

International Rangeland Congresses Historical Notes

R.A. PERRY¹ (Chairman, 3rd Continuing Committee) and H.N. LE HOUEROU² (Chairman, 1st Continuing Committee)

Origins

In the late 1950s, the 1960s and early 1970s rangeland scientists became dissatisfied and frustrated with the International Grassland Congresses. The programmes of the International Grassland Congresses had very little rangeland content and were largely irrelevant for rangeland scientists. Comments and protests to the IGCs from rangeland scientists about the situation went unheeded.

In the late 1960s, the possibility of international rangeland congresses began to be discussed among rangeland people. Dr Harold Heady was a leading proponent of the idea and he discussed it with range people wherever he travelled throughout the world and also by letters. On 16 September, 1970, he wrote to the President of the Society for Range Management suggesting that the Society take the initiative and organise the first congress. Opinion was divided and discussion continued over the next 4 years.

In 1974, at the summer meeting of the Board of Directors of the Society for Range Management, the International Affairs Committee, chaired by J.R. Bentley, recommended that the proposal for a congress be actively pursued as a major committee function. The committee was assigned responsibility for study of the subject and for recommending further action. At the annual meeting of the Society in February 1975, Mr Jay Bentley and Dr Harold Heady submitted a formal report recommending that the Society sponsor the first world-wide congress at a location within the United States in 1978. The Board accepted the recommendations, gave the International Affairs Committee continuing appointment and tenure to plan and conduct the congress and appointed Dr Heady Chairman of the committee.

The 1st International Rangeland Congress

The chairman of the Organising Committee of the 1st IRC was Dr Harold F. Heady. It was held in Denver, Colorado, August 14-18, 1978 and was an undoubted success. It attracted 700 participants from 39 countries. The published Proceedings contained 202 papers. The minutes of the business meeting are published in the Proceedings. Briefly, the important decisions were:

1. International Rangeland Congresses be held in the future;
2. They be held at approximately 4 year intervals;
3. A Continuing Committee of 15 to 20 members be appointed;
4. The Committee draft a constitution and by-laws;
5. As a result of representation from a Venezuelan, the second Congress for 1982 was allocated to Venezuela (As a precaution, some Australians were asked informally would they take over in the unlikely event of Venezuela defaulting).

The First Continuing Committee

At the first IRC the following participants were elected to the first Continuing Committee:

Henri N. Le Houérou, France (Chairman)
Robert F. Barnes, USA
Jay R. Bentley USA

Omar Draz, Syria
Dillard H. Gates, USA
Martin H. Gonzales, Mexico
Michael D. Gwynne, Kenya
Harold F. Heady, USA (ex-officio)
Tibere Ionesco, Italy
Robert W. Lodge, Canada
Ivan D. Maldonado, Venezuela
Mahammed Obeid, Sudan
S.C. Pandeya, India
No'am Seligman, Israel
Winston S.W. Trollope, S. Africa
Owen B. Williams, Australia.

The chairman (Dr Henri N. Le Houérou), after many attempts, received in June 1979 a formal request from the Minister of Agriculture of Venezuela to hold the 2nd IRC in that country; but all further attempts to contact responsible people in Venezuela met with no replies. One year later (in late 1981) he asked Australia to organise the 2nd Congress. It was already too late to organise a Congress for 1982 but Australia agreed to begin planning for one to be held in 1984.

The Chairman, with the assistance of the committee prepared a draft "International Rangeland Congress Constitution."

The 2nd International Rangeland Congress

The Chairman of the Organising Committee for the 2nd IRC was Mr Ray Perry. It was held in Adelaide in South Australia 13 to 18 May, 1984 and attracted over 450 participants from 45 countries. From the point of view of organisation, participation, programme, standard of papers and other contributions, and financially it was a success and left no doubt that international rangeland congresses should continue to be held in the future.

At the final business meeting held on Friday 18 May 1984, The "International Rangeland Congress Constitution" prepared by Dr Henri le Houérou and approved by his Continuing Committee, was passed. It is published in the Proceedings of the Congress.

Dr Pandeya put forward a proposal, purporting to be official but later found to be completely unofficial, for the 3rd Congress to be held in India. On the basis of this proposal the 3rd Congress, to be held in 1987, was allocated to India by the business meeting.

The Second Continuing Committee

Also at the final Business meeting, the following were elected to the Continuing Committee:

First term	Second term
Jay R. Bentley, USA (Chairman)	Ray Perry, Australia
Robert F. Barnes, USA	David Wilcox, Australia
Harold F. Heady, USA	Owen Williams, Australia
Edwin McKinnon, Canada	David Contreras, Chile
Daniel Hubert, France	S.C. Pandeya, India
Noam Seligman, Israel	Walter Lusigi, Kenya
Hamid Narjisse, Morocco	David Bransby, S. Africa
Winston S.W. Trollope, S. Africa	

Once again there were problems of inaction on the part of the responsible people in the allocated country. The Chairman, Jay Bentley received no replies to letters seeking information on

1. 34, Chipping Road, City Beach, Australia.

2. CNRS, route de Mende, BP 5051, 34033 Montpellier Cedex, France.

progress. It was only after a great deal of effort and two trips to India by Jay Bentley, during one of which he made representations to a Government Minister, that the proposal for holding a Congress in India was officially approved by the Government and an organising committee was set up. Two years had been lost and the Congress had to be postponed to 1988.

In order to avoid, in the future, the bad experiences of Venezuela and India, the Continuing Committee formulated a set of guide-lines for allocating future congresses. It also decided to allocate Congresses tentatively 8 years or so in advance so that, should the country allocated the next Congress default or not make satisfactory progress, an alternative country would always be available.

The initial steps in implementing the new procedures were taken by Jay Bentley in 1988. Some months before the 3rd IRC in New Delhi, Jay conducted a postal ballot of the Continuing Committee to select between bids from France and China for the venue of the 4th Congress. The result was: France 12 China 2.

The 4th Congress was allocated to France which agreed to organise it in 2 1/2 years, i.e. for 1991, to get the IRCs back on schedule to occur half way between successive International Grassland Congresses.

The 3rd International Rangeland Congress

The Chairman of the Organising Committee for the 3rd IRC was Dr Pandeya. It was held in New Delhi, 6 to 11 November, 1988 and attracted slightly fewer than 200 participants from 25 countries, although the organisers claimed more than double these figures. Actual counts of people attending meetings showed that the maximum attendance at any ordinary session was 170. Between 190 and 200, including official guests, were present at the formal closing session. Also contrary to claims by the organisers, holding the Congress in a 3rd world country did not attract more participants from other 3rd world countries – it appears that people from 3rd world countries prefer to go to conferences in developed countries. The general standard of papers was poor and 20% of authors simply did not attend to present their papers (only a very small proportion of posters were ever displayed). India ignored the IRC Constitution and excluded intending participants from some Nations (South Africa and Israel) by simply not acknowledging their applications. They also flouted the Congress guide-lines and charged very much lower registration fees for Indian participants than for foreign participants. The 3rd IRC held in India was not a complete disaster but it was certainly not a success which was very disappointing.

At the final business session, the guide-lines and allocation procedure developed by the 2nd Continuing Committee were approved. They are attached to the minutes of that meeting.

Dr Margaret Friedel presented the resolutions prepared by the resolutions committee and moved that they be approved. The motion was seconded and agreed unanimously. The following is a brief outline of the resolutions:

1. the Continuing Committee develop guide-lines for organising committees regarding duration, structure, and activities of future Congresses and to ensure that all contributions be relevant to rangelands and of a high standard;
2. the Continuing Committee investigate a universal definition of rangelands;
3. the Continuing Committee examine the possibility of developing recommendations from Congresses;
4. the Continuing Committee develop guide-lines for the resolutions committee and announce them at the beginning of each Congress;
5. the Continuing Committee continue co-operation with the International Grassland Congress Continuing Committee;

6. registration fees for future congresses include a sum (initially US\$10) to provide funds for the Continuing Committee.

Mr Ray Perry, Chairman of the nominations committee, moved that the following be elected to the Continuing Committee:

C. Milner, UK
 Neil Tainton, S. Africa (subject to agreement)
 Faisal Taha, Kuwait
 Joe Schuster, USA
 Dennis Child, USA
 Wal Whalley, Australia
 Chiara Movia, Argentina (subject to agreement, subsequently declined)
 Noor Mahommed, Pakistan
 Panjab Singh, India.

The motion was seconded and agreed unanimously.

At a joint meeting of the past and new members of the Continuing Committees, Joe Schuster nominated and Henri Le Houérou seconded Ray Perry for the new Chairman. Agreed unanimously. The membership of the new Continuing was as follows:

The 3rd Continuing Committee.

First term	Second term
Ray Perry, Australia (Chairman)	C. Milner, UK
Ed McKinnon, Canada	Neil Tainton, S. Africa
Daniel Hubert, France	Faisal Taha, Kuwait
David Contreras, Chile	Joe Schuster, USA
Hamid Narjisse, Morocco	Dennis Child, USA
Walter Lusigi, Kenya	Wal Whalley, Australia
David Wilcox, Australia	Noor Mahommed, Pakistan
	Panjab Singh, India
and Jay Bentley, USA (ex-officio)	

Between the 3rd and 4th Congresses (1988 to 1991), the Chairman set about the task of tentatively allocating venues for the 5th (1995) and 6th (1999) Congresses. Early in 1989, Committee members voted on proposals from Kenya and China for the 5th Congress. The result was: Kenya 12 China 1.

The East African Society for Range Management was asked to begin planning for the 1995 Congress and to provide a progress report for assessment prior to the 4th Congress.

At the same time a big majority of the Continuing Committee voted for the following proposals:

1. That proposals to host IRCs will only be accepted from Rangeland Societies. The rationale behind this was that the task of organising a high quality IRC requires a considerable number (at least 30 or 40) of experienced and active rangeland people. If there are not enough rangeland people in a country active enough to form a Society, then there are not enough active rangeland people to organise a good IRC.
2. That only members of a rangeland society shall be eligible to be elected to the Continuing Committee. The rationale behind this was that members of the Continuing Committee should be interested enough to wish to join, and experienced enough to be accepted by, a rangeland society.

In accordance with the guide-lines, in February 1991, less than 3 months before the 4th Congress, the members of the Continuing Committee were asked to vote on 2 questions:

1. Is the progress report from the East Africa Society for Range Management good enough to confirm Kenya as the venue for the 5th Congress.

The result was:

Yes 2 No 1 Abstain 1 No reply 7.

Four members of the committee wished to defer their vote to see if the EASRM were able to report better progress by the 4th IRC.

2. Proposals from USA (SRM) and Australia (ARS) to host the 6th Congress (1999).

The result was:

USA 6 Australia 1 No reply 8.

Therefore the venue for the 6th IRC was allocated tentatively to USA (SRM).

The 4th International Rangeland Congress

The Chairman of the Organising Committee, then President of the 4th Congress was Dr H.N. Le Houerou. It was held at Montpellier in France 22 to 26 April, 1991 and attracted 820 participants from 70 countries, a slight majority (54%) being Francophones. Seventy per cent of participants were from industrialised countries and 30% from developing countries. Attendance from European and African countries was higher than at previous Congresses. There were 253 papers, 320 posters, 13 videos, 41 slide shows, and 11 computer software presentations. The use of videos, slide shows, and computer presentations were innovations which were well received by participants. A detailed report is given by the President of the Congress in Volume 1 of the proceedings.

Eight members of the Continuing Committee attended the Congress. The major item for discussion was the adequacy of progress made by the EASRM in planning for the 5th Congress tentatively allocated to Kenya. This matter should have been resolved by postal vote prior to the Congress but 4 members of the Committee had wished to defer their vote until the Congress. Three delegates from the EASRM were given the opportunity to present further information to the Committee on Tuesday 23 April. After a lot of discussion, the committee members present voted on the issue on Thursday 24 April.

The result was:

For confirming Kenya 3 Against confirming Kenya 4.

The tentative allocation of the 5th IRC to Kenya was therefore not confirmed and USA (SRM), which had been tentatively allocated the 6th Congress, was asked to organise the 5th instead.

The resolutions committee presented 5 resolutions which were approved by the Continuing Committee for submission to the final business session of the Congress. Several suggestions concerning planning and organisation of future Congresses were not considered appropriate as resolutions but the Continuing Committee agreed to transmit them to the organising committee of the next Congress for their consideration.

The Continuing Committee endorsed the 8 names suggested by the nominations Committee for replacements to the Continuing Committee.

At the final business session of the Congress, Dr Margaret Friedel moved that the resolutions be approved. The motion was seconded and agreed unanimously.

The resolutions are attached to the minutes of the meeting but briefly they were:

1. the ability to provide translation in at least 2 languages, one English, be a criterion for allocating future Congresses;
2. only participants who have indicated their intention of attending the next 2 Congresses be elected to the Continuing Committee;
3. the Chairman of the Continuing Committee may appoint alternate members in place of non-performing ones;
4. the Continuing Committee develop guide-lines for organising committees regarding duration, structure, and activities of future Congresses and to ensure that all contributions be relevant to rangelands and of a high standard;
5. the Continuing Committee develop guide-lines for the resolutions committee and announce them at the beginning of each Congress.

The resolutions were seconded and agreed to unanimously.

Dr Harold Heady moved that the following people be elected to the Continuing Committee:

M. Dicko, Zambia/Mali
M. Friedel, Australia
M. Gonzales, Mexico
G. Gintzburger, France
A. Abdelguerfi, Algeria
W. Laycock, USA
V. Papanastasis, Greece
A. Pressland, Australia.

The motion was seconded and agreed unanimously.

The 4th Continuing Committee

At a joint meeting of members of the past and new Continuing Committee, Dr Dennis Child was elected Chairman of the new Committee. The membership of the new Continuing Committee is as follows:

Second term	First term
Dennis Child, USA (Chairman)	M. Dicko, Zambia/Mali
Joe Schuster, USA	M. Friedel, Australia
C. Milner, UK	M. Gonzalez, Mexico
Faisal Taha, Kuwait	G. Gintzburger, France
Neil Tainton, S. Africa	A. Abdelguerfi, Algeria
Noor Mahammad, Pakistan	W. Laycock, USA
Panjab Singh, India	V. Papanastasis, Greece
Wal Whalley, Australia	A. Pressland, Australia
Henri N. Le Houerou, France (ex-officio, for one term)	