

OPENING BUSINESS MEETING 9 JUNE 1997 REPORT OF THE CONTINUING COMMITTEE

T. Nolan¹

¹ Teagasc, Athenry, Ireland

The First Business Meeting was called to order and presided over by the Chairman of the Continuing Committee, T. Nolan

Members of the International Grassland Congress, it is my privilege to present this report on the activities of the Continuing Committee since the XVII International Grassland Congress in New Zealand / Australia in 1993. I thank the members of the Continuing Committee for their serious efforts to advance the well-being of what the late Ray Brougham called 'This great Movement' through their advice and guidance and particularly for their prompt attention to the many requests put to them.

I thank and congratulate the Canadian Organising Committee on the excellent programme which they have prepared for this their first Congress. They have shown true interest in Congress and generosity through sponsoring and/or assisting participants. This assistance was particularly directed towards young scientists but also included myself and some members of the Continuing Committee. Following a meeting with representatives of the Organising Committee during the V International Rangeland Congress at Utah in July 1995 it was evident that preparation was well in hand at that time and now the full bloom of all of their work is before us. It has been my pleasure to work closely with our Canadian colleagues and in particular with the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the XVIII International Grassland Congress, Dr Bert Christie, who was most helpful at all times.

Proceedings of the XVII International Grassland Congress

On behalf of the Continuing Committee and members of the International Grassland Congress I congratulate the New Zealand / Australian Organising Committee of XVII International Grassland Congress for the prompt publication and circulation of the three volumes of the Congress Proceedings.

This is a most important component of the Congress. Its timely publication ensured that there was ample opportunity to reappraise the various contributions while the experiences gained during attendance at Congress were still fresh and for those who could not attend to quickly update from this important source. The Proceedings have registered a marker of the state of knowledge and future outlook for world grasslands at that time. During the past four years they have also served as an important reference and guide for grassland scientists, commercial farmers, land use policy makers and farming industry in general.

Venue for the XIX International Grassland Congress

In accordance with Rule (6) (D) (ii) two bids were received to host the XIX International Grassland Congress in 2001, one from China and the other from Brazil. A ballot of the Continuing Committee members was carried out according to Rule (6) (D) (ii) and a majority was secured by Brazil. Therefore I now declare that the XIX International Grassland Congress will be hosted by Brazil. This will be the second Congress for Brazil having hosted the IX Congress in 1965. I am informed that the very appropriate Theme will be 'Grassland Ecosystems - An Outlook Into The XXI Century'. On behalf of the Continuing Committee and all members of the International Grassland Congress I congratulate Brazil and wish them every success. The year 2001 will be special for Brazil as it coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the Sociedade Brasileira de Zootecnia

(Brazilian Society of Animal Husbandry) and the 100th anniversary of Ecole Superior de Agricultura "Luiz de Quiroz", University of Sao Paulo. During the Final Business Meeting Brazil will present an invitation address to all members.

On behalf of all members of the XVIII International Grassland Congress I thank China for their great interest and much preparatory work devoted to the preparation of their bid. It is only a matter of time until China will host the Congress.

Constitution of the International Grassland Congress

Resolution passed at the XVII Congress

In accordance with Rule (6) (D) (iv) action was taken to modify the Constitution to accommodate Resolution 1 passed at the XVII Congress as follows. Resolution 1 stated

1. It is recommended that the next Chairman of the Continuing Committee formulates amendments to the Constitution to be presented to the XVIII International Grassland Congress with the effect that:
 - (i) the venue of the next Congress will be determined by a simple majority of votes of the Continuing Committee, using a preferential voting system (single transferable vote) if necessary.
 - (ii) the names of the heads of the delegation of each country, which are needed for dealing with amendments to the Constitution, shall be submitted by the time of the Final (and not the First) Business Meeting.

The following changes have been made to the Constitution of the International Grassland Congress at Rule (6) (D) (ii) to accommodate Resolution 1(1). Rule (6) (D) (ii) now reads as follows

"The Chairman shall receive invitations for holding the next International Congress. All invitations from the member countries must be received at least one year before the ensuing Congress. The Chairman shall put the names of the proposed host countries to vote by the members of the Continuing Committee by correspondence. The names will be accompanied by details of the facilities that can be offered by these countries for holding the Congress. The venue of the next Congress will be determined by a simple majority of votes of the Continuing Committee, using a preferential voting system (single transferable vote) if necessary. The Chairman shall declare the result at the First Business Meeting for the information of the Congress. If no country receives a majority, the Chairman shall put the names of the two countries receiving the highest number of votes before the Final Business Meeting for voting according to Rule (4) (ii) using secret ballot papers which will be issued to the voting members by the Chairman of the Continuing Committee".

The following changes have been made to the Constitution of the International Grassland Congress at Rule (4) (ii) to accommodate Resolution 1(ii). Rule (4) (ii) now reads as follows

"For the purposes of any amendment to the Constitution of the Congress and for deciding the venue of the next Congress, the procedure of the United Nations, namely, one country one vote, shall be followed (definition of country as adopted by United Nations). Where more than one member of a country attends the Congress, the

Opening Business Meeting

head of the delegation only will have the voting right for the purposes of amendment to the Constitution and for selection of the venue. The name of the head of the delegation of each country shall be submitted to the Chairman of the Continuing Committee before the start of the Final Business Meeting. For the purposes of the amendment to the Constitution and for selecting the venue, a secret ballot system shall be followed.”

I wish to thank Professor Wilkins, who was involved in drawing up the Constitution in 1977, and Professor Humphreys, Chairman of the Resolutions Committee for the XVII Congress, for their unreserved assistance in this area of activity of the Continuing Committee.

Proposals for changes received since the XVII Congress

Since the XVII Congress many proposals were received for changing the Constitution and as directed under Rule (5) of the Constitution I now present them in summary format. I have grouped all proposals received under two headings, a) General comments/suggestions and b) Specific Rule change proposals. It is interesting to recall that a separate Constitution Committee never existed and initial work was done by the Continuing Committee from the Moscow Congress. A first draft was produced by the then Chairman, Professor Pandeya in 1977, with inputs by others on the Committee, particularly Professor Wilkins, in liaison with the Organising Committee for the Leipzig Congress. I propose that, having summarised them here, that they will be handed to the Resolutions Committee with a proposal that the incoming Continuing Committee establish a sub-committee to review the Constitution and to present the draft new Constitution to the XIX Congress in Brazil for adoption.

a) General comments/suggestions

- There is not a pressing need to totally rearrange the current Constitution.
- Congress is too long and too expensive - the challenge is to shorten it and preserve interest.
- Congress Proceedings cost 1/3 of registration fees - it is suggested to publish review papers only in future and a one page summary of others contributions.
- The present eleven areas are no longer appropriate. There are some oversights in the list of countries which constitute the different regions represented by the Continuing Committee members. Tunisia is not reported in Region VIII (Mediterranean) but neighbouring Algeria and Libya are. Also, Cyprus is not mentioned. The composition of the different regions could be better defined, by also taking into account the geo-political changes which occurred after the date of the first Constitution in 1977. Egypt should be more appropriately included in Region VIII, while Romania and Hungary should move from region X to region IX (Europe).
- A seed money account from the previous Organising Committee would be good to provide bridge financing (grant or loan) for the subsequent Organising Committee. This would be repaid later as income commences.
- The Constitution is cumbersome and revision is required. There are geographic problems. The responsibility for providing a revised draft must rest with the Continuing Committee and it would probably be a good thing for that to be progressed by correspondence so that there is an already agreed document to put to the XVIII Congress in Canada.
- Members of the Continuing Committee should meet two years before the actual Congress to review the progress and activities of the Congress.
- More academic responsibilities should be given to members of

the Continuing Committee. For example to identify resource persons on various themes from the regions to help in organising discussion on particular themes of Congress. The modality needs working out but the concept requires attention.

- Funds of the host country of the subsequent Congress are required to permit members of the Continuing Committee or at least the Chairman to meet with the Organising Committee in the intervening period between Congresses. This was briefly discussed in Rockhampton in 1993.
- Some Scientists in Africa, South of the Sahara, have suggested that changes in the method of choice of host country ought to be made. For instance, instead of leaving the final choice to the Continuing Committee, the whole Congress should decide at the Final Business Meeting based on a show of hands or secret ballot.
- It appears that only the Chair of the Continuing Committee does any work in carrying out its functions.

b) Specific Rule change proposals

Rule (2)

- The aims of the International Grassland Congress should include technology transfer and it is suggested that Governments and industries would give more support if this aspect were given more consideration.
- Also change ‘every 3 years’ to ‘normally every 4 years’

Rule (3) (A)

- Definition of ‘Full Member’ - it is suggested that according to Rule (5) a full member remains a full member for any period between two Congresses. If so this should be mentioned under Rule (3) (A) and if not Rule (5) should be modified

Rule (3) (C)

- It may be appropriate to change the word ‘wives’ to ‘spouses’ or ‘accompanying persons and children’ due to increasing participation of women in Congress

Rule (4) (i)

- At present it is not possible to distinguish between ‘full’ and ‘other’ members where a ‘show of hands’ is required for voting. It is suggested that use of colour cards (yes and no colours) given to full members only would solve this problem. Critical vote situations may occur in the future where such a rule will be required.

Rule (4) (ii)

- It is suggested that Rule (4) (ii) be changed to get over the problems arising from a hung vote.

Rule (5)

- It is indicated that 2/3 of the total votes must be in favour for an amendment to be adopted. Is an abstention a ‘no vote’ or a ‘non voting person’ ?

Rule (6) (A)

- Due to so many changes in some regions since the definitions in the 1977 Constitution each Continuing Committee member should provide (where appropriate) names of ‘new’ countries to update those actually present in the Constitution used at a given time.

Rule (6) (B) (iv)

- Explanation of the procedure for election of Continuing Committee members should be written in general terms without mentioning specific Congresses (e.g. XIII, XIV or XV).
- The following should be dropped. ‘The term of office of each member of the Continuing Committee shall not exceed two terms. One term means the period between two Congresses’. This situation was occurring right now with the late Dr. Brougham. It is already mentioned in Rule (6) (A) that no country can be represented on the Continuing Committee for more than two successive terms. We should add also under 6A “One term means the period between two Congresses”. So the first part of 6 (B)

Opening Business Meeting

(v) would be covered under 6A.

Rule (6) (C) (ii)

- It is suggested that the election of the new Chair of the Continuing Committee should take place during the Final Business Meeting and he/she be requested to make an introductory comment to the Final Business Meeting. During this procedure, selected at an appropriate time, the Chair of the Organising Committee would make the final remarks on behalf of the Organising Committee.

Rule (6) (C) (ii) continued

- It is suggested that all invitations from the member countries to host Congress must be received at least one year before the date set for the opening of the ensuing Congress. This wording gives more precision on the exact date. For example, Canada had to ask for precision on that date because as of now, it is subject to interpretation. Also as a consequence, two countries did not meet the deadline last time.

Rule (6) (E)

- There is no provision in the Constitution for the nomination of a Resolutions Committee although such a Committee was formed in recent Congresses. It is suggested that this amendment be included under Rule (6) (E), giving also the terms of reference of the Resolutions Committee.

Rule (9)

- The first sentence should read 'The Proceedings of the Congress shall be printed and published by the host country and forwarded to all the full members within one year after the Congress'.

Committees of the International Grassland Congress

Nominating Committee

The following Nominating Committee has been selected in accordance with Constitution Rule (6) (B) (I) to select replacements on the Continuing Committee for areas 1. United States and Canada, 2. Central America, 4. Southeast Asia and 9. Europe (excluding regions 8 and 10).

Prof. J. Hodgson (New Zealand), Chairman

Dr F. Funes, (FAO, Cuba)

Dr R. Dapkus, Lithuania

Dr Dong Am Kim (Korea, Republic)

Dr P. Singh (India)

Prof. R. J. Wilkins (United Kingdom)

The names of the new members must be handed to the Chairman of the Continuing Committee not later than 1200 h on the 17th June, 1997 and will be announced during the Final Business Meeting.

Resolutions Committee

The following Resolutions Committee has been established to collect and collate proposals made by members.

Dr R. Michaud (Canada), Chairman

Dr R. J. Clements (Australia)

Dr B. H. Dzwowela (Zimbabwe)

Dr E. Piano (Italy)

Dr E. A. Serrao (Brazil)

Members must lodge their proposals with the Chairman of the Resolutions Committee not later than 1200 h on the 17th June, 1997. It is proposed that the Resolutions Committee will endeavour to assemble the minimum number of resolutions from all proposals, without loss of content, and the Chairman of the Resolutions Committee will present them to the Final Business Meeting for decision.

Liaison with International Rangeland Congress

The Chairman of the Continuing Committee of the International

Grassland Congress had informal discussions with Dr Child, outgoing Chairman of the International Rangeland Congress during the V International Rangeland Congress at Salt Lake City, Utah, July 1995. I thank the International Rangeland Congress for their collaborative disposition at all times. The following is, I believe, an accurate account of the position which generally leads to the conclusion that all are agreed that there exists a sound basis for continued contact and discussion mainly based on the projection that ultimately a co-ordinated effort would best promote the aims of both Congresses. The basis for such a change would clearly be to 'promote interchange of scientific information on all aspects of natural and cultivated grasslands' as set out in the Constitution. Adherence to historic structures is considered unlikely to fulfil this objective.

It appears that in future increased input will be required to influence policy makers and donors of the need for greater support for research as a basis to secure improved uses of grasslands. Also it is clear from the scientific programmes of the XVIII International Grassland Congress and V International Rangeland Congress that the role of world grasslands in, for example, social and economic planning, climate change, landscape quality, maintenance of biodiversity, interaction and integration with cropping and aesthetic quality of landscapes is fully recognised and requires continued research. When these considerations are taken in conjunction with the probability of increasing difficulty in sourcing funds for Congresses the need for combined effort is compelling. Given support, grassland scientists can justifiably look forward, with the confidence stemming from their own achievements to date, to increasing our understanding of the biological, social and economic relationships involved in the grassland component of the broader biome. It appears beyond doubt that the combined presence of the International Grassland Congress and International Rangeland Congress scientists at a joint Congress would facilitate improved understanding and integration and would favourably influence all objectives to the benefit of world grasslands use. Many scientists appear to be somewhat frustrated about having to choose which Congress to attend, considering that only few can obtain funding to attend both.

The need to market the achievements of grassland research is of paramount importance. This can generally best be achieved with effect when integrated packages of information are assembled for given situations which can predictably result in improved living standards. Closer interaction between the two Congresses would favourably influence this objective. It is also recognised by both Congresses that their main objectives and scientific programmes greatly overlap and that a joint Congress would facilitate many complementary characteristics. The potential benefits emanating from such complementary activities to grassland scientists and their research is without question.

As expected some problems may also surface in these deliberations. A first action might be a joint 'World Grassland Congress' or 'World Grassland and Rangeland Congress' to be held every three years. This could be achieved without loss of identity to either Congress through allocation of programme areas under sub sections similar to the present strategy within both Congresses. Problems cited for this are mainly related to the increased facility demands for any host country. On the other hand combining present resources, increased support through improved and stronger representation and income from larger attendances could offset the increased costs.

It appears that these discussions should now enter a more formal level so that the main objective of improved promotion of grassland and rangeland science in all parts of the world can begin sooner

Opening Business Meeting

rather than later. The IRC would welcome further discussion. Perhaps it would be possible for both Congresses to decide before the selection of hosts for the VII IRC and XX IGC that the possibility of having a joint Congress would be seriously explored. The incoming Continuing Committee could select a small committee to continue interaction with the IRC to further advance discussion and collaboration on these matters.

Adoption of Continuing Committee Report

I propose that this report of the Continuing Committee be accepted by the members of the XVIII International Grassland Congress and be officially recorded in the Congress Proceedings.