

ECA Honors Greenbook on Its 20th Anniversary

By Bernard S. Kamine
APWA Chairperson

At our July meeting, the ECA Board of Directors commended the APWA-AGC Joint Cooperative Committee for the success of the Greenbook on the 20th anniversary of its publication. The first Greenbook was published in 1967. Every three years since then the Joint Cooperative Committee has produced a new edition, and in the intervening years they have issued supplements.

The ECA commendation noted that the Greenbook has achieved the goals established in 1967. It has become an up-to-date, industry-sensitive, widely accepted uniform set of specifications, which has eliminated conflicts and confusion, lowered construction costs and encouraged more competitive bidding by the contractors who build public works projects.

The ECA commendation expressed the ECA's pride at having been an active participant in this process and the ECA's anticipation of another 20 years of progress.

Thirty years ago each of the various Los Angeles City and County agencies had its own standard specifications for public works projects. Silas B. Birch, Jr., then Inspector of Public Works for the City of Los Angeles, recalls that "all were similar but just enough different to make the contractor study the specifications in depth to be sure his bid was OK. This developed a corps of contractors who found it easier to bid in just one or two agencies and, of course, reduced competitive bidding."

By the late 1950's, local government officials and contractors had begun cooperative efforts to develop fair, modern specifications. In 1958, Birch worked with Tom Sweeney of the City's Bureau of Engineering, Carl Malcolm of Malcolm Construction Co. and John Witte of R. A. Watson to totally rewrite and modernize the standard specifications for the City's Department of Public Works. Birch believes that these specifications pioneered the use by local agencies of clauses covering compensation for changed conditions, time extensions and, in some cases, compensation for delays beyond the contractor's control, owner responsibility for locating and marking utilities, liquidated damages and measurement of time by working days.

The benefits derived from this cooperative effort, and the obvious advantages to be gained from a set of standardized

specifications for all local government agencies, led to the creation in the early 1960's of the Joint Cooperative Committee of government officials and contractors. Birch was the first APWA co-chairperson. The Joint Committee started with the 1958 City Department of Public Works specifications and incorporated into them the best parts of the specifications from the then-four major county agencies: Engineering, Road, Flood Control and Sanitation.

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The process took over 4 years and involved over 400 individuals from the construction industry and government service. They worked together in over 30 subcommittees. Birch came up with the three general parts of the book: general provisions, construction materials and construction methods. He also personally edited the entire work to standardize the language and organize the sections logically.

As word of the project got around, other local agencies asked to get involved. So, by the time the first edition of the Greenbook was published in 1967, the Joint Committee included representatives from

government agencies all over southern California as well as several from public utilities. Some of those people who are still active today are Dean M. Fuller of L.A. County Sanitation, Tom Morgan of Ventura County, and Kahler V. Russell and Joseph L. Vicelja of L.A. County Public Works.

Besides manpower and expertise, the contractors contributed \$10,000 to fund the effort. That was used to pay for necessary clerical support. There was no money left to publish the book. Sam Jaffe, publisher of the Building News, Inc., agreed to print it and to sell copies to the public agencies at his cost (he charges a little more for the copies sold to everyone else).

Today the Joint Committee consists of 25 authorized members, 12 from cities and counties in southern California, 5 from public utilities and 8 from contractor associations. The ECA has one authorized member. In addition, all other persons who are interested in the work of the committee and who make a meaningful contribution to that work can participate and vote on most issues.

The Joint Committee meets monthly, except in December. Its New Materials and Methods Subcommittee and Specification Review Subcommittee also meet monthly. Many task forces of those subcommittees meet even more frequently. The other subcommittees, Editorial and Publicity, meet as needed.

In addition to the Greenbook, the Joint Committee also published a companion volume of standard plans in 1985. It is updated through the Standard Plans Subcommittee of the Joint Committee.

The next edition of both the Greenbook and the Standard Plans is due in 1988.▲

