

Letter to the Editor

Design of Exhibition Grounds

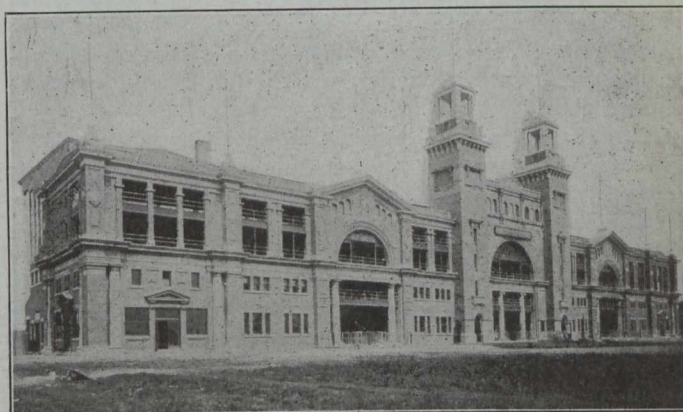
IN the issue of *The Canadian Engineer* for January 18th, 1917, an article was published dealing with the new grand stand under construction for the Provincial Exhibition Commission of Quebec. At that time the work was still in an uncompleted state and it was therefore impossible to illustrate the full architectural design of the structure. The building has now been completed, with the exception of the interior plastering work, and photographs are reproduced herewith showing the facade, and also the stand proper, in readiness to receive the crowds which taxed its seating capacity at the recent annual exhibition.

This stand constitutes a decided departure, at least in so far as Quebec is concerned and in all probability much farther afield, from the preconceived ideas of such structures, and there does not appear to be any good reason why the ideas conceived and carried out should not be expanded to include other buildings which may in the future be required for exhibition purposes.

The question of the utility and the beauty of exhibition grounds in general, and the buildings thereon in particular, is a broad one, and it is unfortunately only too true that it has been generally approached in a haphazard manner without much idea of continuity or symmetry of design. This is due no doubt to the precarious and hand-to-mouth state of the finances of such institutions, which has led to the system of putting down a building when the funds were available, without much reference to what had been done before or what might be done in the future. Such a system is lamentably erroneous, and this fact should be impressed on the minds of those responsible for it; and it would appear that the engineer, in conjunc-

at small expense when the magnitude of the work is considered, and as the funds become available the actual work can be proceeded with as may be deemed expedient.

The present method appears to be for the commissioners, who as a rule know little or nothing about engineering or architecture, to visit the site and pick out a likely spot which may or may not be suitable, and then call in an architect to design a building to conform to the amount of money on hand. If the architect is of an original turn of mind and has an eye for beauty the



This View Shows the Beauty of the Facade

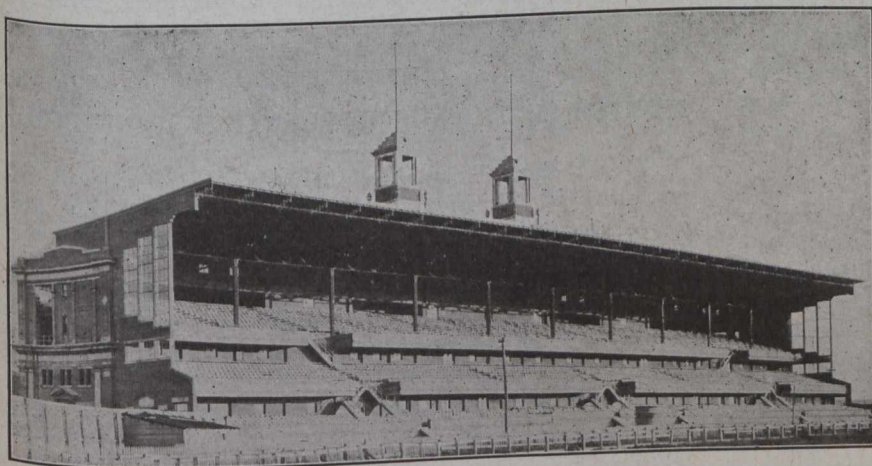
chances are ten to one that he will find himself entirely unable to carry out his ideas, owing to the lack of means, or the opposition of laymen in authority who consider their own ideas superior to his.

To obviate the disastrous results which generally accrue from such a method, the better way would be for the commissioners to have their limitations laid squarely before them in the first place, in order that they might be induced to consult those who are qualified by training and experience to handle such problems. In this way a plan might be evolved, at no very great expense, which would serve as a basis for future designs and construction, and which plan should be consulted on all occasions when funds might be available for developments.

The concrete idea then would be for the exhibition commission to appoint a consulting board, consisting of an architect and an engineer, needless to say both of reputation and experience, to prepare a general plan of the whole site, with such buildings and other structures shown thereon as might reasonably be expected to be required in the future. This plan would then be strictly adhered to in preparing detailed designs whenever such might be required for the erection of structures.

The writer is aware that such methods have already been employed to a greater or less extent in certain communities, but they are not general; and in particular the

city of Quebec is a flagrant example of the antiquated methods touched upon above. As a matter of fact, the exhibition grounds at Quebec have the general appearance of the buildings having been shaken up in a box and scattered at random, to be left wherever they chanced to fall; and as for the architecture of the buildings, there is none, with the exception of the grand stand shown herewith, and possibly one other building. The engineering profession, however, is not particularly concerned with



Showing arrangement of Tiers, one above the other

tion with the architect, is the one to undertake the campaign of reform. It is not by any means opening up a new vista for engineering as the matter is simply one of town planning and landscape gardening on a small scale, and as such belongs in the province of the engineer and the architect.

What matters it if an exhibition commission is not sufficiently in funds to immediately carry out a complete scheme? At least the scheme can be carried out on paper