8 July 1987

J.L. Côté
ISO/TC97/SC22 Secretariat
140 O'Connor Street, 10th Floor
Ottawa ON   K1A OR5
    CANADA

Subject: WG14 response to ISO/TC97/SC22/N298

ISO/TC97/SC22/WG14, on the standardization of the programming language C, met in Paris, France on 11 June 1987. The meeting was held in conjunction with a week long meeting of X3J11, the American committee charged with drafting a standard for C. By unanimous vote at that meeting, WG14 has elected to make the following response to SC22/N298:

We feel it is inappropriate for WG14 to respond in detail to the technical issues raised by the Japanese response to SC22/N260. Rather, we have submitted their comments to X3J11 for consideration, as document X3J11/87-091. X3J11 has already made several changes to their draft along the lines requested by the Japanese. X3J11 has also committed to reviewing all points raised in SC22/N298. In each case, the response will be either to make the requested change or to explain why no change is considered appropriate. By their current schedule, X3J11 will complete these responses, along with responses to all comments received during the first formal review period, by the end of 1987.

We also feel it is inappropriate for WG14 to wait until X3J11 has completed all changes in preparation for the second formal review period. The interests of the international community are better served by making available, as soon as possible, a Working Draft for C that can be reviewed by all member countries.

We also feel it is no longer appropriate for WG14 to use SC22/N260 as a Working Draft, since X3J11 has made a number of revisions to their draft standard since that document was issued. At our 11 Jun 87 meeting, all attendees asserted that there is nothing in the current X3J11 draft that would prevent any of them from accepting that draft unchanged as an ISO standard for C. There is also strong sentiment for ensuring that the ANSI and ISO standards for C are identical.

We therefore ask the Japanese to accept the responses being formulated by X3J11 as the appropriate responses from WG14, even though these responses will not be completed until the end of 1987.

We also propose that the X3J11 draft submitted to the Jun 87 meeting be used as the ISO Working Draft for C, and we ask the SC22 Secretariat to forward this draft to ISO/CS for registration as a Draft Proposal. A copy of the draft is enclosed with this letter.

We also assert our intention of working closely with X3J11, in the coming months, so that any technical changes to their draft will be acceptable to all members of WG14. It is the goal of WG14, and of X3J11, that the final draft submitted by WG14 for ISO approval be identical to the final draft submitted by X3J11 for ANSI approval.

We recognize that this is not a traditional response. We feel, however, that the formation of international standards for programming languages creates coordination problems that are not well handled by traditional mechanisms. A programming language is an extraordinarily complex creature to describe precisely. X3J11 will have invested nearly 20 weeks of meeting time, over a five year period, before ANSI adopts a standard for C. While X3J11 has d. ayed closure more than once to accommodate input from other nations, we cannot expect them to do so indefinitely.

Thus, the members of WG14 strongly urge that the Japanese, and the SC22 Secretariat, adopt this somewhat streamlined approach in the interest of expediting the standardization process.

Sincerely,

P.J. Plauger
Acting Convenor, WG14