

MANITOBA ENGINEERS DISCUSS POSSIBLE ENGINEERING LEGISLATIVE ENACTMENTS

THE executive committee of the Calgary Branch, Canadian Society of Civil Engineers, recently submitted for the consideration of the other branches, a resolution regarding possible Dominion legislative enactments defining the status of engineers. The Manitoba Branch of the society met two weeks ago to discuss the Calgary resolution, and as a result of the discussion forwarded the following resolution to the council of the society:—

“Resolved that it is the consensus of opinion of the Manitoba Branch of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers that some organization and legislation be consummated for the purpose of defining the qualifications of an engineer and in the line of organization would suggest the following:—

“That the council at the general meeting in 1918 be authorized to devise ways and means to obtain with the help of the kindred societies, a census as complete as possible of all the professional men engaged in any class of engineering work in Canada and at the Front. When this is done and the men properly classified according to their age, education, training and achievements, that the council be authorized to arrange with the kindred societies to gather all these engineers worthy of the name, under one flag, which would be that of the Engineering Institute of Canada, and carefully enact new by-laws which should be strictly adhered to. This in order to show that this country possesses in the engineering profession a potential strength ready to be conscripted by the government, who should make full use of it not only to do its full share in helping to obtain a speedy victory for humanity, but also, after the war, to make this Dominion one of the foremost countries of the world.”

Commenting upon the above resolution, J. G. Legrand, M. Can. Soc. C. E., bridge engineer of the G. T. P., Winnipeg, writes to *The Canadian Engineer* as follows:—

“It is instructive to note the wording of this resolution, which would seem to show that the majority of the members present at the meeting were not quite clear in their minds as to what precisely constitutes an engineer, and desired legislation to define for them the qualifications necessary for an engineer. But I know that a definition of the qualifications of an engineer was not the only advantage expected from legislation by the majority of the members present.

“If engineering is to be put on the same footing as law, medicine, etc., the necessary legislation should, it seems to me, contain the following main clauses:—

“1st. A correct definition of what constitutes an engineer. In order to obtain this, the main divisions of the engineering profession should be consulted.

“2nd. An accurate estimate of the minimum amount of knowledge, both technical and practical, required for the different grades of membership in each division.

“3rd. The appointment of a governing body composed of legal men chosen by the members of the Institute belonging to the different divisions of the engineering profession. This governing body should have powers corresponding to those of the governing boards of law, medicine, and so forth.

“In conclusion I should say that the seeking of legislation should be done in the broadest spirit, in order to offer the public at large a profession in which they could have full confidence.”

Mr. Legrand had been asked to uphold the negative side of the discussion as to the advisability of seeking Dominion legislation for the purpose of bettering the standing of the engineering profession in Canada. In part, Mr. Legrand's speech was as follows:—

“The question of legislative enactment to place the engineering profession on a footing similar to that of the other professions, such as medicine, law, surveying, architecture, etc., is not new. It was taken up some years ago when there was so much public work being done in this country, but in those days the engineers were kept so busy that there was no time left to look after their own personal interests. But now this state of affairs has been greatly modified, particularly during the past three years, in which there has been a decided decrease in public works.

“The progress of the war has, however, changed the conditions so materially that our profession is coming more and more into prominence every day.

“There is no doubt in my mind but that the engineering profession, especially at this time, should be considered supreme in the professional realm.

“It is the duty of the engineer—I call an engineer a man who devises ways and means and plans the various public and private works necessary for the comfort and well-being of his fellowmen—to demonstrate to the public that he is a man of inventive ability, ready at all times to do them service, and on whom they can rely as a true friend.

“It seems most extraordinary that it should be necessary to explain to any one that even the ordinary comforts and conveniences utilized from day to day, such as transportation, lighting, heating, clothing, home facilities, food, etc., in fact, everything entering into the daily routine of an ordinary man's life, emanate from the brains of engineers.

“It is an undoubted fact that the public at large are not in a position to understand or appreciate the work done by our profession, but the reason for this is that we engineers do not sufficiently inform the public of our doings.

“The engineering profession embraces such a wide field that it has necessarily been divided into quite a number of classes, such as general engineering, embracing railways, highways and canals, etc.; mining; hydraulic; naval; aeronautical; chemical; structural; mechanical; electrical engineering; and so forth. All these classes are of equal importance and are so intimately governed by the same general principles that one cannot progress and develop without the help of all the others.

“‘Noblesse oblige.’ That is, ‘Position and standing impose obligations.’ The obligations of a man who chooses the engineering profession involve hard work at all times in order to improve not only scientifically but socially as well. He must read the best authors and learn how to speak clearly in order to show himself to the best advantage. Further, he must live a clean life, both from the physical and moral standpoint, so that he may enhance the value and reputation of his profession and ultimately bring it to be looked upon as ‘The First of the Professions,’ the position which is rightly hers.

“With such ideals, which should be inculcated in college, the engineering profession will not need any legislative enactment. Indeed, let me remark, as I close, that legislative enactment as applied to the other professions has certainly not improved either their moral or their material standing.”