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Preface

This volume contains the papers selected for presentation at The Fourth Conference on Integer and Combinatorial Optimization by the Program Committee listed below.

At this point in time it is perhaps useful to reflect briefly on the IPCO conference series. In 1987 Ravi Kannan and Bill Pulleyblank proposed to the Mathematical Programming Society to launch a conference series on Integer Programming and Combinatorial Optimization following a format similar to that of the FOCS and STOC meetings in Computer Science; namely, consisting of the presentation, in a single stream, of papers distributed as a volume at the conference and selected for this purpose by a program committee on the basis of extended abstracts. The Mathematical Programming Society agreed and offered to sponsor the meetings.

The first three IPCO conferences were held in May 1990 in Waterloo, in May 1992 in Pittsburgh, and in May 1993 in Erice, respectively. It was decided that the conference should take place in every year in which there is no International Symposium on Mathematical Programming. Since the latter event is triennial, IPCO conferences are to be held twice in every three-year period.

By all conceivable measures, the IPCO conference series is a success. The number of submissions to the first four conferences was 76, 74, 83 and 105 respectively, with an increase over time not only in the numbers, but also in the diversity of backgrounds of those submitting. Although in view of the increase in the number of submissions the limit of 36 papers may seem too restrictive, it nevertheless follows from the basic decision to have only one stream of sessions and to keep the meeting within the time frame of three days. Both decisions seem to be essential contributors to the success of the meetings.

Turning now to the Fourth IPCO Conference, the selection of papers for presentation was a particularly arduous task, since this time – as already mentioned – there were 105 submissions, mostly of very high quality, of which only a third could be accepted. The criteria used for the selection were the perceived originality, quality and relevance to the conference subjects of the extended abstracts. All the extended abstracts were sent to all the members of the program committee, who were asked to (a) rate them and (b) select 36 among them before the meeting of the committee. At that meeting, which took place in Copenhagen, January 5 - 8, 1995, the individual ratings and selections were compared and debated extensively, until a consensus was reached on the set to be accepted for presentation. To the Committee's regret, many papers deemed of publishable quality could not be accepted because of the above circumstances.

Although the Program Committee had a thorough discussion of the extended abstracts, it should be clear from the above that the papers of this volume were not refereed. In fact, many of them represent reports of on-going research and it is to

be expected that most of them will appear in a more complete form in scientific journals.

The Program Committee thanks all those who submitted extended abstracts and papers.

March 1995

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