IV – General Rules Covering the
Preparation of Bills of Quantities for
Civil Engineering Work

PREAMBLES

Preambles are introductory clauses inserted at the commencement of bills of quantities containing any necessary instructions, references to obligations imposed on the contractor under the terms of the contract and any matters which affect the contractor in pricing the bills and which ought to be drawn to his notice. Their main purpose is to help contractors when tendering for jobs by making the task of pricing the bills of quantities as straightforward as possible.

Clause 21 of the Standard Method of Measurement of Civil Engineering Quantities states that the following directions should be given to firms tendering for works of civil engineering construction, and these will normally be incorporated in the main preamble to the bill of quantities:

(a) Attention is directed to the form of contract, the conditions of contract, the specification and the drawings, and these documents are to be read in conjunction with the bill of quantities.

(b) The bill of quantities has been drawn up in accordance with the Standard Method of Measurement of Civil Engineering Quantities published by the Institution of Civil Engineers.

(c) The prices and rates to be inserted in the bill of quantities are to be the full inclusive value of the work described under the several items, including all costs and expenses which may be required in and for the construction of the work described, together with all general risks, liabilities and obligations set forth or implied in the documents on which the tender is to be based; where special risks, liabilities and obligations cannot be dealt with as above, then the price thereof is to be separately stated in the item or items provided for the purpose.

(d) A price or rate is to be entered against each item in the bill of quantities, whether quantities are stated or not. Items against which no price is entered are to be considered as covered by the other prices or rates in the bill.

(e) Any special methods of measurement used are stated at the head of or in the text of the bill of quantities for the trades or items affected. All other items are measured net in accordance with the drawings, and no allowance has been made for waste.

(f) General directions and descriptions of work and material given in the
specification are not necessarily repeated in the bill of quantities. Reference is to be made to the specification for this information.

These directions cover matters of the greatest importance to the contractor and particular attention is drawn to the fact that, under these directions, all rates entered in the bill of quantities are to be all-in-comprehensive rates, all items are measured net with no allowance for waste and that where no price is entered against an item in the bill of quantities then the item in question is deemed to be covered by other rates or prices in the bill. The contractor is accordingly precluded from making claims for extras under any of these heads and must bear this in mind when building up his unit rates for the billed items.

Preamble clauses are frequently inserted at the head of each individual or sectional bill to cover general and financial aspects of the particular section of work, and which have an important bearing on the pricing of items in the bill.

**PRELIMINARIES BILL**

A ‘Preliminaries Bill’ is sometimes incorporated in a civil engineering bill of quantities. This bill details the general obligations of the contractor under the terms of the contract and temporary works to be provided, and gives him the opportunity to price them, if he so wishes.

Under clauses 8 and 9 of the *Standard Method of Measurement of Civil Engineering Quantities*, general obligations as provided for in the conditions of contract and the cost of temporary works are, as a general rule, to be covered by the billed rates, and there is normally no need for a separate ‘Preliminaries Bill’ as encountered in building work.

**TAKING-OFF QUANTITIES**

(a) *Generally*

Clause 23 of the *Standard Method of Measurement of Civil Engineering Quantities* gives general guidance as to the way in which the ‘taking-off’ of dimensions should proceed. In ‘taking-off’ the quantities for insertion in the bill of quantities, consideration must be given to the order of measurement which is followed in the final measurement of the work. It is suggested that the quantities should, as far as practicable, be those which would result if the contract drawings were to be regarded as the record drawings or details of work as actually carried out. In this way a more logical sequence in the order of ‘taking-off’ will be developed and greater accuracy in dimensions is almost bound to follow.

It is most important that all work whose quantity cannot be determined with a reasonable degree of accuracy should be labelled ‘provisional’, and