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The Canadian Engineer

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Editor—E. A. JAMES, B.A. Sc.
Business Manager—JAMES J. SALMOND.

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HEAD OFFICE: 62 Church Street, and Court Street, Toronto
TELEPHONE MAIN 7404.

Montreal Office: B 32 Board of Trade Building. T. C. Allum, Business and Editorial Representative. Phone M 2797.

Winnipeg Office: 330 Smith Street. G. W. Goodall, Business and Editorial Representative.

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ACCIDENTS DURING APRIL.

Statement of accidents in Canada during April, 1908, in the following industries and trades:—

Trade or Industry	Killed	Injured	Total
Lumbering	10	5	15
Mining	7	11	18
Building trades	5	12	17
Woodworking trades	1	11	12
Railway service	32	45	77
Navigation	2	9	11
General transport	2	11	13
Miscellaneous	1	18	19
Unskilled labor	7	11	18

LETTING BY TENDER.

Competition may or may not be the life of trade. Certain it is we require some competition to ensure fair prices. Various methods of securing competition have been used. In many districts contracts are auctioned off. That such a method should still be in vogue is a marvel. The effect of such a system must be most pernicious. Men anxious to secure work bid down until they reach a figure so low that only by using poor labor and poorer material can they complete, without great personal loss, the undertaking. In the end this system is unsatisfactory and injurious to both parties. To overcome the evils of such unreasonable competition the letting of contract by tender was originated. But this newer system seems to have fallen in these evil days. One would imagine that forces were combined against it, so many are the inventions now attached to specifications, which defeat the good purposes of letting contracts by tender.

In many cases an unreasonably large deposit is required—a deposit so large that the number of firms or individuals who may compete is very limited—so limited that competition is eliminated. And coupled with this is the holding of deposits. A firm puts up a large deposit, and for weeks, and sometimes months, it is held while plans and contract are being perfected with the successful tenderer. This should not be necessary. Complete plans and contract should be prepared before the opening of tenders. A few days should be long enough to close the bargain and free all the deposits.

Abuse number two is that some men, not able to estimate on their own design, call for tenders for no other purpose than that they may secure prices—a most unfair and unprofessional practice. A legal method of stealing, taking of a man's time and knowledge without ever intending to give returns.

Our municipal councils are doing more than anyone else to discourage the submitting of fair tenders. Work is advertised, firms from a distance submit prices in competition with local men, but when the tenders are opened the local firms secure the work, even if they are a few thousand dollars higher than their competitors. Result: After a few experiences local men set their own price and the ratepayer pays twice for work completed.

It is not often that the contractor is at fault, but we noticed a most remarkable tender during the last week. One firm put in a tender, which, without mentioning any amount, said: "We will do the work for one hundred dollars less than the price of any other firm." Such a method of securing work cannot be too strongly discouraged. It leads to poor workmanship, defective material, and dishonest methods.

Fair specifications, contract to the lowest tenderer, and a fair contract will secure good results. Any other method will lead to trouble.

Independent United States steel producers have thought fit, though reluctantly, to lower prices of steel in spite of the stubborn refusal of the United States Steel Company. A London despatch of Monday last says: "The cut in your steel market had long been regarded as inevitable. It will not affect our market, because prices here had already fallen considerably. All manufacturing centres agree that there is still an absence of buying orders, but the further decline in coal prices encourages hope of a better selling market."