

I

The Founding of FEBS and Early Developments

I.1 The Foundation and Early Years of FEBS



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It was Frank Young's and Peter Campbell's fault that I became involved in the formation of FEBS. I succeeded Campbell as Meetings Secretary of The Biochemical Society in 1959, Campbell becoming the Committee Secretary. As Meetings Secretary, he had already persuaded the Committee to look towards continental Europe in two ways. One was to encourage the continental societies to invite The Biochemical Society to hold joint meetings on their home ground. The other was for The Biochemical Society to issue a general invitation to all European societies to have their members attend The Biochemical Society's summer meeting, which traditionally alternated between Oxford and Cambridge. Joint meetings in Finland in 1959 and France in 1960 had already been planned, and I set up further such meetings over the next several years, until 1965, in Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and Italy. These meetings were terminated when the annual FEBS meetings began, as their logical successors.

Hans Krebs and Frank Young, as the respective hosts at Oxford and Cambridge, willingly accepted the idea of larger audiences at the summer meetings, and a start was made at Cambridge in 1960 and Oxford in 1961. There followed immediately the Fifth International Congress of Biochemistry in Moscow in August 1961. By this time, through these various contacts, I was beginning to make good friends with fellow officers in the continental

European biochemical societies. My further activities in Society affairs might have stopped at this time because I resigned my position as Meetings Secretary. I had begun to be bored with the routine of setting up each Society meeting, and arranging the printing, and I felt that if boredom was setting in, then I was not serving the Society. At the last Committee meeting I attended as Meetings Secretary in December 1961, there was on the agenda a proposal that had originated with Young, namely that The Biochemical Society should appoint a foreign secretary. This was agreed, with the amendment, on the suggestion of Henry Arnstein, that the post be called International Secretary. Arnstein in fact became my successor as Meetings Secretary. The suggestion was adopted by the Society at its annual general meeting the following March, and the Committee was kind enough to invite me to occupy this new post, which I gladly accepted because I felt that there was an opportunity here for creativity, in fostering intra-European relations. The summer meeting at Cambridge, to which the continental European biochemists were invited, had already been arranged, and I contacted as many European societies as I was aware of, suggesting that an informal discussion be held during the Cambridge meeting, with the idea of putting intra-European biochemical contacts onto a more established basis. A spur to the idea of more formal contact, and arranging meetings for European biochemists, came from the upcoming venues for the International Congresses of Biochemistry. At that time the congresses were the only open, general meetings available to biochemists, and with New York chosen for 1964 and Tokyo for 1967, it would not be until at least 1970 that another International Union of Biochemistry (IUB) Congress could be held in Europe. This was a distinct disadvantage to the younger biochemists.

The informal meeting was held, and I detected a great deal of enthusiasm towards the idea of such collaboration. Memories are hazy now, but I have a firm recollection of the support from Otto Hoffmann-Ostenhof for Austria and Jean Emile Courtois for France.

The stage was now set for an official meeting between representatives of the Societies, and this took place at the Oxford meeting of The Biochemical Society in July 1963, which Robert Thompson, as Secretary General of IUB, also attended to give us his advice; Robert Harte also came from the American Society of Biological Chemists. I had produced draft statutes for this so-far unnamed organization. These were discussed and appropriately modified and augmented, with the agreement that they should be sent to the Societies, to ask whether on this basis they wished to join a European biochemical organization. The tentative name Federation of European Biochemical Societies was assigned and was eventually accepted. The only alternative suggestion came from Campbell, who was advised that some Eastern European biochemical societies felt that the description of the organization as a federation was too strong a term, and might not lead to approval by their respective governments, in cases where governmental approval was necessary. I resisted this suggestion

because I could already see the convenience of describing the organization as FEBS, and the lesser attraction of AEBS. No trouble on this score was, in fact, ever raised.

Keeping up the initiative of The Biochemical Society in promoting this venture, its Committee was persuaded that its annual meeting for March 1964 at University College London should in fact become the first FEBS Meeting. The Federation itself came into official existence on 1 January 1964 with 17 adhering Societies, and at the opening of the first meeting, the Society delegates to the FEBS Council, plus the officers of FEBS, autographed a copy of the Statutes (Figure 1.1).

The Statutes, as worded at that time, provided that the host Society would appoint the officers of FEBS for the year in question. Accordingly, Frank Happold, as Chairman of the Biochemical Society's Committee, became the first Chairman of FEBS. I became the Secretary of FEBS and Prakash Datta, the Treasurer. The Biochemical Society has usually held its annual general meetings at University College, where the Society was founded in March 1911. This meant, because of my previous activities, that I had already established a close collaboration with Datta as the man on the spot for arrangements for meetings at University College. In particular, the 50th Anniversary Meeting of The Biochemical Society at University College in March 1961 had brought us very close together.

The first Council meeting of FEBS was held in London on Sunday, 22 March 1964, in The National Liberal Club (Figure 1.2), and I have two distinct memories from that meeting. The first was the very important decision to drop the word 'national' from the phrase 'national Societies', which I had written into the original Statutes as a description of the proposed members of FEBS. This was done at the suggestion of the biochemists from the GDR and GFR and was designed to eliminate any political or territorial considerations. The members of FEBS would simply be the Societies, and in turn the Society members. The other recollection is of E. H. Fischer, recently returned from a visit to Israel, and delegated by the Israel Biochemical Society to present an application to join FEBS, being unable to persuade the Council that Israel was part of Europe.

The meeting itself was highly successful in terms of attendance. We had thought that a print of 1000 for the programmes and abstracts would be more than adequate, but in fact the number of those attending slightly exceeded this figure. Fred Sanger arranged a symposium entitled 'Structure and Activity of Enzymes', which was subsequently published as FEBS Symposium No. 1, edited by T. W. Goodwin, J. I. Harris and B. S. Hartley, and has, I believe, been the best seller of all FEBS Symposia. The speakers were truly international, coming from Britain, France, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, Sweden, Italy and the United States. The only disappointment was that Sanger was stricken by influenza and unable to see the fruits of his handiwork. It is

Federation of European Biochemical Societies

These Statutes were signed at the First Meeting, London, 23 March 1964

Statutes of The Federation

1 Purpose of the Federation
The Federation exists to promote the science of biochemistry, and in particular to encourage closer contacts between European biochemists by arranging meetings, exchanging information, and promoting contacts between the members of the Constituent Societies.

2 Administration and Membership
(a) The Federation shall consist of the following constituent Societies of the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland. All members of the Constituent Societies are also members of the Federation with equal privileges. **France & Bulgaria**
(b) The affairs of the Federation shall be administered by a Council. The Council may empower a Constituent Society to act on its behalf.
(c) Each Constituent Society shall nominate one delegate or a deputy to the Council of the Federation. The delegate shall be reappointed annually by the Society.
(d) The Administration of the Federation shall be vested in turn in the Constituent Society which has charge of the arrangements for the next General Meeting of the Federation. The Host Society shall be appointed by a simple majority vote of the Council at the previous General Meeting.
(e) The Council shall meet at each General Meeting of the Federation and at such other times as may be necessary.
(f) The Chairman of the Council shall be the delegate of the Host Society, and his Society shall nominate up to two *ex officio* members of the Council to serve as Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Such *ex officio* members shall be without voting powers.
(g) Any Constituent Society is free to withdraw from the Federation at a meeting of the Council provided notice of such a withdrawal has been communicated to the Chairman at least one month before the Council Meeting.

3 Meetings of the Federation
(a) A General Meeting of the Federation shall be held at least every two years at a place chosen by the Host Society.
(b) A General Meeting of the Federation shall provide opportunities for the presentation of original communications, demonstrations, and symposia.
(c) The detailed arrangements for the Meeting shall be at the entire discretion of the Host Society.
(d) A registration fee shall be charged equally to all members attending the Federation meeting. The meeting will also be open to non-members.
(e) Any profits accruing from the Federation Meeting shall be the property of the Host Society, to defray the expenses incurred in administering the Federation.

4 Exchange of Information
(a) Each Constituent Society shall send to a nominated editor of all other Constituent Societies the same circulars that it sends to its own members.
(b) It shall be the duty of each Constituent Society to publicise the activities of the other Constituent Societies so as to encourage contacts between biochemists in the different European countries, and on request to circulate to its members information of the next Federation Meeting.

5 Attendance at Domestic Meetings
Any member of the Federation may, on making proper application, be admitted to an open meeting of a Constituent Society other than his own, on the same terms as if he were a member of that Society, although permission to present a paper shall be at the discretion of the Society holding the meeting.

6 Date of Inception of the Federation
The Federation shall come into being not later than 1 January 1965.

7 Dissolution of the Federation
The Federation and its statutes may be dissolved at any time at a meeting of the Council at which two-thirds of the delegates are present and at which a two-thirds majority of the delegates vote in favour of the proposal. The proposal must be notified to the Constituent Societies at least one month before the Council meeting and shall be signed by at least one-third of the delegates.

8 Statutes of the Federation
The statutes of the Federation may be amended, deleted, or expanded at any Council meeting by a two-thirds majority vote, provided that at least two-thirds of the delegates are present.

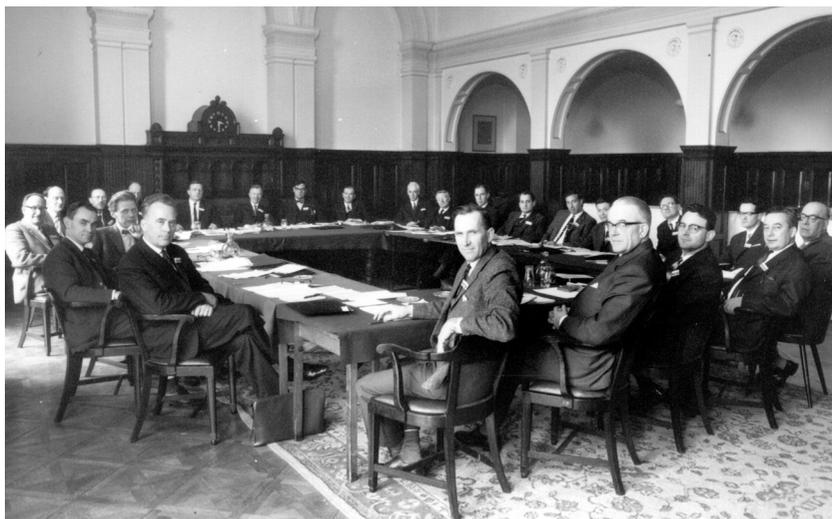
9 Address of the Federation
The official address of the Federation shall be that of the Secretary of the Federation.

The Council of the Federation

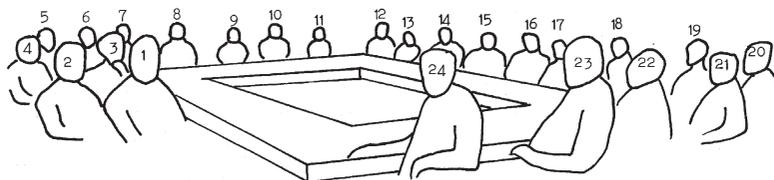
- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| Austria
(Österreichische Biochemische Gesellschaft)
Professor O. Hoffmann-Ostenhof | Germany
(Gesellschaft für Physiologische Chemie E.V.)
Dr. E. Ashagen | Poland
(Polskie Towarzystwo Biochemiczne)
Professor K. Zakrzewski |
| Belgium
(Société Belge de Biochimie: Belgische Vereniging voor Biochemie)
Professor C. Liebeg | Great Britain
(The Biochemical Society)
Professor F. C. Hopwood, Chairman | Portugal
(Sociedade Portuguesa de Bioquímica)
Professor S. F. Gomes da Costa |
| Czechoslovakia
(Československá společnost biochemická při ČS. Akademie Věd)
Dr. P. J. Mášar | Hungary
(Magyar Biokémiai Társaság)
Dr. G. Domjan | Spain
(Sociedad Española de Bioquímica)
Professor A. Sols |
| Denmark
Professor F. Lundquist | Italy
(Società Italiana di Biochimica)
Professor A. Bonington | Sweden
Professor S. Bergström |
| Finland
(Societas Biochemica, Biophysica et Microbiologica Fennica)
Professor V. Nurmikko | The Netherlands
(Nederlandse Vereniging voor Biochemie)
Professor H. Veldstra | Switzerland
(Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Biochemie: Société Suisse de Biochimie: Swiss Society for Biochemistry)
Professor M. Brenner |
| France
(Société de Chimie Biologique)
Professor J. E. Courtois | Norway
Professor S. Laland | SECRETARY: Dr. W. J. Whelan
TREASURER: Dr. S. P. Datta |
| Bulgaria
(Социален Съюз на Биохимията)
Professor T.T. Nikolov | | |

Figure 1.1 The Statutes of FEBS as signed by the members of Council on 23 March 1964 in London.

also a matter of very pleasant record that the first paper ever read at a FEBS Meeting was delivered by Feodor Lynen. The European flavour was further enhanced by Edgar Lederer delivering The Biochemical Society's Hopkins' Memorial Lecture during the meeting.



Federation of European Biochemical Societies
1st Meeting of Council, London, 22 March 1964
at National Liberal Club



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 H. Veldstra (The Netherlands) | 12 S. Moore (Organiser, IUB Congress) |
| 2 S. Bergström (Sweden) | 13 J.E. Courtois (France) |
| 3 F. Lundquist (Denmark) | 14 R.H.S. Thompson (Secretary General, IUB) |
| 4 M. Brenner (Switzerland) | 15 H.R.V. Arnstein (Secretary, Biochemical Society) |
| 5 W.F.J. Cuthbertson (Treasurer, Biochemical Society) | 16 E.H. Fischer (representing Israel) |
| 6 A. Sols (Spain) | 17 T.K. Nikolov (Bulgaria) |
| 7 K. Zakrewski (Poland) | 18 P.N. Campbell (Secretary, Biochemical Society) |
| 8 W.J. Whelan (Secretary, FEBS) | 19 V. Nurmikko (Finland) |
| 9 F.C. Happold (Great Britain, Chairman, FEBS) | 20 S.F. Gomes da Costa (Portugal) |
| 10 S.P. Datta (Treasurer, FEBS) | 21 O. Hoffmann-Ostenhof (Austria) |
| 11 S. Mason (Thos. Cock & Son Ltd.) | 22 C. Liébecq (Belgium) |
| | 23 E. Auhagen (Germany) |
| | 24 S. Laland (Norway) |

Figure 1.2 The first meeting of the FEBS Council held on 22 March 1964 at the National Liberal Club, London.



Figure 1.3 Keir, Campbell and Arnstein with the signed contract.



Figure 1.4 The FEBS logo designed by David Thomas.

Someone who should be remembered from the early days is David Thomas, honorary consultant in typography to University College. He left his imprint on FEBS by designing the layout of the programme of the first meeting, the charter flight brochures, the Bulletin, and the cover of the *European Journal of Biochemistry*. The familiar FEBS logo was his creation (Figure 1.4).

In the beginning, FEBS was founded only with the idea that the Societies might come together to hold regular meetings. There was even some doubt whether the meetings would be annual or biennial. For the further growth of FEBS, it was a happy coincidence that the Sixth International Congress of Biochemistry was taking place in New York in August 1964. I had developed an interest in organizing reduced rate travel when helping British biochemists attend the Moscow IUB congress and the joint meetings with sister Societies in Europe. The upcoming New York Congress was an even bigger opportunity and I was already planning charter flights for members of the British Society. FEBS had come into existence just in time to qualify as a charter organizer. Wearing my FEBS hat, I transferred the arrangements from the British Society to FEBS, and persuaded the French biochemists, who were organizing their own charter, to do likewise. This allowed us to open the charters to all biochemists who were members of FEBS Societies. Societies whose membership



Figure 1.5 Delegates of FEBS departing for a meeting in New York, July 1964.

was too small to justify an economical charter could now offer this to their members via FEBS, and in the event three charters were organized from London and one from Paris (Figure 1.5). By deliberate arrangement, biochemists from different countries sat next to each other on the aircraft, as a further means of developing intra-European contact on an individual basis. I have two particular memories of these charters. One was of receiving a phone call from Theodor Bücher's secretary in Munich, asking for a seat on one of the aircraft. I had a vague idea that Bücher was somewhat influential in biochemistry in the GFR, and as part of the process of making contact, I put him in a first-class seat next to Campbell. The contact that he then made with FEBS was perhaps to be significant in terms of later developments, which will be recounted. The other memory is of a rivalry between BOAC and Air France over the degree

of hospitality to be accorded to charter passengers, which led to two of the BOAC charter planes returning to London being loaded to the roof with champagne. Lynen, one of the passengers, was highly appreciative of this gesture and took full advantage of it. He was subsequently photographed in a somewhat dazed state, on the tarmac at London Airport by Hugo Theorell. When Lynen's Nobel Prize was announced the following November, it was this photograph that Theorell gave to the waiting reporters, and which was to appear in the press and on television.

An informal Council meeting of FEBS was held in New York, at which came the beginnings of ideas other than simply holding meetings. I suggested that FEBS might issue a news bulletin, listing meetings and other types of announcements with which we are now familiar. This was agreed and the first bulletin was produced in time for distribution at the second FEBS Meeting in Vienna in April 1965.

I attended this second Council meeting no longer as an officer of FEBS. The officers were now, according to the Statutes, appointed by the Austrian Society, and Hoffmann-Ostenhof was the Chairman. This was a memorable meeting. Three suggestions were made that have become permanent features of the FEBS scene. Arnstein proposed that FEBS should organize summer

schools. He became, on this account, the summer schools' organizer and in turn persuaded Christian de Duve to hold the first such activity in Louvain in the summer of 1965. Pointing out that FEBS could do many more things than simply organize meetings, I suggested that officers might be appointed on a more permanent basis than had earlier been envisaged, and that while the Chairman of FEBS should be appointed each year by the host Society for the meeting, there should be a secretary, not necessarily associated with the host Society, who would act on a longer term basis and deal with activities other than the meetings. A second suggestion was that FEBS might venture into the field of publication. I had particularly in mind something along the lines of *Biochemical and Biophysical Research Communications (BBRC)*, which seemed a first-rate innovative idea with scope for imitation. Subcommittees were set up to consider both ideas and at the third Council meeting, held at the end of the week, I accepted the invitation to become the Secretary General of FEBS for a 3-year period. The idea of a journal publication was referred to a subcommittee.

With the Bulletin and summer schools already augmenting FEBS activities, the stage was now set for the next development, that of publication. I should inject here the great pleasure I personally felt at the keenness of individual Societies to invite FEBS to hold a meeting in their country, and a long list of invitations was quickly built up.

FEBS did not have the funds with which to meet the expenses of convening a meeting of the subcommittee, but by various acts of individual enterprise, six members eventually met in Courtois's office in Paris in November 1965. These were Courtois, Hoffmann-Ostenhof, Uriel Littauer, Claude Liébecq, Pavao Mildner and myself. Peter Reichard could not attend but sent his views. Littauer had been sent by the Israel Biochemical Society to the Vienna meeting to renew the application for membership, and his powerful advocacy convinced FEBS, where conviction had been lacking the year before, that Israel was part of Europe.

The subcommittee made a recommendation, but not the proposal I had originally put forward. The majority opinion was that if a journal was to be launched, it should be of the conventional type, publishing the customary extended reports. We chose not to wait for the next Council meeting to approve the idea, but instead drew up a specification for the journal and sent it to various publishers, asking for their interest. We received a number of encouraging replies and were particularly impressed by the North-Holland Publishing Company, who was then developing their rapid photo-offset process. Also at this time, I had decided to propose to FEBS that a treasurer should be appointed. While we did not have much income by way of Society dues, if we were to go into the field of publication, there would be a lot of financial matters to handle. I could think of no one more suitable than Datta, who had performed this task for the first FEBS Meeting and I already involved him

informally in FEBS prior to the Council meeting in Warsaw, at which his name would be proposed, by taking him with Liébecq and me to Amsterdam to talk to North-Holland about the journal. This brought us in contact with the dynamic Bart van Tongeren of North-Holland, a most pregnant meeting.

The early years of FEBS were marked by a succession of happy coincidences. The coincidence that now comes to mind is of Bücher being invited to lecture at the Middlesex Hospital, and my receiving a message that he would like to talk to me during his visit to London. I agreed and roped in Arnstein and 'Cuth' Cuthbertson, the Treasurer of The Biochemical Society. During a convivial evening Bücher explained that he had become the President of the Gesellschaft für Physiologische Chemie, and was keenly interested in sponsoring cooperation of the type for which FEBS had been designed. Specifically, he wished to propose that instead of FEBS founding a new journal, he would use his best efforts to persuade his Society in turn to persuade Springer-Verlag to agree to convert the *Biochemische Zeitschrift* into the FEBS journal. I was delighted by this proposal for it seemed to me that we should not be in the business of creating new journals of the conventional type, and enlarging already numerous activities, but rather that we should become associated with an existing journal. Secretly I had hoped that the British Biochemical Society might have made this proposal in relation to the *Biochemical Journal*. The meeting with Bücher occurred in March 1966, and at the Council meeting in Poland the following month, the alternatives were proposed of founding a new journal, or of accepting Bücher's suggestion regarding the *Biochemische Zeitschrift*. It was the second suggestion that was adopted and the officers were empowered to negotiate with Springer-Verlag. At the same meeting the proposal for Datta to become the Treasurer was also accepted. Events then moved very rapidly. The negotiators for FEBS were Whelan, Datta, Liébecq and Hoffmann-Ostenhof, assisted by Bücher and Otto Westphal. At an initial meeting in Heidelberg, we came in contact with the kindly, understanding Dr H. Mayer-Kaup of Springer-Verlag. Also at this first meeting was a representative of the *Hoppe-Seyler Zeitschrift*, because an early idea was that both journals might merge into the FEBS journal. This was not to be. It was decided that it would be good to retain a German language journal in the form of *Hoppe-Seyler*, with the *Biochemische Zeitschrift* becoming the truly international FEBS journal. There was a second meeting in Heidelberg, notable for me by Liébecq's hair-raising driving between Frankfurt airport and Heidelberg. Subsequently meetings were held between Datta, Whelan, Liébecq and Hoffmann-Ostenhof in Brussels, and with Mayer-Kaup in a hotel room at London airport, at which a contract was agreed. Liébecq was already appointed as Editor-in-Chief; Krebs became Honorary Chairman of the Editorial Board, and the rest is history.

I conclude with an account of my final year with FEBS before I left Britain in September 1967 to take up my present post at the University of Miami. The

FEBS charter operation was again repeated for the Seventh International Congress of Biochemistry in Tokyo, with the added innovation that for the return journey there would not be a charter operation, but returning biochemists could travel by the normal service of the airline that had taken them to Tokyo, with unlimited stop-offs so that full advantage of the return through the Far East could be had.

I decided to raise again the question of FEBS publishing a *BBRC*-like journal and there were two more happy coincidences to follow. One was that in June 1967 Bücher had invited me to Munich, to lecture to his medical students. On this visit I discussed the idea of the new journal with Bücher, and found him very enthusiastic. Part of his motivation seemed to stem from one of his colleagues having had a paper rejected by *BBRC*. Bücher felt that it was time for competition. The second coincidence was that Bernard Horecker had been spending the summer in Stockholm, and I took advantage of this to invite him to be a chairman at a symposium that I was organizing as part of the Fourth FEBS Meeting in Oslo. Horecker was, and is, the Chairman of the Editorial Board of *BBRC*. The idea of the journal was proposed at a meeting of the FEBS Publications Subcommittee held prior to the first of the two Council meetings, and it was immediately evident that there was strong opposition. Nevertheless, it was presented to the Council, but because of similar divided opinions it was referred back to the Publications Subcommittee. There were three principal arguments against such a journal. The first was that it would not be possible to recruit an editorial board. The second was that there was not a market for such a journal. The third came from people who felt that short communications are ephemeral and simply overburden the literature, later being replaced by full reports. I felt a compulsion to try to secure approval of the proposal during that meeting. If I did not do so then I would lose any influence that I had, because I was resigning as Secretary General prior to leaving for Miami. On this basis, therefore, answers to the main lines of opposition had to be found immediately. The answer to the first question was had by using all one's powers of persuasion on prominent European biochemists who were at the Oslo meeting, asking if they would join the editorial board of the new journal, for which a name was already to hand: *FEBS Letters*. It was on this basis that the first editorial board came into being. I believe that every member of the board except Sydney Cohen and Boja Keil was someone who was at Oslo and who agreed to join on the spot, notably Krebs and Sanger. The next question, whether there was a market for such a journal, was answered by the fortunate presence of Horecker. He informed us that *BBRC* had been so successful that the editorial board was thinking of launching a companion journal, with the subject matter being divided between molecular biology on the one hand and biochemistry on the other. Horecker, on hearing our suggestion, said he would rather see a second such journal, the need for which he and his editorial board were already convinced of, started by a separate

organization. Then there would not be a monopoly in the hands of one organization, but there would be competition and innovation. What we realized from this news was that if *FEES Letters* was not founded then and there, the potential market would become saturated by *BBRC* dividing into two journals. Obviously, this gave additional impetus to try to launch *FEBS Letters*.

The third argument raised against *FEBS Letters*, namely that the contents would be ephemeral, in fact proved to be a very positive, helpful influence in shaping policy. As a result of discussions with the projected editorial board, it was agreed that it would be the policy of *FEBS Letters* that although its contents would consist of short communications with rapid publication, the board would insist that these were to be publications in a final form, not to be republished elsewhere. A meeting of the Publications Subcommittee was hurriedly summoned, to inform them of developments, and with one dissenting member, they agreed to support the proposal at the Council meeting on the next day.

A truly memorable discussion took place at that Council meeting. The opposition was still there, but was less evident now. Bücher was a powerful protagonist, making the point that the journal could be brought into existence without FEBS being involved, but that the editorial board, willing to serve the journal, was in fact making a marriage proposal to FEBS, with *FEBS Letters* as the present from the bridegroom to the bride. However, the issue could still not be resolved, but the impasse was broken by Arnstein's suggestion that the proposal be referred to each of the individual Societies for a vote, using the argument that the Societies had not been able to consider the proposal and therefore that the delegates to the Council meeting did not have instructions. This was accepted, and it was agreed that unofficial approaches could be made to publishers to see whether, in fact, anyone was willing to put the capital into such a journal, because FEBS itself had no capital.

Immediately after the meeting, several publishers were approached with the idea that news could be brought to an unofficial meeting of FEBS Council delegates during the Tokyo Congress the next month. Despite our contacting four publishers, there was an inevitability that the photo-offset process, so expertly developed by North-Holland, was ideal for the rapid publication envisaged for *FEBS Letters*. The publishers' responses were brought to the meeting in Tokyo. The Societies had already been asked for their votes, and while some were negative, a clear positive majority vote was obtained. Datta, who had thrown all his weight behind the proposal, became the Managing Editor, and the first issue of *FEBS Letters* appeared in July 1968. I shall always be grateful to Datta that the paper I submitted for this first issue, along with my colleagues Brenda Ryman and Norman Palmer, was inserted by him as the first paper to be published in that journal.

Looking back on those early, heady, first years of FEBS, two thoughts come to mind. The first is that of my good fortune in having had the opportunity to share in these memorable experiences. While I may have been propelled into a

catalytic role in the founding of FEBS, I stay away from any idea of originality on my part. It was clear, from the first time that the idea of FEBS was mooted, that all that was required was the activation energy. The forces for collaboration were already there and the idea of such a European organization was developing in everybody's mind. FEBS also became the model for sister organizations: the Panamerican Association of Biochemical Societies (PAABS) in the Americas, and the Federation of Asian and Oceanic Biochemists (FAOB) in Asia and Oceania. These three organizations now work closely with the International Union of Biochemistry and greatly assist IUB for the reason that the Union's contacts with individual biochemists are only possible via the Societies. The regional organizations link the IUB with the Societies.

The second thought is that while I have related a succession of what I have called happy coincidences, the happy coincidence that towers above all others was that of my getting to know Prakash Datta and realizing what he might be able to do for FEBS. That, and his insatiable energy and enthusiasm, have been responsible more than any other single factor or person for the outstanding success of FEBS. The staggeringly successful financial fortunes that have come about through the journal publications are the result of Datta's astute management, and the way in which his engaging personality has made friends of everybody. As Treasurer, Managing Editor of *FEBS Letters*, Publisher of the FEBS Bulletin, and innovator in so many directions, he has truly become 'Mr FEBS', and long may he so continue.

Miami, 13 December 1973

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1.2 The First Ten Years of FEBS: Retrospect and Prospect



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A decade is, of course, too short a period for a thorough assessment of the significance and achievements of an organization like FEBS, and in any case such a study should be undertaken by someone not too closely involved in its day to day affairs and therefore able to take a detached view. The 10th anniversary of FEBS is, however, an appropriate occasion to review its present activities and to discuss future developments. Looking back at the time immediately preceding the foundation of FEBS, I still remember vividly



Figure 1.6
W. J. Whelan.

the enthusiasm which was generated everywhere by the idea of setting up an organization to promote cooperation among European biochemists. The time was clearly opportune for the initiative taken by W. J. Whelan (Figure 1.6) in arranging first the preparatory meeting of delegates in Oxford in July 1963 and then the first Council meeting in London on 22 March 1964. As Meetings Secretary of The Biochemical Society I was not at that time actively involved in FEBS affairs, though I attended various meetings as an observer. It was a unique opportunity to watch an international scientific organization take shape at an incredible pace under the dynamic influence of Bill Whelan who seemed to have in great measure the indispensable gift of obtaining agreement on a number of important ideas and proposals concerning FEBS activities, as well as ensuring that decisions once made would be implemented efficiently. The fact that within 3 years of the foundation of FEBS it was possible to publish two major biochemical journals gives a good indication of the pace at which new developments were being carried out. What is perhaps equally remarkable is that at that time FEBS had practically no financial resources of its own, and indeed in the original Statutes there is no mention of any membership subscription or other funds to be used for running the Federation. Since it was originally planned that the Federation would be administered in turn by the different constituting Societies responsible for organizing the FEBS meetings it was envisaged that any profits accruing from the annual FEBS meetings would be used by the host Society to defray the administrative expenses. With the acceptance at the second Council meeting of a proposal to appoint a Secretary General, and later a Treasurer, for a 3-year term of office, a somewhat more permanent administration came into being and it was decided that Constituent Societies would pay a membership fee on the basis of 5 p per member, which was increased to 10 p in 1967. The total income of FEBS from this source was, however, still less than £1000, a very modest sum for an organization soon to encompass essentially the whole of Europe.

Whilst Bill Whelan was heavily engaged in setting up the initial FEBS organization and discussing the arrangement for publishing the *European Journal of Biochemistry*, I mentioned to him one day a proposal that FEBS should organize summer schools, which might serve not only to give advanced instruction in new techniques and other developments but also to bring together young biochemists from all over Europe and thus encourage future cooperation. Without hesitation he thought this seemed a good idea and that I could get on with it. The suggestion was, therefore, considered further at an informal meeting of FEBS delegates in New York in July 1964 and subsequently approved at the Vienna meeting in April 1965. In New York it was



Figure 1.7
Claude Liébecq.

suggested that Christian de Duve should be asked to organize the first course in Louvain and I think it was Claude Liébecq (Figure 1.7) who offered to make the initial approach. Since FEBS had no funds to support such a venture it was evident that each school would have to be financially self-supporting. In retrospect it seems to me that it was slightly crazy to start a new activity of this kind without any financial backing, but such was the momentum of FEBS and goodwill of the organizers that the idea of a school not succeeding and giving rise to a serious deficit simply did not loom very large in our discussions. In fact, the first summer school was held on 8–18 June 1965, that is, less than a year after the proposal was first made.

It became my task, as Chairman of the newly set up FEBS Summer Schools Committee, to seek financial support and it is a pleasure to acknowledge the helpful response of a number of individuals and organizations. Through the good offices of Dr A. Kepes in Paris, ICRO was persuaded to make a substantial financial contribution to the cost of the Louvain course. Later, support was received from the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) for several summer schools including a course in Uppsala on ‘The separation and fractionation of macromolecules and particles’, which is still held, though now entirely under the auspices of EMBO. Other organizations that supported early summer schools, included the British Council, the Royal Society and the Council of Europe.

Although all these contributions were very welcome, and indeed of great importance, it was time-consuming to negotiate financial support separately for each course. Moreover, usually course organizers had to start planning the programme without knowing whether FEBS would be able to obtain any funds. Sometimes course organizers themselves were able to negotiate local financial support, but the burden of being responsible for both the scientific and the financial organization was more than one could continue to ask of organizers. I should like, however, to acknowledge their willingness to help FEBS in this way. By the time I succeeded Bill Whelan as Secretary General in 1967 and Peter Campbell became Chairman of the Summer School Committee there was the expectation that one day FEBS would have an independent income from its publications. The Council readily agreed in principle that some of these funds would be allocated to the summer schools programme, but it was clear that the immediate problem could not be solved in this way. Fortunately, with the help of Theodor Bücher and Otto Westphal a successful approach was made to the Volkswagenstiftung who generously provided a grant of DM50 000 in 1968 and subsequently a further grant of DM100 000, which successfully bridged the gap until it became possible to provide support from FEBS funds.



Figure 1.8
Peter Campbell.

Under Peter Campbell's (Figure 1.8) chairmanship of the Summer Schools Committee the number of summer schools increased from each two in 1966 and 1967 to usually four per year. Also, at his suggestion, summer schools were renamed Advanced Courses, mainly because this description indicated more clearly that the Courses were meant to be for postdoctoral biochemists and intending participants would thus find it easier to obtain travel grants from universities and other institutions. A second, though more trivial point was that in fact some courses had been held during winter months and, except for the poetic view of an eternal FEBS summer, the new name would therefore be more appropriate.



Figure 1.9
Max Gruber.

In 1971, Max Gruber (Figure 1.9) became chairman of the Advanced Courses Committee and continued to arrange a very successful programme. Many different topics have been covered by the 26 courses that have been held since the beginning of the scheme and altogether several hundred biochemists from all FEBS countries have taken part. Now that FEBS has an independent income from *FEBS Letters* and the *European Journal of Biochemistry* it has been possible, not only to subsidize advanced courses, but also to set up a FEBS Youth Travel Fund that provides individual grants to young biochemists to help meet the ever-increasing travelling costs.

It was inevitable that the initial burst of activity in setting up FEBS and organizing the various major undertakings in the fields of charter travel, meetings, publications and summer schools would be followed by a period during which these activities would need to be fully developed and become firmly established. Although the second half of the first decade may thus be regarded as a time of consolidation, a number of new developments have in fact taken place during these years. Thus, a hospitality scheme for visits by children of members and the exchange of houses or apartments for a limited period was started in 1967. A scheme for exchanging laboratory protocols was originally organized by R. Crockaert in 1969 and again in 1972 and is now being continued by the IUB under the aegis of Biochemical Education. More recently, an experimental scheme for the exchange of information on the teaching of biochemistry at the graduate level has been initiated by Giorgio Semenza at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, Zürich.

A number of developments that have been made possible through the generosity of various benefactors deserve special mention. A donation from the Lord Rank Research Centre has been used to finance the Sir Hans Krebs Lecture that has been given since 1968 as one of the plenary lectures at the

annual FEBS meetings. More recently, the publishers of the *European Journal of Biochemistry*, Springer-Verlag, have endowed an annual FEBS Ferdinand Springer Lecture. Under this scheme, the lecturer visits at least two different FEBS countries, local arrangements for the lecture tour being the responsibility of the host Society. Lastly, as from this year, generous support from Eppendorf Gerätebau Netheler & Hinz GmbH and Boehringer Mannheim GmbH will enable FEBS to award Anniversary Prizes to two symposium contributors at annual FEBS meetings.

Of the major activities, the regular FEBS Meetings continue to provide the main opportunity for European biochemists to get together. In general, they have followed the established pattern but their size has been increasing steadily, and they are now as large as the early International Congresses. Although it has been FEBS policy not to arrange the annual FEBS Meetings in a year when an IUB Congress is held in Europe, a special FEBS Meeting on 'Industrial aspects of biochemistry' was organized in Dublin last year as an experiment. This was a smaller and more specialized meeting and its success may encourage other similar meetings.

The host Societies continue to have sole responsibility for organizing the annual Meetings. This seems to me a highly desirable arrangement since local conditions vary so much that it is inconceivable that any central organization could do the job, unless the meetings were to be held in the same one or two places year after year. The suggestion has been made that this would be efficient and reduce the vast amount of preparatory work that is now done by the Organizing Committee of the host Society. A major disadvantage, however, would be that such an arrangement would give rise to a stereotyped kind of meeting, whereas one of the most stimulating aspects of the present system is the diversity of places where FEBS Meetings have been or will be held and the freshness and enthusiasm with which each one is organized.

When one considers the size of the FEBS Meetings and all the problems involved in their organization it is remarkable how few serious difficulties there have been. Even though we live in troubled times the only occasion when a FEBS Meeting came near to being in jeopardy was in 1969 when some of the universities in Spain were closed and the question was raised whether the meeting in Madrid should be held as planned. In the event, the meeting took place and was most successful. I believe the experience of dealing with this crisis ultimately strengthened FEBS and incidentally established useful general criteria for judging the practicability of holding international meetings in delicate political conditions (see *Nature* (1969), vol. 221, 794).

As regards the publication of symposia arising from meetings, it was reaffirmed in 1972 that each Society was free to make its own arrangements with publishers. Although the possibility of FEBS setting up its own publishing house has been discussed, there seems to be little advantage at present in pursuing this idea, particularly in view of the difficulties experienced by many

scientific periodicals in maintaining their circulation. Indeed, considering these circumstances it is clear that both the *European Journal of Biochemistry* and *FEBS Letters* have done exceptionally well to become established as major biochemical journals during difficult times and their editors deserve the highest praise for the success of their efforts. A recent development has been the publication last year of an *Index of Biochemical Reviews* as a special *FEBS Letters* supplement and it is hoped that this will be continued annually.

Mention should also be made here of the *FEBS Bulletin* produced twice yearly by Prakash Datta, who incidentally also prepares the *Information Sheet* now under IUB auspices. These publications are significant, for together with the circulars from the FEBS officers they provide important channels of communication with FEBS Societies and through them with individual members.

Over the years, relations with several other international bodies have steadily improved and there is now excellent cooperation between FEBS, IUB and PAABS. Also, FEBS is represented on the board of the European Cell Biology Organization (ECBO) and contact has been made with the newly created Federation of Asian and Oceanic Biochemists (FAOB). There is no doubt that effective collaboration between the various international organizations interested in biochemistry and allied fields is highly desirable. An important step in this direction would be to establish closer cooperation with EMBO, with which in the past there has only been sporadic contact.

As the time goes on and FEBS activities expand, the administrative burden will inevitably increase. At the moment, a small Executive Committee consisting of six officers has overall responsibility for FEBS between Council meetings, but the various activities I have described are organized on a decentralized basis. These arrangements have the advantage of being highly flexible and keeping the administration costs extremely low. Whereas a permanent FEBS secretariat might be convenient, it would be expensive and not necessarily more efficient. For these reasons, I think it would be a mistake to set up a permanent office but provision should be made in future for increased secretarial assistance to individual officers.

At one time there was some criticism that a small Executive Committee is inevitably not fully representative. A proposal to increase the membership to eight by the election of two additional members by FEBS Council was informally discussed, but subsequently not pursued. In my opinion, such a development would have many advantages, not least the opportunity of giving more people experience of organizing some of the FEBS activities, whilst at the time relieving the officers of a certain amount of the administrative work.

By the end of the first decade, nearly all of the European biochemical societies, comprising some 18 000 biochemists, have become members of FEBS, the last to join being Iceland. The present Statutes were adopted at the 10th Council meeting in Zürich in 1970 after a number of alterations during the early years. At the same time, the tax position of FEBS was satisfactorily sorted

out and the objectives of FEBS are now officially recognized as scientific and non-profit making. For better or for worse the innocence of the original Statutes concerning financial matters has disappeared and a central fund, composed of membership fees, royalties and other income, is defined in Statute 6. Even so the Statutes remain but 10 in number, and are brief as well as simple. FEBS has not succumbed to bureaucracy and its objectives remain unchanged, namely 'to advance research and education in the science of biochemistry . . . to hold and arrange instructional courses . . . to facilitate the exchange of scientific information between biochemists generally and especially European biochemists by holding of meetings and discussions and by other appropriate means'.

Much progress has been made towards achieving these objectives, but I think that there is room for improvement. Thus there is still relatively little contact with some societies and the extent to which different Constituent Societies are keen to play an active part in FEBS varies greatly. It would be helpful if Societies would suggest ideas more often, for example for advanced courses or other activities.

The past 10 years do not appear to have diminished the need for FEBS nor has the original enthusiasm vanished. As an organization it is now firmly established and widely respected and the future prospects are bright.

Throughout the time I have been associated with FEBS, Prakash Datta has been a constant source of strength with his tremendous keenness and wise counsel. FEBS is indeed fortunate in having him as Treasurer. For me, personally, the years in FEBS have been exhilarating and enjoyable, above all because of the opportunities of meeting and working with so many colleagues, from all the different Societies, whose friendship I shall always value highly.

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