

# The Canadian Engineer

*A weekly paper for Canadian civil engineers and contractors*

## Awakening Recognition of the Engineer

Address Delivered November 15th Before the Ottawa Branch of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers—A Plea for Greater Recognition of the Engineer and His Work

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ANY discussion regarding the awakening recognition of the engineering profession must consider to what extent the awakening has occurred and what must be done to make the recognition complete.

The awakening has already taken place in the profession itself, and the extent to which recognition may grow on the part of those outside the profession depends entirely on how far that awakening has occurred within ourselves, and to what extent we are prepared to arouse those outside to a similar sense of awakening.

The recognition from within is a forerunner of the recognition from without, and must be by it inspired.

Let us glory in the fact that we have become alive to a sense of our position and our possibilities, but let us not deceive ourselves as to the headway that has been made. We have awakened, it is true, but are very much in the position of one aroused from a long sleep. We are yet blinking and rubbing our eyes and wondering just what we should do, because the full light of what might be and what should be has come to us, and finds us lacking somewhat in the initiative. During the past decades the engineering profession has been the fountain source of material advancement and has been a mighty modernizing and civilizing force down to the present minute, yet as far as real recognition of the achievements of the profession and its elevation to its real status in society is concerned, we have advanced little beyond the glacial age of tradition; so that fierce fires of enthusiasm will be needed to melt the ice-bound barriers of precedent with which we have to contend.

You all know that for some years past there has been a general feeling of unrest on the part of engineers in Canada, the United States and Great Britain. This has given rise to a general searching and questioning as to why the engineer is not occupying the position to which his ability, education and accomplishments justly entitle him.

In our own Society this unrest, which has been, in truth, a feeling of dissatisfaction based on a certain anxiety towards improved conditions, has resulted in the appointment of a Committee on Society Affairs. But, after all, is not this the result of a professional consciousness which has arisen and demands expression in activity?

At the last meeting of Council, held on October 30th, the report of the Committee on Society Affairs was accepted and approved. Its recommendations regarding changes of by-laws owe much to the Ottawa members of that committee. The report as approved by the Council is now in the hands of the printers and will be issued to our corporate members of the Society within the next few weeks. A vote is to be taken, returnable in time for the

annual meeting to determine if these recommendations meet with the full approval of the membership at large. Not even the members of the committee believe that the proposed by-laws are at present perfect, but if adopted, will mean a long step in advance, and will pave the way for any future improvements that may be proposed.

The extent to which the individual member realizes the suggested changes, and personally sets about to carry into effect the program as contained in the report of this committee, will determine how much the Society and the profession have awakened to a realization of a proper perspective of what is required by the profession in its relations with the outside world.

The distinctive feature of this report is the increased sense of responsibility of our Society, which means the profession, in its relation to the individual member, and of greater importance still, in its relation to its service to the public at large. We have, therefore, apparently reached a point where we know that our former objects were limited and our activities circumscribed, and it is now possible, with that knowledge, to go further, believing that the future of the profession lies largely in how far it is willing to assist the individual member and to what extent he may co-operate with the profession in dealing with all public matters, whereby our interests are affected, using this newly awakened sense in making our combined influence felt outside of the Society. It would then appear that (and let me emphasize) **the awakening of the engineering profession involves, in the first instance, the increased recognition of the profession's responsibility to the individual, and the individual's responsibility to the profession, and in the second place their collective responsibility to the public, and in turn an acknowledgment from the public of the engineer's real place in national affairs, which includes status, remuneration and opportunity of service.**

### Recognition from Without

You will find, generally speaking, that the recognition engineers have received has been as individuals rather than as a profession. Fifty years ago the engineer was a skilled laborer, and his status was such. During that time he has become a man, highly educated, highly trained, and so successful in his application of knowledge to material things, that his work has wrought untold benefit to humanity. The great achievement of the engineer in revolutionizing the material welfare of mankind has fitted him to shoulder greater burdens and responsibilities.

The gradual evolution of the status of the engineer has forced him to take account of other laws and forces than those of mathematics and science, so that to-day he