

Editorial

JOHN GALBRAITH, ENGINEERING EDUCATIONALIST.

With engineering in Canada will always be prominently associated the name of John Galbraith, who gave the fullness of his life to the building up of an institution devoted to the teaching of the scientific principles which, when inculcated, formed the basis of many engineering careers. The loss which engineering has sustained at his death will never be fully realized. So brightly has shone the personality of the Dean through so many years that it will continue to shine.

Nearly forty years of a whole-hearted application of one of the most observing, resourceful and judicious intellects, to the problems before it, have left an impress that nothing can obliterate. His tremendous ability, his remarkable alertness to the difficulties of others and to the cause to which he had devoted his life, his unceasing vigilance and prompt yet cool and masterful disciplinary powers, his keen sympathies for the student and his work, for his staff and its worries, for the country and its needs, raised him high above his fellow men, yet nestled him into their hearts.

The encomiums which are being so abundantly and so deservedly accorded him, come with double aptitude, in the light of the fact that death found him in the harness, to the last, never lingering, never slipping, and always in the hearts of his School men, always with them in his heart.

ETHICS IN COMPETITIVE DESIGN.

Competitive designing may be a good thing, providing the rules of the game are observed. Its goodness is altogether contingent, however, upon close adherence to the conditions by which the competition is governed. Otherwise it is apt to come within the category of "skin games."

Recently the council of a western city took a flier into the sport and launched a competition, which is very slow at righting itself to the general satisfaction of all concerned. For even the judges should observe the rules with exactness.

The city employs an engineer. (It may be that our readers will remember a reference in these columns last year to a city engineer, taken suddenly ill, being indiscreet enough to be hustled to the hospital without first bending his knee and asking permission—thereby almost forfeiting his job. It is the same city engineer, and the same city. The incident was commented upon to show the absolute lack of fairness which the city council displayed in dealing with the case.)

Competitive designs were received this spring for a piece of engineering work of interest to engineers and architects. The conditions of the competition, with which we are especially concerned, stipulated that the competitors were required to submit fully detailed drawings to enable the city engineer to check over the design, as regards strength and stability, as well as specifications,

quantities, prices, etc.; that designs were required to conform in line and grade with location plans supplied by the city engineer, and that, should any of the conditions be ignored, the plans, being disqualified, would not receive consideration.

Some 29 designs were submitted by 23 engineers and architects. They were referred to the city engineer. The city engineer also prepared a design, which, it is stated, was not presented at the same time as the others. Later he prepared a second design.

The special committee of the city council took his design No. 2 into competition with the others and recommended it.

The other competitors thereupon held a meeting and protested against the recommendation on the grounds that, (1) the city engineer acted in a triple capacity, viz., as compiler of the regulations governing the competition, as technical expert in judging the designs, and as a competitor; (2) the city engineer's design was contrary to his own regulations, and did not conform to the lines and grades as laid down by himself. Therefore it was not eligible for competition. Having spent considerable time, labor and money on the competition, the competitors (21 of whom had signed the protest) hoped that the council would take a stand which would allow it to be closed with satisfaction to all and honor to the council.

The city has a branch of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers, who protested against the procedure; so did the Provincial Architectural Institute.

The city council adopted the design No. 2 submitted by the city engineer.

In view of the disturbance which resulted from the proceedings, the city engineer, in a letter to the mayor, stated that the modification of design No. 1, which was embodied in design No. 2, had been conceived and prepared before examining the individual plans submitted by the various competitors. He explained that the choice of design was not made by him or upon his recommendation but by the committee; and that he was not present when the decision was reached. He made it clear that since his own designs were in competition with the other twenty-three, he would prefer to be relieved of all responsibility for advising the city council in the matter.

It is stated, further, by one of the aldermen, that no one knew of the design No. 2 until a day or two before the committee met to go over the plans. According to the city engineer's letter to the mayor, his report dealing with the engineering features of the various plans had been prepared prior to this. The sub-committee to go over the plans and city engineer's report was not appointed until six weeks after the competition had been closed. It is very evident that as the city grows older its council is not improving in the matter of fairness. But there is an engineer connected with the unfairness, whose case should be clearer than the circumstances indicate. We have been hoping that our information is inaccurate, but supplementary advices from other sources strongly bear it out. Is it a case of absolute devotion to his employers, in right or wrong, with an equally absolute disregard for engineering ethics?