

AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE

THE PRESENT LEVEL OF PRICES*

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IN pre-war times the American Concrete Institute held its annual meeting in February, because at that season there is less activity in the concrete field and a larger attendance is possible. The February, 1918, session was postponed until June on account of the war, and was held in Atlantic City at the same time as the annual meeting of the American Society for Testing Materials. This year the Board of Direction of the institute considered it inadvisable to attempt another February meeting, and again called the meeting for June at Atlantic City, where one evening's joint session will be held with the American Society for Testing Materials. The other meetings of the institute have been arranged so as not to conflict with the meetings of the other society, and one open afternoon has been left to permit the members of the institute to attend the session of the other society at which the subject of cement will be discussed.

Special attention will be given once more to the subject of concrete ships. Last year the reports were largely on what was expected in the way of performance. This year the engineers who have specialized in concrete ships will be able to report what has actually been done. Although the armistice brought to a close many plans for the construction of concrete ships, nevertheless the development is looked upon by the Board of Direction of the institute as one of the most important in the concrete industry in the past decade and authoritative information should be of interest.

The following is the tentative program, further particulars concerning which can be obtained from Henry B. Alvord, secretary of the institute, 6 Beacon St., Boston, Mass.:-

Morning session, June 27th: Report of Committee on Plain and Reinforced-Concrete Sewers, by W. W. Horner; report of Committee on Treatment of Concrete Surfaces, by J. C. Pearson; "Effect of Vibration during Placing on Strength of Concrete," by Prof. D. A. Abrams; "Investigation into the Economic Possibilities of Light Weight Aggregate in Building Construction," by A. W. Stephens; "Result of Investigation on Shear, Impact and Bond made for Concrete Ship Studies," by W. A. Slater.

Afternoon, June 27th: Papers on cement will be read at the meeting of the American Society for Testing Materials.

Evening, June 27th, Joint Session with American Society for Testing Materials: Report of A.S.T.M. Committee on Cement, by R. S. Greenman; report of A.S.T.M. Committee on Concrete and Concrete Aggregates, by Sanford E. Thompson; report of A.C.I. Committee on Fireproofing, by W. A. Hull; A.C.I. paper, "Later Fire Tests of Concrete Columns," by W. A. Hull; A.C.I. paper, "The Strainagraph and Its Application to Concrete Ships," by F. R. MacMillan; A.S.T.M. paper, "Effect of Fineness of Cement," by Prof. D. A. Abrams; A.S.T.M. paper, "Cements Producing Quick Hardening Concretes," by P. H. Bates.

Morning, June 28th: Report of Committee on Reinforced-Concrete and Building Laws, by E. J. Moore; report of Subcommittee on Regulation for Strength Tests of Floors; "Temperature Cracks in Chimneys," by J. G. Mingle; "Plasticity and Temperature Deformation in Concrete," by S. C. Hollister; report of Committee on Reinforced-Concrete Highway Bridges and Culverts, by A. B. Cohen; "Concrete Work on the Brooklyn Army Base," by A. C. Tozzer.

Afternoon, June 28th: Report of Committee on Concrete Roads and Pavements, by H. E. Breed; papers on "Fuel Oil Tanks," by H. B. Andrews (design), H. E. Walton (construction), J. C. Pearson (tests); report of Committee on Concrete Sidewalks and Floors, by J. E. Freeman; "Concrete Railroad Track," by A. C. Irwin; report of Committee on Nomenclature, by W. A. Slater.

Evening, June 28th: "Construction of Concrete Barges for New York State Canals," by S. C. Hollister; "Layout and Equipment of the Government Concrete Shipyards," by A. L. Bush; "Problems in the Design of Concrete Ships," by J. Glaettli, Jr.; "Problems in the Construction of Concrete Ships," by R. J. Wig.

MUCH has been said regarding the present situation of public work and especially of road building. I would not attempt to argue for unreasonable prices because unreasonable prices cannot be maintained. I have even gone so far as to say definitely to the producers of road building materials that if they are not in a position to justify their prices and reductions are coming, they should be made immediately.

If war permitted an unusual profit in any commodity that margin of profit cannot and should not be continued, but if products only brought during the war a reasonable margin of profit, and in order to maintain that profit present prices must be continued, it is the duty of you men to uphold them.

Suspicion of Prices

Unfortunately, there is a very marked degree of suspicion in the minds of the public. One industry is awaiting the action of the other with the result we are rapidly approaching a condition which, if not changed quickly, will result seriously. We should realize that industrial victories, like military victories, are won by courage, patriotism, unity and confidence.

I would remind you that we were five years reaching the present basis of prices and we cannot return to former prices and conditions in a few months. I doubt if we want to go back even if it were possible.

I would also remind you that during the last year there was very little, if any, money made by the producers and manufacturers of road building materials.

Brick Prices for Example

Unfortunately, I did not have the privilege of hearing the speech of Governor Cox from Ohio, but read it last night, and while no man in Ohio stands higher in my estimation than Governor Cox, I am afraid that he is working under a misapprehension or from wrong information in regard to road material prices. He referred to the increase in prices of various materials, one of which was brick. I was informed by one of the large producers of brick in Ohio over the phone last evening, that in November, 1917, his contract prices were \$20 per thousand delivered, to which was to be added any increase for labor, fuel and freight. In June, 1918, for deliveries upon the same contracts his price was \$25 per thousand and he assumed whatever increase there might have been in labor, fuel and freight rates. In 1919 his price is \$25, and while it is true that his fuel has been reduced slightly, his increase in the cost of labor since 1917 is considerably more than 100 per cent. and labor is more than 70 per cent. of the cost of producing brick.

Another feature surrounding the manufacture of brick is that the manufacturers have met the request of the government to keep labor employed, with the result that hundreds of thousands of brick are piled in their various yards and are not being used because of the present attitude toward public improvements. It is needless to say that the employment of this labor cannot continue very long unless there is a different attitude on the part of those responsible for public work.

Cement Prices

I am also afraid Governor Cox's information in regard to the increase on cement was unreliable inasmuch as I am informed from reliable sources that the price of cement at the mills supplying Ohio is 15c. per barrel higher than it was one year ago, and no higher than ten months ago. During this period of ten months there was one raise in freight rates upon incoming commodities and two wage increases.

I do not believe the road material industries are less patriotic than any other class of people and, notwithstanding the fact that many of their industries were practically closed dur-

*Address before conference of governors and mayors at Washington, D.C., March 5th, 1919.