

## The Early Years of the **International Federation of Municipal Engineering (IFME)**

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### **1955**

For the first time, foreign delegations were in attendance at the IFME Congress: representing the Netherlands were Mr. J. de Jong (Tilburg) and Mr. Bronkhorst (Utrecht); and from Switzerland, Mr. Pache (Montreux) and Mr. Boniface (Lausanne).

On October 13, IFME President Marcel Caseau presented a report to committee on the recently-held *Congress of British Municipal Engineers*, to which he had been invited as an observer. He was impressed by the importance accorded their organization in England, and expressed the hope that their President would participate in the 1956 IFME Congress.

### **1956**

The Congress of 1956 opened in Vincennes on May 11. Delegations from Great Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands were present, thereby enhancing the international dimension proposed and supported by IFME President Caseau.

### **1958**

From the very beginning of his election to the presidency of IFME, Marcel Caseau promoted the concept of an increased international dimension for the Federation. He increased contacts with foreign associations having similar objectives to those of the IFME and issued invitations to them to participate in future IFME Congresses.

Several meetings were held in 1957 and 1958 to organize an international gathering of municipal engineers in Brussels during the 1958 World's Fair. It is noteworthy that the very first IFME Congress of 1937 had also been held in conjunction with the Paris World's Fair.

Accordingly, the IFME Congress of 1958 was organized for Brussels, May 29, 30 and 31, and included delegations from Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain and the Netherlands.

The French delegation, with some 60 members, was the largest group, although several members were unable to attend due to the Algerian crisis and its political impact on the French government that year. Several wives of delegates were also included in this delegation.

The Federation of Municipal Engineers of Belgium, was led by their President Mr. Defourny. He and the Count de Grunne, then-Director of the Union of Belgian Cities and Communes, were jointly responsible for the physical organization of the IMFE Congress.

The opening session of the Congress was presided over by Mr. Vermeyleen, Belgian Minister of the Interior. He was joined on the podium by the Presidents of the various international delegations present for the Congress.

Presentations, given with simultaneous translation, covered the following topics:

*The Role of the Municipal Engineer*, presented by Netherlands delegate Mr. J. de Jong; *Purification of Waste Water*, given by French delegate Mr. F. Prat; and, *Public Lighting*, presented by British delegate Mr. Granville-Berry.

Congress attendees were invited to site visits at the following locations:

*The tramways tunnel at the Gare du Midi (Central Train Station) in Brussels; The Phillips factory in Turnhout; and, City Operations and Port Installations in Antwerp.*

May 31, the final day of the Congress, was reserved for a visit to the World's Fair and the French pavilion in particular, where attendees were hosted by the pavilion's architect, Mr. Guillaume Gillet.

A large banquet, held at the World's Fair grounds, closed out this first international conference.

## **1959**

The "international dimension" of the Congress continued to be a main concern and driving force. Following the success of Brussels, the Presidents and Secretaries of the Engineering Associations of Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands and France struck a Provisional International Committee charged with preparing bylaws to govern an **International Federation of Municipal Engineers**.

## **1960**

The Provisional International Committee met in Amsterdam on December 15, 1960, to put in place the proposed bylaws for the future **International Federation of Municipal Engineers**. Present for this meeting were delegates from Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and France.

It was decided at this time that the Presidency would be held for a three-year period on a rotating basis, and the President would assume his position once the International Congress had met and selected its Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee for each International Congress would be composed of:  
The **President** of the National Association of the country hosting the upcoming Congress; The **Secretary-General** of the same National Association;  
The **Treasurer**, also of the same National Association;  
**First Vice-President** – that individual who was President for the preceding Congress;  
**Second Vice-President** – a member of the National Association of the country hosting the subsequent Congress;  
**Delegated Members** – One delegate from each National Association not already represented on the Committee.

Although at first sight seemingly complex, the Executive Committee composition would accomplish two objectives:

It would reduce operating costs while involving current and subsequent National Association Secretaries-General and Treasurers on an on-going basis; and,  
It would ensure continuity of policy and procedure by enabling a smooth transition of individuals into the office of President from one Congress to the next.

It was estimated that the annual cost of maintaining the Executive Committee would be approximately 10,000 New Francs (1960) per delegate.

The Danish delegate informed the Executive Committee that the participation of his Association in the future Federation would be conditional on the formation of a grouping of all the Scandinavian Associations.

The General Assembly of the **International Federation of Municipal Engineers** met in Paris on the occasion of the meeting of the National Congress of City Engineers of France, held on the 29 of April, 1960 at the Palais de l'UNESCO and chaired by Mr. Formery, Charge de mission, representing Mr. Couve de Murville, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The four constituent associations were:

The Federation of Engineers of the Provinces, Cities and Communes of Belgium;  
The British Association of Municipal Engineers;  
The Association of Directors of City Public Works of Holland;  
The Association of Engineers for the Cities of France;

The Danish Association deferred its immediate participation for the reasons mentioned above.

In the minutes of the Executive Committee, the Secretary, Mr. Janssens (Belgium), noted the absence of a German Association. This was due to the fact that, in Germany at that time, engineers were organized by professional specialty and the category of municipal engineer did not yet exist. He expressed the hope that the Federation would be able to find a satisfactory means by which to enter into some relationship with their

German colleagues which would ultimately lead to them joining the organization. Some approach had to be found to address the nuance of one of the bylaws discussed and adopted in Amsterdam; namely that *“the improvement of acquired knowledge of urban engineering, from technical, legal and administrative points of view need not be a principal requirement for membership in the Federation; municipal engineers with an interest in specialized branches of their profession should also be eligible for membership”*.

Thus, the **International Federation of Municipal Engineers (IFME)** was born. Its first President was Mr. Beckett, a delegate of the Institute of Municipal Engineers of Great Britain. His mission was to organize the first Congress of the IFME to be held in 1961.

## **1961**

The first Congress of the IFME was held in Brighton the 15, 16 and 17 of June, 1961. At noon on June 14, the French delegation, with about 80 members, embarked for Newhaven. No information on the size of other delegations has been officially recorded...

The British contingent at the Congress was quite large, since the Congress became, in effect an extension of a larger gathering of Engineers already underway. As was noted by delegate Pierre Dejou, *“Unlike France, Great Britain seems to conjoin two activities in one, that of their Municipal Engineers who perform the same functions as those of our (French) City Engineers, and that of the Corps of Engineers for National Roads and Bridges – responsible for the creation and maintenance of major highways, large public artworks and the like”*.

Two presentations of considerable interest were included in the program:

Mr. Tilleman, City engineer for Rotterdam, on *“The Art of the Municipal Engineer on the Continent”*; and,

Mr. Marchant, City engineer for Wandsworth, on *“The Municipal Engineer and His Future”*.

At the IFME General Assembly, the President, J.L. Beckett, said that he feared that a delay of three years between Congresses was too long to maintain and foster the interest shown in the Federation and that he hoped it would be possible to hold another congress before 1964.

A new Executive Committee was put in place.

Marcel Caseau became President, charged with organizing the next Congress of 1964;

J.L. Beckett, the out-going President, became First Vice-president;

Mr. A. Van Walraven, President of the Netherlands Association, became Second Vice-president;

Pierre Dejou and Antoine Coste were confirmed respectively for the next three years as General-Secretary and Treasurer of IFME.

The President's Ball, with formal dinner was held during the Congress. Following the close of the Congress, some delegates took advantage of a tour of London and a further two-day visit to Birmingham, Oxford and Stratford-Upon-Avon (where they attended a presentation of Hamlet).

## **1962**

The Executive Committee met to consider applications for admission from new potential association members. Municipal Engineering Associations from Sweden, Denmark and Israel were admitted to IFME.

President Caseau expressed regrets that municipal engineers from countries neighboring France, such as Italy, Germany and Spain, could not yet be admitted since constituent associations had not as yet been created in these countries. Under the rigid bylaws of IFME at that time, only associations, not individuals, could be considered for membership.

## **1963**

Between the Congresses of 1961 and 1964, the Executive Committee, composed of some dozen members, continued to meet two or three times a year in member countries.

In 1964 these meetings were held in Vincennes (May 12) and Nykobing (September 7).

Generally, these meetings concerned the upcoming Congress in 1964, but efforts to include German and Italian engineers in the Federation were unsuccessful. The Executive Committee did adopt a resolution which would allow limited and approved travel expenses of delegates to be charged back to their respective national associations.

## **1964**

Preparations for the IFME Congress of 1964 in Vincennes (May 5-7) were complete and "the curtain raised" at the French Association of City Engineers annual conference on Monday, May 4.

This Congress would host 303 engineers, of which 132 were foreign delegates. The British delegation was particularly strong, with some 89 representatives. Also included were 180 wives of delegates, for whom a special program of activities had been prepared. This brought the total number of persons participating to almost 500 individuals, all of whom had to be lodged and fed. The provision of translation services

(English and French), site visits and associated activities further complicated the logistics of the Congress.

These challenges fell on the shoulders of Pierre Dejou who coordinated efforts between the Federation and the office of the Mayor of Vincennes. He was assisted in his efforts by an Organizational Committee, which he chaired, and which included: Messrs. Lindemann, Mathon, Debuf, Robin, Le Roux, Guignon, Guinot, Bonnet, Monard Bourjon, Patez, Audrerie, Jurion, Mornay, and Mrs. Hue, committee secretary.

The original intent was that the International Congress, so minutely planned, would be opened by Mr. Roger Frey, France's Minister of the Interior. However, to ensure the presence of the Minister, this would require some 300 delegates representing 7 nations to assemble in Paris, which would clearly be impractical if not impossible. Ultimately, the task fell to his Deputy Minister, Mr. Vochel.

At the opening session, which featured a number of politicians and senior French bureaucrats, Marcel Caseau, as President of the Congress, benefitted from the presence of representatives from the Ministries of the Interior and Public Works and that of the President of ANEM to outline projects currently underway in France and deal with questions concerning any anticipated modifications or changes to these projects.

In his address, Mr. Vochel noted that between the two last national censuses the number of cities with populations surpassing 55,000 inhabitants had increased from 53 to 83, a phenomenon not unique to France. This seemed to be a general trend for all developing nations with increased demographic and industrial growth.

Of major interest were the varying responses in different countries to given problems and the reconciliation of objectives with those solutions subsequently adopted.

Papers presented by French engineers gave a synthesis of contributions from foreign engineers on a variety of subjects which had been chosen after several months of deliberation.

These papers were submitted, prior to publication, for discussion in various working groups - with the aid of simultaneous translation:

*Traffic and Parking*

**Presenter:** Mr. Eugene Pasquali, Planner and Director General for Technical Services for the city of Antibes.

**Chairman:** Mr. Antoine Quinson, Mayor of Vincennes

*City Sporting Equipment*

**Presenter:** Mr. Rochatain, Director of Sports Services for the city of Lyon

**Chairman:** Dr. Robert Herand, Director, National Sports Intstitute

*Urban Growth and Development*

**Presenter:** Mr. John Millet, Chief Engineer for the city of Nancy

**Chairman:** Dr. P. Weber, Deputy Mayor of Nancy

A program for site visits was prepared for delegates and a separate activity program was organized for the wives of delegates.

Receptions, cocktails, evening events and shows were provided by various individuals, organizations and groups involved in the planning, presentation and hosting of the Congress.

Among the festivities there was one innovative event of note – a special evening reception for some 400 invitees, offered by the President and independent of his official banquet, hosted by Mr. Pallez, Director General of Local Collectives, of the Ministry of the Interior.

On the occasion of this dinner, Marcel Caseau took the opportunity to summarize efforts made to realize the Congress by municipal engineers of seven countries and concluded his comments by noting that, in spite of contacts established over the preceding three years, new national associations had yet to be admitted to the IFME.

The final event was a “post-Congress” 48-hour excursion to visit the chateaus of the Loire, which was taken advantage of by some 80 people.

Administrative matters were not absent from the Congress. The General Assembly of IFME adopted a resolution to modify Article 5 containing its bylaws governing the definition of “municipal engineer” to include individuals who perform its function but do not carry that specific title. This was seen as an overture to neighboring countries which would bring the Federation into line with current thinking and make the organization more of a “European community”.

At this same General Assembly, the new Executive Committee was installed, composed as follows:

**President:** A. Van Walraven (Netherlands)

**First Vice-President:** M. Caseau (France)

**Second Vice-President:** A. Van Wingham (Belgium)

**Secretary-General:** J-J Pennock (Netherlands)

**Treasurer:** G. Maas (Netherlands)

**Delegated Members:** M. Kenyon (Great Britain)

Mr. Eriksson (Sweden)

Mr. Amiaz (Israel)

## 1965

The Executive Committee met twice, in Amsterdam and in London.

Spanish and American Associations became candidates for admission to the Federation.

A conference held that year in Menton did not succeed in attracting Italian engineers, in spite of contacts and efforts made previously. This once again showed the difficulty faced by the Federation to achieve a "European dimension"; while the addition of the Americans was largely a by-product of the political and military alliances formed between the United States and Britain during the cold war.