

FEMSLE 80001

## The Federation of European Microbiological Societies: An Historical Review

Edwin A. Dawes

*FEMS Archivist, Department of Applied Biology, University of Hull, Hull, UK*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Federation of European Microbiological Societies (FEMS) has been in existence now for almost nineteen years. From its small but sure beginnings it has grown into a dynamic organization that links some twenty-nine societies from twenty-three different countries, encouraging joint activities, facilitating communication between them and sponsoring meetings, laboratory workshops and fellowships. As the old barriers have collapsed and a new wave of change is sweeping through Eastern Europe, it seems an appropriate time to review the birth and activities to date of the Federation as a celebration of the 100th volume of *FEMS Microbiology Letters*.

The aim of this paper is to produce a reasonably comprehensive chronicle of FEMS and its affairs but, to ensure a narrative style, data concerning all the Officers and member societies

have been collected as appendices, making them readily accessible for reference.

### 2. THE BEGINNINGS

The first federation of microbiological societies in Europe was a geographically-restricted consortium entitled the North-West European Microbiology Group (NWEMG), which had come into existence in 1968. It comprised societies from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom (Society for General Microbiology and Society for Applied Bacteriology), and proved to be a fruitful forum for international interaction. Its meetings were characterised as delightful scientific and social occasions. Prior to this, the biochemical societies of Europe had been formed into a much larger grouping known as the Federation of European Biochemical Societies (FEBS), which served as the model for aspirations to a much wider association of European microbiological societies. The impetus for this geographically-unrestricted European federation came principally from three Officers of the Society for General Microbiology (SGM): the then President, D.G. (later Sir David) Evans, Treasurer Harry Smith and International Secretary Tony Rose, strongly supported by André Lwoff in Paris.

---

*Correspondence to:* E.A. Dawes, FEMS Archivist, Department of Applied Biology, University of Hull, Hull, HU6 7RX, UK.

Accordingly, the SGM financed a preliminary meeting of interested parties in Paris in May 1973. Representatives of thirteen European microbiological societies attended and nine of these delegates were firmly committed to the concept of a Federation.

A second meeting of representatives was called on 17–18 January 1974 at the Ciba Foundation in London under the chairmanship of David Evans. On this occasion thirteen societies were represented and five others indicated interest. Those present were in favour of a Federation but the representatives of the Danish, Dutch and Finnish Societies understandably expressed concern for the possible effect on the NWEMG and wished to discuss that matter further with their societies. (Here it may be recorded that the NWEMG continued to function for several years after the foundation of FEMS. It was finally wound up at a meeting in Dublin, Eire, in September 1979.)

A draft set of Statutes, based on those of FEBS, was drawn up and circulated to all representatives. It was agreed that the Headquarters of the Federation should be at the Office of the Society for General Microbiology (then at Harvest House, Reading, UK), an arrangement that has continued happily to the present day.

An interim Executive Committee was elected comprising A. Lwoff (Société Française de Microbiologie), M. Modarski (Polish Society for Microbiology), A.H. Rose (Society for General Microbiology), H. Seeliger (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Hygiene und Mikrobiologie) who served as Chairman pro tem, and H. Smith (Society for General Microbiology). They were charged with arranging the first meeting of a Council of the Federation in the autumn of 1974, to which all European microbiological societies would be invited to send a delegate, and at this meeting an Executive Committee would be formally elected. They were also requested to arrange the first scientific meeting of the Federation in the late Spring of 1975. Dr. Rose agreed to act as Secretary until the first meeting of the Council of the Federation, which was scheduled for Amsterdam on 22 November 1974.

The Amsterdam meeting was held in two parts because of the need to elect an Executive Com-

mittee. During the first part H. Seeliger occupied the chair and a discussion on the duties of the individual officers ensued, focused particularly on the Meetings Secretary, an office not recognised by many of the societies yet one perceived to be critical for the effective functioning of the Federation. Council members wished to see the Meetings Secretary effect a liaison with a local individual for each meeting, the final programme for which must be approved by the Executive Committee. The Meetings Secretary would also be responsible for issuing notices of meetings.

The Council adjourned to allow a Nominating Committee to deliberate and then unanimously accepted its recommendations for the appointment of A. Lwoff as President; M. Modarski, Vice-President; H. Smith, Treasurer; A.H. Rose, Secretary-General; and C.J.E.A. Bulder as Meetings Secretary. With discussion of revisions to the Statutes, meetings policy, finances, publications policy and publicity the first Council meeting concluded and FEMS was well and truly launched.

### 3. THE FEMS COUNCIL

The composition of the FEMS Council was established as comprising the Officers of the Federation together with one delegate from each member society, and meeting once per annum. The pattern of the meetings evolved into the presentation of the Officers' reports on the previous years' work, the approval of meetings for FEMS support, the award of fellowships and discussion of any relevant business. The meetings provide an excellent forum for interaction between the member societies and for the exchange of views. The Secretary-General plays a vital role in the administration of the affairs of the Council and in maintaining rapport with delegates throughout the year: Tony Rose, Jacob Nuesch and Karl Schleifer have successively carried the burden of this important office in admirable fashion.

The annual Council meeting is normally scheduled to link with a FEMS Symposium and efforts are made to rotate the venue through different countries of the Federation. A pleasing tradition

of these meetings is that afterwards the national society hosts a dinner for the FEMS Council. These convivial evenings have been spent in some unusual and delightful surroundings, the most recent (1991) being on a cruise on the Bosphorus hosted by the Turkish Microbiological Society. In 1982 at Pisa, Meetings Secretary Terry Roberts stage-managed a surprise feature at the dinner arranged by the Italian Microbiological Society when he introduced the new Publications Manager, Eddie Dawes, in his role as a magician, thereby initiating what became another tradition associated with the annual function.

At the second Council meeting, held in Vienna in 1975, it was announced that, after two years of negotiations, the Federation had been granted charitable status under UK law, which exempted it from paying income tax on its profits. The Statutes were then modified to bring them into a form acceptable to the Charity Commissioners. An emblem for FEMS was selected at this meeting and the Treasurer reported that the income was sufficient to allow a small subsidy of about £200 to be made available for each of the meetings planned for 1976. It is a measure of the success of FEMS that three years later the sum available per meeting had risen to £2000 and by 1989 was £6000.

The membership of FEMS continued to grow and the current list of constituent societies is given in the appendix together with the year of their affiliation.

#### 4. FINANCE

From the inauguration of FEMS the constituent societies were expected to pay an annual subscription based on a rate of 1.80 Swiss Francs (currency chosen for its stability) per member. Initially this raised about £3100 per annum and at the end of the first financial year (31 March 1976) there was a balance of £1200. Problems were posed by the currency restrictions of Eastern European countries and a system of blocked accounts was operated. The funds held in these national accounts were to be used to finance FEMS meetings when they occurred in these

countries, a system that generally worked quite well.

The agreements reached with the Society for General Microbiology and Society for Applied Bacteriology in 1977-78 for the association of their journals with FEMS brought a crucial injection of funds in the early years, and helped to carry the Federation through the difficult period until revenue from *FEMS Microbiology Letters* ensured financial security. Royalties from *Letters* has continued to be the principal source of income for FEMS but the later established journals are now making a significant contribution. The efforts of Treasurers Harry Smith (1975-82) and his successor Peter Walker (1982-91), the shrewd investments they made and the wisdom they brought to bear in managing the FEMS accounts, deserve the highest commendation. As the assets grew so were the Treasurers able to increase the expenditure on meetings as already noted, and also to recommend support for workshops and the funding of FEMS fellowships.

#### 5. SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

The first FEMS Symposium, on 'Photosynthetic prokaryotes', was held at the University of Dundee, Scotland, in August 1976 and represented the Second International Symposium on Photosynthetic Prokaryotes. It was followed in November of the same year with one on 'Gonorrhoea' at the Zoological Society in London, and a symposium on 'Exotic and resistance plasmids' in December at L' Institut Pasteur, Paris. Three symposia within the span of four months ensured that FEMS had firmly arrived on the scientific scene.

The tempo slowed in 1977-78 with meetings in Austria, Switzerland and Yugoslavia but thereafter, as the FEMS finances improved, the number of meetings gradually increased and with a good geographical spread. Thus the following 'first times' can be recorded: Poland, Eire and Federal Republic of Germany in 1979, Finland in 1980, Czechoslovakia, The Netherlands and Turkey in 1981, Italy in 1982, USSR in 1983,

Spain in 1984, Denmark, Sweden and Hungary in 1985, Israel in 1986, Democratic Republic of Germany and Portugal in 1988, and Greece in 1990.

The meeting held jointly between the NWEMG, the Society for General Microbiology and FEMS at Dublin, Eire, in September 1979 on 'Extracellular products of microorganisms' was noteworthy because on that occasion the NWEMG was formally wound up after its eleven years of existence. By this time it had become apparent that FEMS was more than adequately covering the function that the NWEMG had so admirably fulfilled since 1968.

In retrospect, it is interesting to recall the detailed discussion that developed at the First Council meeting when the role and duties of the Meetings Secretary were proposed. This post was rightly perceived to be a keystone in the edifice of the Federation. With responsibilities for all FEMS Symposia and Workshops, liaising with local organizers in venues throughout Europe, and tackling the inevitable problems that arise in the planning and organization of scientific meetings, the post is a vital one. During the initial two years C.J.E.A. Bulder of The Netherlands occupied the post and then from 1977 during the period of rapid expansion of FEMS activities, Terry Roberts, with boundless energy and charismatic personality, forged links that ensured the annual programme of meetings reflecting the dynamism of the Federation. When he retired in 1984, John Arbuthnott succeeded him and continued, with his own characteristic vigour, to mastermind the schedule of meetings, handing over in 1990 to the present incumbent, Ron Board, who continues in the best traditions of this demanding office.

## 6. FEMS PUBLICATIONS

### 6.1. The Journals

Dave Tempest, in his entertaining recollections of the launch of *FEMS Microbiology Letters* in this issue, has emphasized the well-known function of publications in the financing of scientific societies and how the Treasurer's thoughts

quickly focused on such a source of revenue. Harry Smith, following his remit from the first Council Meeting in 1974, when it was agreed that FEMS should acquire, as soon as possible, a Journal for publishing original papers and, later, a Journal for rapid publication, set about his task with zest. It was accepted that, initially, FEMS should not sponsor a new Journal but rather adopt one already in existence.

With such schemes in the offing, the necessity for a Publications Committee was apparent and in 1975 one was set up under the chairmanship of Roger Stanier, who collaborated with Harry Smith in the publication crusade. (Here it may be observed that the official FEMS attitude to Publications Committees has vacillated over the years, as this chronicle subsequently reveals.)

The possibility of association with *Annales de l'Institut Pasteur*, *Antonie van Leeuwenhoek* or Springer Verlag journals were amongst the options investigated but finally financially advantageous proposals were approved with the Society for General Microbiology for the association of FEMS with the *Journal of General Microbiology* and *Journal of General Virology*, from July 1977. An association with the *Journal of Applied Bacteriology* followed in January 1978. These links, which continued for several years, played an important role in securing a sound financial base for FEMS in its formative period, helping to sustain the Federation until income from its own publishing ventures ensured financial stability.

The ambition to start a rapid publication journal was also being pursued vigorously with various European publishing houses by Drs. Smith and Stanier in 1976. The outcome was an agreement, approved by the FEMS Council in November 1976, with Elsevier-North Holland, Amsterdam, for a rapid publication type journal similar to *FEBS Letters*. [Harry Smith readily acceded to the request of Professor S.P. Datta (Treasurer of FEBS) that *FEMS Letters* not be adopted as the title to avoid any confusion with the well-established *FEBS Letters*; Professor Datta who had been extremely generous with helpful advice during this formative period of FEMS, was, however, quite happy with the insertion of 'Microbiology' to give *FEMS Microbiology Letters*.] Dave Tem-

pest, then at the University of Amsterdam, was appointed as Chief Editor and the first issue of *FEMS Microbiology Letters* appeared in January 1977. Due to his enthusiasm and vigour, and the efforts of his Editorial Board, the fledgling journal quickly spread its wings, attracting a steadily increasing body of authors and subscribers. In 1979 it was agreed to publish a number of short review articles in addition to the short research communications.

Meanwhile, it had become apparent that a Publications Committee was really unnecessary and that publications policy could be more efficiently and economically controlled by a Publications Manager. Accordingly, the FEMS Council disbanded the Committee in 1978 and appointed David Tempest as Publications Manager for a period of three years, co-opting him to the Council and the Executive Committee. The Publications Manager was finally included ex officio on the Council and the Executive Committee in 1991.

However, the agreements with the Society for General Microbiology and the Society of Applied Bacteriology for the affiliation of their journals with FEMS called for the signatory societies not to enter into any negotiations for the publication of new journals that might affect the interests of any existing publications. Meetings thus became essential for exchange of information between the societies and discussion of future publishing aspirations. They were chaired by the FEMS Publications Manager and included the Treasurers of the three societies and the Chief Editors of the journals involved. The group first met at Cambridge in 1979 and was, in effect, a form of Publications Committee albeit of different composition to the one disbanded the previous year.

In January 1982, Eddie Dawes succeeded Dave Tempest as Publications Manager and Chief Editor of *FEMS Microbiology Letters*. The journal expanded from three to five volumes per annum in 1983 and the number of accepted papers continued to rise. The Executive Committee was now convinced that the time was opportune for expanding its publications portfolio, with the intention of generating additional income to support meetings and workshops. The new President, Hans Veldkamp, and the Publications Manager

engaged in discussions with Elsevier in relation to two areas of publication which had been identified, namely ecology and reviews, and which would not be expected to affect the interests of the existing FEMS and FEMS-affiliated journals, views that were upheld by the Publications Group in January 1984. A market survey by Elsevier confirmed the apparent viability of these proposals which were then unanimously approved by FEMS delegates.

Publication commenced in January 1985 of *FEMS Microbiology Ecology* with Hans Veldkamp as Chief Editor, and *FEMS Microbiology Reviews* under the Chief Editorship of Gerhard Gottschalk of Göttingen. These journals started, respectively, as bimonthly and quarterly publications and are now firmly established.

The FEMS publication portfolio was completed with the addition of a fourth journal, *FEMS Microbiology Immunology*, approval being given by the Publications Group during the International Congress of Microbiology at Manchester in 1986. It first appeared in January 1988 under the Chief Editorship of Heather Dick who, most unfortunately, had to resign because of ill health in 1989. John Beale then assumed the mantle of Chief Editor at this difficult time.

The advent of these new journals led Elsevier to introduce an integrated volume numbering scheme, resembling that of *Biochimica Biophysica Acta*, but one which did not meet with universal approval.

The success of *FEMS Microbiology Letters* in attracting an ever-increasing number of acceptable papers compounded the problems of maintaining its reputation for rapid publication and during the 1980s the number of volumes published per annum increased from two to seven. When Charles Fewson took over from Eddie Dawes as Chief Editor in January 1991, he was faced with a particularly difficult situation, as the publication times of 'non-rapid' publication journals were decreasing to threateningly short periods. The challenge was accepted and, with reorganization at Elsevier, the publication times are now shorter than they have ever been.

The association that FEMS has enjoyed with the publishers of its journals is worthy of note. It

commenced in 1976 when the first contract was drawn up with Elsevier-North Holland for the launching of *FEMS Microbiology Letters*. Over the succeeding years the relationship between the Federation and Elsevier overall has been fruitful and beneficial to both organizations.

### 6.2. *FEMS Circulars*

When Terry Roberts took up the post of Meetings Secretary in 1977 one of his first tasks was to inaugurate an information sheet for circulation to the members of the constituent societies of FEMS because communication with members was a vital necessity. Titled *FEMS Circular*, No. 1 appeared in June 1977 and carried statements on Policy by Tony Rose, Finance by Harry Smith, Publications by Roger Stanier plus information concerning *FEMS Microbiology Letters* and the newly-affiliated FEMS journals, the *Journal of General Microbiology* and the *Journal of General Virology*. It also listed the first five FEMS Symposia (1976-77) and two forthcoming meetings in 1978 and 1979 respectively.

*FEMS Circular* started as a biannual and from No. 2 provided a listing of member societies, news of publications, symposia and other topical matters. From No. 3 it became customary to list the names and addresses of the Officers of FEMS and the Delegates of the member Societies.

Ever since publication of the *FEMS Circular* began there was some concern about its effective distribution to all the individual members of the constituent Societies to which it was bulk mailed. From time to time complaints surfaced at the annual Council Meeting that copies were not reaching members in some countries and in these instances the Officers made every endeavour to overcome the difficulties.

The format of the *Circular* remained essentially unchanged until No. 32 (January 1992) when the new Meetings Secretary, Ron Board, introduced a double column style.

### 6.3. *The Symposium volumes*

The prime initial objective of FEMS was to sponsor scientific meetings on specific microbio-

logical topics in member nations and, whenever appropriate, to publish proceedings of the events. FEMS publications policy at the outset determined that Symposia should not be published in the Federations journals. Whenever feasible, a separate book should derive from the Symposia proceedings. These principles were upheld until *FEMS Microbiology Reviews* came into existence in 1985; thereafter, on certain occasions, some papers arising from FEMS Symposia which were not published in book form were included in the *Reviews* journal.

The first FEMS Symposium was held at the University of Dundee, Scotland, on 23-27 August 1976 on the topic of 'Photosynthetic Prokaryotes'. It was organized by Professor W.D.P. Stewart and Dr. G.A. Codd and comprised the Proceedings of the Second International Symposium on this subject, the previous one having been held at Freiburg, Germany, in 1973. FEMS provided partial sponsorship of the Dundee meeting and it gave rise to the first FEMS Symposium volume, a paperback of 264 pages, photocopied from the original typescripts.

Since that time over 40 Symposium volumes have been published, the majority as substantial hardbacks which, from the early 1980s, are readily identifiable on library shelves by their distinctive FEMS logo. Various publishers have been involved. The royalties accruing from these books contribute to the funding of future meetings and workshops.

## 7. SOME NOTABLE EVENTS

There are some particular events, apart from those chronicled elsewhere, that deserve special mention in any history of FEMS and they are now highlighted.

### 7.1. *Laboratory workshops*

As early as 1978 Marian Modarski, the Polish Vice-Chairman, had advocated the funding of laboratory workshops but unfortunately at that time the Federation's finances did not permit support. It was an occasion for rejoicing, there-

fore, when in 1982 it proved possible to sponsor a workshop that was the first of its kind in Europe, an Advanced Course in Microbial Ecology, held at Kastanienbaum, near Lucerne, Switzerland. The course spanned four weeks, was highly successful, and some of the experimental work arising from it was subsequently published in *FEMS Microbiology Letters*.

Other FEMS workshops followed and in 1989 the Council made funds available for support grants for young scientists, such as graduate students, to attend such laboratory courses. FEMS is currently (1992) able to offer £8000 towards the cost of running laboratory workshops.

The first practical laboratory manual to be published by FEMS derived from a workshop on 'Immunochemical and molecular genetic analysis of bacterial pathogens and their virulence determinants' held in July 1986 at Dublin. The book was published by Elsevier in 1988 and edited by P. Owen and T.J. Foster.

### 7.2. FEMS and the XIV International Congress of Microbiology

Several of the FEMS officers, and past and future officers (Harry Smith, Peter Walker, Eddie Dawes, Louis Quesnel), served on the Organizing Committee for the International Congress of Microbiology held at Manchester, UK in 1986. They were determined that young scientists should not be prevented from attending because of expense and to that end ensured that ample low cost University accommodation was available. Further, the FEMS Council at its meeting in Budapest in 1985 approved a scheme for the financial support of two young microbiologists from each member society to attend the Congress. In the event, thirty-one young scientists were supported by FEMS at the Manchester Congress.

FEMS itself maintained a high profile throughout the Congress by operating a hospitality room where an exhibition of the FEMS journals and FEMS Symposium volumes was held. A meeting of the Editorial Boards of the FEMS journals also took place in Manchester where they and FEMS officers were the guests of Elsevier at a reception.

### 7.3. FEMS Fellowships

In 1987, Treasurer Peter Walker was able to propose the sponsorship of a number of short term fellowships for young scientists who would benefit by spending a month or so in a laboratory abroad to learn new techniques. The available funds permitted the award of ten fellowships per annum and Secretary-General Karl Schleifer introduced a rotating basis for ten member societies each to nominate one candidate in the years 1988, 1989 and 1990. However, the constantly improving FEMS resources permitted an increase to 12 and 14 fellowships respectively in 1989 and 1990. They have proved a valuable and popular addition to the FEMS sponsorships.

## 8. CHALLENGE OF THE TIMES

The sweeping changes that have occurred during recent times in Eastern Europe, bringing the re-emergence of nationalities, carry implications for FEMS. It seems certain that the next instalment of the history of the Federation will have an interesting story to record. Our new President, Helena Mäkelä, and her Officers face challenging but exciting times and in this issue she shares her visions for the future.

## 9. APPENDIX

### FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN MICROBIOLOGICAL SOCIETIES OFFICERS 1975-1992

#### CHAIRMEN

André Lwoff (France)	1975-1977
Orjan Ouchterlony (Sweden)	1977-1980
Eduard Kellenberger (Switzerland)	1980-1983
Hans Veldkamp (Netherlands)	1983-1986
Marian Modarski (Poland)	1986-1989
Joseph Alouf (France)	1989-1992
P. Helena Mäkelä (Finland)	1992-

#### VICE-CHAIRMEN

Marian Modarski (Poland)	1975-1980
C.J.E.A. Bulder (Netherlands)	1977-1979

P. Helena Mäkelä (Finland)	1980-1985
Elena Kondratieva (USSR)	1985-1988
Giuseppe Falcone (Italy)	1987-1990
Milos Kocur (Czechoslovakia)	1988-
Cesaro Nombela (Spain)	1990-

## SECRETARY-GENERAL

Anthony H. Rose (UK)	1975-1980
Jacob Nuesch (Switzerland)	1980-1986
Karl H. Schleifer (W. Germany)	1986-

## TREASURER

Harry Smith (UK)	1975-1982
Peter D. Walker (UK)	1982-1991
Louis B. Quesnel (UK)	1991-

## MEETINGS SECRETARY

C.J.E.A. Bulder (Netherlands)	1975-1977
Terence A. Roberts (UK)	1977-1984
John P. Arbutnott (UK)	1984-1990
Ronald G. Board (UK)	1990-

## PUBLICATIONS MANAGER

David W. Tempest (Netherlands)	1978-1981
Edwin A. Dawes (UK)	1981-1990
Charles A. Fewson (UK)	1990-

## PUBLICATIONS

## FEMS MICROBIOLOGY LETTERS

Commenced publication January 1977

## EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

David W. Tempest (Netherlands)	1976-1981
Edwin A. Dawes (UK)	1982-1990
Charles A. Fewson (UK)	1991-

## FEMS MICROBIOLOGY ECOLOGY

Commenced publication February 1985

## EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Hans Veldkamp (Netherlands)	1984-1988
T. Henry Blackburn (Denmark)	1988-

## FEMS MICROBIOLOGY REVIEWS

Commenced publication April 1985

## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Gerhard Gottschalk (Germany)	1984-
------------------------------	-------

## FEMS MICROBIOLOGY IMMUNOLOGY

Commenced publication January 1988

## EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Heather M. Dick (UK)	1987-1989
A. John Beale (UK)	1989-

## FEMS CIRCULAR

Commenced publication June 1977

## COMPILERS

Terence A. Roberts (UK)	1977-1984
John P. Arbutnott (UK)	1984-1990
Ronald G. Board (UK)	1990-

## MEMBER SOCIETIES

Their year of admission is given in parentheses, the Federation being formally founded in 1974

## AUSTRIA

Oesterreichische Gesellschaft für Hygiene Mikrobiologie und Präventivmedizin (1975)

## BULGARIA

Union des Travailleurs Scientifiques de Bulgarie (1974)

## CROATIA

Croatian Microbiology Society (1992)

## CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Czechoslovak Society for Microbiology (1979)

## DENMARK

Danish Society for Microbiology (1974)

## FINLAND

Societas Biochimica, Biophysica et Microbiologica Fenniae (1974)

## FRANCE

Société Française de Microbiologie (1974)

## GERMANY

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Hygiene und Mikrobiologie (1974)

Vereinigung für Allgemeine und Angewandte Mikrobiologie e.V.(1986)

Gesellschaft für Mikrobiologie und Epidemiologie der DDR (1980-1991)



- GREECE  
Greek Society for Microbiology (1974)
- HUNGARY  
Hungarian Society for Microbiology (1982)
- ICELAND  
Microbiological Society of Iceland (1988)
- ISRAEL  
Microbiological Society of Israel (1974)
- ITALY  
Società Italiana di Microbiologia (1975)  
Società Italiana di Microbiologia Generale e  
Biotecnologie Microbiche (1984)
- NETHERLANDS  
Nederlandse Vereniging voor Microbiologie  
(1974)
- NORWAY  
Norsk Forening for Mikrobiologi (1974)
- POLAND  
Polish Microbiological Society (1974)
- PORTUGAL  
Sociedade Portuguesa de Microbiologia (1974)
- SLOVENIA  
Slovene Microbiology Society (1992)
- SPAIN  
Sociedad Española de Microbiología (1974)
- SWEDEN  
Swedish Society for Microbiology (1974)
- SWITZERLAND  
Société Suisse de Microbiologie (1974)
- TURKEY  
Turk Mikrobiyoloji Cemiyeti (1975)
- UNITED KINGDOM  
Society for Applied Bacteriology (1974)  
Society for General Microbiology (1974)  
British Mycological Society (1988)  
Association of Medical Microbiologists (1988)
- USSR  
All Union Microbiological Society of the Union  
of Soviet Socialist Republics (1978)
- YUGOSLAVIA  
Association of Yugoslav Societies for Micro-  
biology (1974)
-

Historical Note

## The genesis of the Federation of European Microbiological Societies: A footnote to history

Edwin A. Dawes

*FEMS Archivist, Department of Applied Biology, University of Hull, Hull, UK*

Accepted 10 November 1994

Recently and adventitiously, some important evidence has come to light concerning the origins of FEMS from records which were not available to me at the time when the historical review of FEMS was written (Dawes, 1992). This note is now appended to that chronicle to set the record straight.

Appositely, the new information derives from the forthcoming Golden Jubilee of the Society for General Microbiology (SGM). Emeritus Professor John Postgate, who is writing a booklet to celebrate the occasion, asked me inter alia about the early days of FEMS in a letter which included the statement "I recall that it (FEMS) grew out of the North Western European Microbiology Group, *having been proposed to the SGM by Mark Richmond in 1972 after a trip round Europe*" (my italics).

This was the first time that the name of Professor M.H. (now Sir Mark) Richmond had appeared in any of the documentation to which I had access; neither had he been mentioned orally or in writing by any of my correspondents involved with the early days of FEMS. Professor Postgate has kindly made available to me copies of the relevant documents in the SGM archives which clarify the situation and it is a pleasure now to be able to acknowledge and record the seminal role of Mark Richmond in the genesis of FEMS.

In the historical review we stated "The impetus for this geographically unrestricted European federation came principally from three Officers of the Society for General Microbiology: the then Presi-

dent, D.G. (later Sir David) Evans, Treasurer Harry Smith and International Secretary Tony Rose, strongly supported by André Lwoff in Paris" (Dawes, 1992). This impetus came about in the following way. At the request of David Evans, Mark Richmond, at that time Professor of Bacteriology at the University of Bristol, wrote on 18 September 1972 to Arthur H. Dadd, the General Secretary of the SGM, about a matter which concerned him, namely future groupings of the European Microbiology Societies (the North-West European Microbiology Group (NWEMG) had been in existence since 1968). In essence he was arguing for an extension of the idea to other European countries. Specifically, he wrote "Ideally I feel we should try to organise a microbiological analogue to FEBS (?FFMS) [N.B. this was obviously a typographical error for FEMS appears correctly later in the letter], perhaps with regional groupings under the single organisation (N.W. Group, Central Group, S.W. Group; with a possible later addition of an Eastern component) . . . . Anyway, I think a FEMS has much to offer Microbiology in Europe."

Dr. Dadd reported receipt of Professor Richmond's letter to the SGM Council at their 170th Meeting held on 6 October 1972, and the International Secretary suggested that this important matter be discussed at their next meeting, when a paper would be available for discussion.

Accordingly, the minutes of the 171st SGM Council Meeting on 17 November 1972, record,

under the heading of 'European Microbiology', that Professor Rose "explained the Appendices involved". These were two in number. The first (Appendix 171G), by Professor Rose, was titled "Possibilities for an extended association between the Society for General Microbiology and other European Microbiological Societies" and was written in support of Professor Richmond's letter, which constituted Appendix 171H. The paper offered three possible forms of an association of which one was

"an all-embracing type of association, similar to the Federation of European Biochemical Societies".

What followed is, of course, already documented.

### Reference

- Dawes, E.A. (1992) The Federation of European Microbiological Societies: An historical review. *FEMS Microbiol. Lett.* 100, 15–24.