
Introductory Remarks

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Introductory remarks

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The Royal Society, which for over three centuries has been the prime meeting-place for all the leading pathfinders in British science and technology, is concerned more than ever today with the great enterprise of viewing technological and scientific development and research in the total context of the needs emerging in industry as a whole. To this end, the Society's Committee on Industrial Activities, of which I am Chairman, but most of whose 22 members are Fellows of the Royal Society working within British industry, has instituted a series of major discussion meetings under the general heading 'Technology in the 1980s'.

One clear object of these meetings is to focus attention upon those developments and researches now in progress that relate to the needs of a particular industry and that seem so important that they are likely to transform some aspect of the technology of that industry by (say) the 1980s. An even more important aim is to look ahead, in the light of all the information we have about not only technological but also general developments in that industry, and to try to forecast its expected character and problems in the 1980s in an integrated fashion, that can give real help in planning today's research and development effort.

The Royal Society decided to concentrate attention for the first of these Discussion Meetings upon an industry of prime significance for the whole life of the country: the building industry. The Society is delighted to welcome a very large and distinguished audience to our meeting on 'Building technology in the 1980s.' I and my fellow organizers, Dr Pepper and Mr Bakke, are also particularly happy to welcome an exceedingly authoritative group of speakers, coming from many branches of the industry, as well as from governmental research and development organizations and from universities.

In all these three categories I wish to give an especial welcome to certain outstanding authorities from overseas: from American and Swedish industry in the form of Mr William McGrath and Dr Bo Aler; from the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Administration in the form of Mr H. B. Finger; and from the Technical University of Denmark in the form of Professor Fritz Ingerslev.

During these two days we can look forward to having inspired visions of what the future holds in many specialized parts of the industry: for example, from Sir Ove Arup on design, from Mr Parkin on the acoustics of large halls, from Mr Roberts on public health engineering. Again, the field of building materials is one where special treats are in store, not only in the shape of the papers by Mr Allen and Dr Nurse but also through the exhibition of novel building materials and components on display here simultaneously with the Discussion Meeting. Lastly, a closing review of the two days' proceedings will be given by Denis Harper, Professor of Building at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, who will set forth his own conclusions regarding the current research and development needs of this industry.

And now, for the crucial task of setting the scene for our discussion meeting, I have the greatest possible pleasure in welcoming one of the leaders of the building industry in this

country, who will give the introductory lecture in this first morning session devoted to 'the building process'. As Chairman of that outstandingly successful firm John Laing Construction Ltd, Sir Maurice Laing is peculiarly well qualified to discern how major changes in the industry have taken place in the past and how they can be foreseen as happening in the future. We are all looking forward very keenly, Sir Maurice, to hearing you speak about 'The inherent problems of effecting change'.