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INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON MATHEMATICAL INSTRUCTION, 1980-81

by Peter HILTON (Secretary, ICMI)

1. THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The following is extracted from the report of Professor Hassler Whitney, as published in the 12th issue of the ICMI Bulletin:

"As reported in the last Bulletin, Number 11, ten Members-at-Large of ICMI were chosen at the General Assembly of the International Mathematical Union (IMU) at Otanieri, Finland, in August 1978, with me as President and Peter Hilton as Secretary. Considerable time and effort were then spent to form a new Executive Committee (EC), with due regard to the Members' experience and geographical distribution. I feel greatly honored by being chosen as President, and very glad of the cooperation of my worthy colleagues on the EC. They are all playing a vital role in the work of ICMI.

The most visible functions of ICMI are the International Congresses on Mathematical Education (ICME's). The first was at Lyon, France in 1969; the second at Exeter, England in 1972; the third at Karlsruhe, Federal Republic of Germany in 1976; and the last one at Berkeley, California, USA this past August 10-16.

At Berkeley the final decision was made to accept the fine invitation from the Australian National Committee for Mathematics to hold the next ICME in Adelaide, South Australia, in August 1984.

With the spreading of ICMI's functioning to wider regions, the difficulties, financial and otherwise, of attending congresses, conferences and meetings are steadily increasing in a trying period of history. We were very fortunate to have representation from most regions of the world at Berkeley; but this is likely to be still more difficult at Adelaide. It was also fortunate that the whole EC could be present at Berkeley, and could have a number of meetings, two of them with three of the remaining Members-at-Large present; we were glad to benefit from these Members' wise counsel.

What part can ICMI play in world-wide mathematics education? The Congresses can help the overview of the whole field, and in part can be relevant to particular problems you might be facing. The regional conferences sponsored by ICMI can attack specific or more general problems in fields of direct concern to the countries involved but can also, of course, range more widely.

The work in mathematics education in any particular country may center in a national organization adhering to the IMU. Any such organization may appoint a representative to ICMI, commonly through a sub-commission on mathematics education. Our list of representatives is not up to date; most have not been heard from for a period of years. Would you please write to the Secretary *) or to me giving the name and address of your present Representative (if different from the name on the appended list), along with any news on mathematics education that you feel to be of general interest. If your country does not have a national committee or representative, you might inquire locally and with the ICMI Executive Committee about getting one started.

Initiative for regional conferences comes from the people concerned locally. Such concerns are apt to be of wider interest also. If tentative plans are drawn up by a committee from two or more countries, the ICMIEC is likely to welcome this, sponsor the conference, and appoint a member to the Planning Committee. This helps in various ways, including the problem of funding; ICMI can usually make a modest contribution.

Finally, what you can accomplish in your own school or region depends primarily on you and the people directly concerned. Help from outside is beneficial to the extent that it relates to the actual local problems. I see, as a major lesson of recent years, that lasting improvement comes mostly from community efforts, involving students, teachers, administrators, parents, and others. If common goals are agreed on, then plenty of open communication and cooperation yields benefits going far beyond anything that might be imported from outside".

2. ICME IV

The main event of the period under review was, of course, the fourth International Congress on Mathematics Education held at the University of California, Berkeley, from August 10 to August 16, 1980. The following is

*) *Secretary's footnote:* Copies of the Bulletin are obtainable from: Professor Ellen Stenson, Dept. of Math., CWRU, Cleveland OH 44106, USA. It would be helpful if the details referred to by Professor Whitney could be made available to Professor Stenson, who is endeavouring to compile an up-to-date list of national representatives.