Just before they closed the matter, there was a slight hush in the Reston, Va., hotel conference room.

The 11 contractors, all executive officers of the international association of Wall and Ceiling Contractors and the Gypsum Drywall Contractors International, were coming to the end of two days of meetings.

All Saturday morning they had been together, talking, discussing, shaping the final major points. For the past five minutes, though, they had worked and re-worked a trivial point—and they were tired of it. The fatigue showed.

As the hush settled, John W. Thomson, Jr., of Miami, former President of iaWCC and now President Emeritus, who was seated in the middle chair on the right side of the huge table, leaned forward.

He cupped his hands on top the desk, and took in every person with a long sweeping look that started from his left. "Gentlemen," he said, quietly, "we all came here today to sign this agreement. I suggest we get on with it."

The face of Al J. Ricca, President of iaWCC, broke into a careful smile. So, too, did T. J. Vogle’s, GDCI's President.

As Presidents, they needed consensus.

Now, it was here.

Almost in unison there was a sound of exhaling and the contractors got up from their chairs and moved to another table, a round one at the end of the room.

Ricca and Vogle took the middle seats and the other men tilled in around them. Larry McReynolds, legal counsel from Atlanta, Ga., abruptly and expectedly produced the necessary documents and they were quickly pushed into position in front of the two presidents.

Out came the pens. The flashbulbs and pictures took a few minutes.

Then it was done. The signatures were on the agreement documents.

The Consolidation is Official

Two years ago the organizations had almost reached the combination point. But that initial effort failed. In the minds of many contractors in both organizations, though, the justification for combining the two associations were as valid as ever and they persisted in their efforts to get talks moving again.

About six months ago these efforts culminated in the formation of official committees by both organizations and the move toward consolidation got underway in earnest.

Plan Submitted

A Plan for Consolidation was worked out and this plan was first submitted to GDCI at its convention in San Diego, Calif., early last March. The convention overwhelmingly endorsed the consolidation proposals.

Throughout two days of discussions, iaWCC and GDCI contractors resolved the finer points of the consolidation between their organizations.
From there, the plan went to iaWCC’s Board of Directors at its meeting, late in March, in London. The iaWCC Board and later the convention both unanimously accepted the plan. When it was later submitted to the entire iaWCC membership in a mail ballot, iaWCC contractors voted 95 percent in favor of consolidation.

As a result, the new association now brings together both organizations of approximately 400 contractor-members, making it potentially the largest such organization in the history of the wall and ceiling construction industry.

Negotiations leading to the final consolidation were conducted by the following contractors, under the chairmanship of Frank J. Krafft, of Alexandria, Va., President of the Krafft-Murphy Company and President of iaWCC at the time the first combination effort failed.

Those on the committee included: iaWCC—A. J. Ricea, Detroit, Michigan; Vito J. Arsenia, Cleveland, Ohio; Donald J. Chambers, Mansfield, Ohio; Harry J. Vernetti, Rockford, Illinois; and J. M. McNulty, Chicago, Illinois, alternate.

GDCI—Max Jensen, Bellevue, Washington; T. J. Vogle, Tulsa, Oklahoma; Gene Anderson, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Rolfe Crabbe, Kansas City, Kansas; Robert Mitchell, Denver, Colorado.

When Joe M. Baker, Jr., Executive Vice President of the new iaWCC/GDCI, started opening mail ballots last April from iaWCC members voting on the proposed consolidation, one of the first ones gave him cause for optimism.

The ballot from nationally known John H. Hampshire, Inc., of Baltimore, was signed by a familiar signature that Joe had not seen in a long time.

It was the signature of John H. Hampshire himself, founder of the company, and one of only two surviving founders of iaWCC’s forerunner organization, the Contracting Plasterers’ International Association. The only other living original founder is Joseph D. McNulty, of Chicago.

So encouraged and enthusiastic about the consolidation that would bring all specialties of the wall and ceiling industry into a single organization, John H. Hampshire insisted upon casting the “yes” vote and signing it himself.

Other optimistic surprises have come Baker’s way in the intervening months as he paved the organizational path for consolidation. He visited with many GDCI chapter groups, extolling the advantages of the new association.

Then in Detroit, it happened again. With Len Pohutsky, of Len’s Drywall, Farmington, Mich., as president, and Executive Director Jerry Shields in full accord, the Michigan Drywall Contractors Association decided to become the first affiliated chapter in the new iaWCC/GDCI.

Executive Director Shields fired off the check—and the Michigan drywall contractors officially became No. 1 in the nation.

In New England, the drywall contractors association also voted to affiliate. Other groups, as the magazine went to press, were in the process of deciding.

“This new association has the potential for becoming the most effective group in the construction industry,” Baker said, “and I am most encouraged by the kind reception I have had had in all parts of the country.

“I realize that many wall and ceiling contractors are a bit hesitant right now and would rather wait and see before committing themselves. But, frankly, I see no reason to hold back.

“This association will do the best job for the industry, and in the coming months and years we’ll demonstrate that conclusively.”
The new name “international association of Wall and Ceiling Contractors/Gypsum Drywall Contractors International (iaWCC/GDCI)” will be for three years duration after which the iaWCC/GDCI Board of Directors will vote on the name and all other points involved in the consolidation, including any temporary arrangements.

There will be co-officers for the three-year period, and GDCI will elect 11 directors to the new Board, one from each of the 8 regional conferences and three at-large, serving terms of three years. These directors will serve in addition to the 19 already serving from iaWCC.

Past Presidents of both associations will be recognized equally, and there will be no proxy voting.

The headquarters of the iaWCC/GDCI will be in Washington, D.C., at the site of the old iaWCC headquarters, and Joe M. Baker, Jr. will serve as Executive Vice President of the new association.

Chartered chapters of the consolidated organization now require that all members also hold membership in the new association, but members of a local association not affiliated as a chartered chapter may become individual members.

The magazine, CONSTRUCTION DIMENSIONS, will serve as the official publication for the new organization, placing the phrase “Incorporating Drywall Magazine” on its masthead, and during the three-year period the

Enjoying a joke during discussions are, from left, iaWCC’s Vito J. Arsena, GDCI’s John C. Craig, iaWCC’s E. F. Brady, GDCI’s Bill Marek.

While legal counsel Larry McReynolds and GDCI’s Ted Vogle discuss a point at left, iaWCC’s Robert Watkins turns to hear John W. Thomson, Jr.

Nominating Committee will be comprised of three Past Presidents from iaWCC and two from GDCI.

The convention sites for 1977, 1978, and 1979 will be in the cities of New Orleans, San Francisco, and Atlanta, respectively, in the last week of February and at the Hyatt-Regency Hotel of each city.