected a representative to attend the meeting of the Permanent Commission, and he will represent that country in RILEM apart from specialists, who can attend certain sessions of the annual meeting. The participation from each country is restricted to these two persons only. (The writer is the delegate for Canada, the United States delegate being Professor M. P. White of Massachusetts University, Amherst, Mass.)

The General Secretary is M. Robert L'Hermite, Director General of Les Laboratoires du Bâtiment et des Travaux Publics, who is assisted by members of his staff, notably M. F. Laisne. The RILEM office is at M. L'Hermite's office at 12 rue Brancion, Paris 15me. From this office is published the RILEM BULLETIN, a monthly technical journal, using both French and English, containing contributed articles, papers from RILEM meetings and (quite recently) papers contributed to a Symposium held by correspondence.

CANADIAN PARTICIPATION:

The Division of Building Research has followed the development of RILEM with a lively interest, both organizations having been initiated in the same year. In its own early formative stages, the Division was kept advised of the progress of RILEM through the British Building Research Station but it took out full membership in 1952, the Director of the Division being named as the "delegate" for Canada. Every effort has been made to attend as many RILEM meetings as possible, with the following results:

Permanent Commission Meetings:

1956	Munich	-	Dr. N. B. Hutcheon	attended
1957	Helsinki	-	Mr. R. F. Legget	almost attended*
1961	Prague	-	Mr. R. F. Legget	attended
1962	Zurich	-	Mr. R. F. Legget	attended
1963	Warsaw	-	Dr. N. B. Hutcheon	will attend

* RFL had to go to Helsinki after the Stockholm Symposium and not before and so participated indirectly, so to speak, in the Permanent Commission meeting held earlier.

Symposia:

1956	Copenhagen	-	Winter Concreting	-	E. G. Swenson
1957	Stockholm	-	Cracking of Concrete	-	RFL*
1961	Prague	-	Durability of Concrete	-	RFL

Working Groups:

C. R. Crocker is a member of the Working Group on Winter Construction.

In 1952-53 the Division took part with other European testing laboratories in the investigation of a RILEM standard cement test. The results of this work were submitted in D. B. R. Report R-32 by H. E. Evans and E. G. Swenson.

More recently, DBR took part in the Symposium by correspondence on Humidity.

SOME COMMENTS:

It is, therefore, on the basis of some degree of active participation in RILEM activities that this note is written. The first comment must be one of appreciation for the good fellowship that has been enjoyed, and the technical benefits that have accrued from attendance at all the meetings listed.

All the Symposia have been interesting: the published Proceedings (always issued as bound volumes by the host country) are useful records. Inevitably they reflect European practice, but no more so than publications of ASTM (for example) reflect North American practice.

The devotion of M. L'Hermite to RILEM must be appreciatively recorded: it is, in effect, his creation. The members will never really know how much time and effort M. L'Hermite and members of his staff have devoted to its development, but the financial statements that are available leave no doubt but that even financially RILEM is greatly indebted to his organization.

Grateful as all the members must be for this devoted effort, it does at the same time raise some rather awkward problems. Chief among these is the restriction thus automatically placed upon free discussion of the operations and the future of RILEM. This became embarrassingly evident at

* RFL had to go to Helsinki after the Stockholm Symposium and not before and so participated indirectly, so to speak, in the Permanent Commission meeting held earlier.

the Zurich meeting of the Permanent Commission when such a discussion was started. It is reflected in the fact that this note must be a private paper, for restricted circulation, at any rate in the first instance. Since, however, it was decided at Zurich that some consideration must be given to the future of RILEM, this paper has been drafted in the hope that it may prove to be of some constructive assistance.

Detailed criticisms voiced at Zurich, and of special relevance to North American participation, related to such operating difficulties as the quite inadequate notice of meetings of the Permanent Commission, the fact that no working papers (not even an agenda) were circulated in advance of the meeting, and the fact that business that could have been readily completed in two days was allowed to extend over four. To some extent this was due to the bilingual character of the proceedings. All these are matters that could readily be corrected, but financial problems are more serious.

The budget for the year 1962 was first seen by the members of the P. C. at their meeting in Zurich in September 1962. The financial statement for 1961 was presented at the same time, but it was remarkable for what it did not show rather than for what it did reveal about RILEM finances. All members of the P. C. are responsible to their respective organizations for the proper expenditure of the fees they pay. This aspect of finances did not appear to be of concern to M. L'Hermite. In view of his control of the finances and known contributions to operations, full discussion of the matter was impossible.

The unusual procedure for the nomination of national "delegates" has already been noted. Since the term "delegate" internationally connotes some appreciable degree of official status, the matter is clearly in need of correction. Elections to the "Bureau" are equally mysterious. Certainly the members of the P. C. see no evidence in their proceedings of the normal democratic operation of societies.

All these matters relate to what should be routine operations. Of far more importance has been the parallel growth of two other related international organizations. ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) may be mentioned first. This is now a truly international body, having consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Its work in the development of international standards is growing, in volume and stature, at a phenomenal rate.

Although one of the stated purposes of RILEM is to standardize testing methods for building materials, there has been little evidence of active work in this field at the meetings attended by the writer and his colleagues. Even if there were, any such standard methods would have to be referred to ISO

in order to gain any international recognition. There, in accordance with ISO procedure, they would have to be considered (again) by specially appointed ISO Technical Committees.

The other body is CIB (the International Council for Building Research Studies and Documentation) now well established with a permanent secretariat located in Rotterdam, Holland. CIB is a "non-governmental non-profit making international organization of public and private institutions and of persons ... involved in various aspects of the development of building." It has "consultative status B" with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Full members are usually the national building research organizations of the almost forty countries that now hold membership. Associate members are allied organizations but personal membership is also possible.

CIB has an excellent written constitution which is working effectively. It is governed by a twelve-member Executive Committee and officers which meets once a year. It holds triennial Congresses, meetings of importance; operates over twenty Working Commissions which may organize Symposia; and publishes a quarterly Bulletin.

THE FUTURE:

In its early years, RILEM was in essence a "club" of senior men, all personal friends, each of whom was closely connected with a major European testing laboratory. This most happy atmosphere still persists, despite the passage of the years, and the newcomers have had the pleasure and privilege of sharing to some degree in this delightfully personal aspect of RILEM.

It has been the admission of overseas members to RILEM, with their lack of inhibitions, and the corresponding very courteous attempts to broaden the base of its operations, that have probably led to what may be called the "growing pains" with which this paper deals. It would have been, however, only a matter of time before the same questions would have arisen inevitably, as the eminent senior members who were the original members of "the Club" pass from the scene due to unavoidable retirement from active work.

For many reasons, not the least of which is the "explosion" in building throughout the world which has already started, it will clearly be impossible for RILEM to continue in operation as a purely personal club, delightful though this might be. Change, therefore, is inescapable. In what direction should it be made?

Acceptance of ISO as the international standards body is a basic premise for such forward looking. There is already some overlapping of membership - Dr. Wegelius of Finland, for example, having served as

President of both RILEM and ISO - so that some clarification of the role of RILEM in relation to standards work is clearly desirable. Of more consequence is the corresponding acceptance of CIB as the officially recognized international coordinating body in the field of building research in general.

Since the headquarters of ISO, RILEM and CIB are respectively in Geneva, Paris and Rotterdam, with almost all meetings of the three bodies being held in Europe, it is quite natural that the bulk of the members - from Europe - do not yet appreciate the physical and financial impossibility of full participation in all three bodies by overseas countries, whether developed such as Canada and the U.S.A. or still developing as is the case with all the newer countries of the world which it is the stated objective of CIB (at least) to serve and assist.

Active participation in the work of ISO is now essential for all trading nations. It follows, therefore, that if international efforts in building research coordination are not to be dissipated, there is no real room for two international bodies in this field. Useful as have been the contributions of RILEM up to this time, it is clear to the writer that, taking the long view just expressed, the position of RILEM must be changed. The sooner this is done the easier will be the transition.

Two possibilities appear to be available:

- (1) Since RILEM, like ASTM, grew out of IATM, there is a clear parallelism that might usefully be followed, i. e. RILEM might accept the limited but very useful role of being the European Society for Testing and Materials. In many ways, this is really what it is, in actual fact, today. Close liaison could be effected between such a reconstituted RILEM and ASTM, the forthcoming joint (ASTM-RILEM) meeting in Philadelphia in February 1964 being typical of what could be regular joint activities. The idea of RILEM being an international organization would have to be given up, however, and some quite drastic improvements in operation would be essential. The basic idea, however, presents interesting possibilities.
- (2) Alternatively, RILEM might be persuaded to merge its operations with CIB, thus ensuring the strongest possible international organization to serve the rapidly expanding needs of international building research. Vested interests in RILEM are still not so firmly established that very much would be lost. It does not yet have, for example, an established independent secretariat. The close interests of the two bodies is well shown by the joint (RILEM-CIB) symposium already planned for Helsinki for June 1965. The wide use of the individual

membership classification within CIB would satisfactorily answer all problems of membership transfer. Amalgamation of the two Bulletins would give an international journal in the field of building science of unquestioned value.

Since the writer is not a European, he is unable to see whether there is any real need for the existence of such a body as is mentioned as the first alternative. He favours the second course, probably because of his own duality of membership in RILEM and CIB and the vision this gives of the potential of a combined body.

These notes have been written as objectively as possible, and with general international (i. e. world wide) interest in view. For the limited view of Canadian interest, ISO must be supported, as must also ASTM with its very heavy demands for meeting time - not to mention such smaller bodies as the Canadian Standards Association. Accordingly, active participation in international building research activity must be confined to one organization only and even this will be difficult to sustain with the staff available. It is clear that this support must be given to CIB. Participation in RILEM activities will simply have to be curtailed, meetings being attended only when they coincide with other duties in Europe. No precipitate action will be taken, but it is greatly to be hoped that some redirection of RILEM can be effected no later than the next meeting of its Permanent Commission in Warsaw in September 1963.