

It is often the case, in other societies, that a free discussion affords more useful and comparative information than is to be found in the paper itself. Such discussions are good, the weak and strong points of any scheme are brought out prominently, for in the multitude of counsel there is often much wisdom. Discussion also broadens the mind, enlarges the horizon of thought and develops the reasoning faculty; it is also educational to both the speaker and audience alike, it creates a healthy and generous rivalry, and establishes a standard of excellence which by mutual accord becomes higher each year and which will inevitably reflect credit on the profession generally, and give greater satisfaction to the public for whom we work. Such discussion would be of immense advantage to the engineers and to the authorities; the latter would not only secure an excellent advertisement, by virtue of the official visit of the society, but what is of even greater value, the town authority would hear criticisms and obtain information useful for future operations.

Later on, the institution could, if it was deemed desirable, organize examinations in the theory and practice of municipal engineering and in municipal law.

Such an institution would tend to weld together the band of municipal engineers to their own direct benefit, and the town authorities, by sending their engineers to the meetings, would in every way reap great advantages, because the educational and social aspects of such meetings would be conducive to mutual interest, efficiency, confidence, progress and *esprit-de-corps* among the officials.

Considering that enormous sums of money are annually spent by municipal engineers, of various classes, and that so much depends on the efficiency of their works in the direction of public health, public utilities, and public amenities, it might seem strange that active steps to combine had not long since been taken. An official who is perforce to follow solely his own ideas—ploughing his lonely furrow—without seeing what has been done by others in the same sphere of operations, is apt to fall behind and develop the spirit and sentiment of the proverbial cobbler who never went beyond the confines of his own little village.

Whilst in the early stages, it might perhaps, be found possible to form only provincial institutions, the formation of a powerful Dominion institution should be advocated, for in union there is strength and in co-operation there is prosperity. The aim and object of the promotion should be to force it to become a power in the land and that the opinions, transactions and developments of the institution should carry weight and tend to create an appreciative public opinion of the inobtrusive work carried on by engineers in the Dominion. Such an institution, if rightly directed and loyally supported in its initial stages, would soon reach the position when its power and influence would be felt outside the circle of engineers.

At present if any Canadian engineer desires to meet in conference, men of similar vocation, he has to cross the international boundary where, of course, he will see much to his advantage, and though he will certainly receive a warm welcome and a great hospitality, he cannot help but feel a sense of loneliness in the crowd. If, however, a representative society were to make an official visit to the same town the members would not only receive even greater welcome and more bountiful hospitality, but they would also feel far from being lost in the multitude but rather as if they were members of a great family.

From a national point of view, moreover, we should be patriotic enough to be in a position to announce that we have similar societies in Canada, for certainly we have much to be proud of in the number of municipal works, which we can visit.

The suggested Canadian Institution of Municipal Engineers, if formed, could occasionally pay an official visit to a city across the line, just as the gas engineers visited Toronto last year, and the American Society of Civil Engineers visited Ottawa recently. This is a graceful manner of recognizing the internationality of the engineering profession.

The writer does not know what are the views of the municipal engineers on this subject. He has spoken to a few and they appear to be favorable to the suggestion of forming the institution, but it will be advisable to have a free discussion before anything is done in the matter. Perhaps the editor will throw open the columns of this journal for such purpose.

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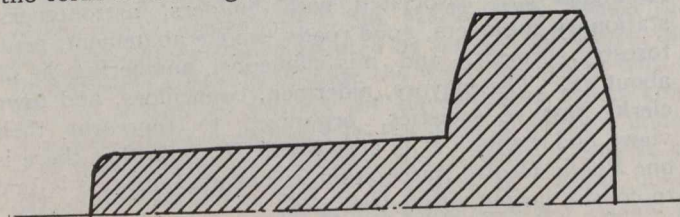
Regina, June 27th, 1913.

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The City of Toronto and the Acquisition of the Toronto Railway.

Sir,—There are several matters which it will apparently be well for the city council of Toronto to take into consideration in estimating the expenditure that will be necessary within the coming year or two, in order to bring the street railway and its equipment into such a condition that will provide a better service than is at present afforded to the citizens.

Gauge.—It must be remembered that the present gauge of the tracks is a special one, and one to which it will never pay any radial railway to construct its tracks. The gauge of four feet, ten and seven-eighths inches, was adopted in the first instance to permit vehicles of ordinary gauge to run inside the elevated portion of the rail. Even at the outset this was a mistake, because it was always a difficult matter for a wheel running upon the lower portion of the rail to be lifted out over the elevated portion, and many a wheel tire was torn off in endeavoring to get away from the track. The accompanying figure shows the form of the original rail.



It is necessary, therefore, for the city council to bear in mind that the gauge should be changed now that there is an opportunity. It should never have been permitted to remain in use when the railway discontinued horse in favor of electric traction.

This change necessarily requires a certain amount of alteration in the tracks, and while this is being done is a most opportune time for widening the space between them, i.e., the devil strip. The necessity of this change has been so self-evident that new tracks and new diamond crossings have already been laid to a greater width than previously, in readiness for this contingency.

Wide Devil-Strip Necessary to Accommodate Cars of Radial Railway.—The actual width between new tracks at present is not known to the writer, but from observa-