

In answer to these objections, it is urged that the co-operation of the architect and the approval of the owner, if sought and gained in each instance, will remove all chance of excessive bidding. True; but it will also remove to a great extent all need for a middleman at a fancy commission. If recognition of the right to charge a fee for estimating is made by the architect or the owner, there is no reason for including the fee in the bid. If it is not included in the bid on the contract, it will not affect the total estimate, and hence it will no longer be necessary for all or none of the contractors to agree to charge for estimating. Thus will be removed the necessity for a middleman as organizer. If a fee is paid each contractor for estimating, there will be no necessity for the contractors to form a pool from which their payment may be made. Thus will be removed any necessity for a middleman as broker. Except, therefore, to educate small and irresponsible contractors in good business methods, there will be no need of special agents to make payment for estimating possible, once architects, owners and contractors see that it is desirable. Then if a system can be developed with the proper checks and balances, its adoption will be a matter of good business for all concerned.

#### Some General Considerations

To date, only the "Nelson Form" has proposed anything that would make the plan applicable to public work, which involves a reconciliation of the principle of free and open competition with payment for all estimates. If applied under the Kelley system, it must be applied secretly as noted above, or else the state would acknowledge no limit to the amount it would pay for estimates on any project. This is one of the most important and difficult problems involved in the whole situation, and one which deserves particular attention.

Another important consideration is the extension of the principle to the sub-contractors on a project where the general contractor submits the final estimate. Here again the "Nelson Form" is particularly interesting.

General contractors, in an effort to reduce their overhead costs, have been asking: "If an owner is willing to pay for plans and specifications in order that he may see how his ideas work out on paper, why should he not also pay contractors for the benefit of their experience and efforts in determining what it would cost to transfer these ideas on paper into a concrete structure?"

Since "the owner reserves the right to reject any and all bids," contractors frequently submit bids where the work does not proceed, and where no remuneration is thus paid anyone for the expense of bidding. On the other hand, while it is true that the cost of estimating is a legitimate overhead expense, it is likewise true that modern business methods teach the segregation of general overhead expense as closely as possible, and charge as many items as possible directly against the account where they belong. Applied to the expense of estimating, this means that each job should bear its full share of such cost.

With these views in mind, the "Committee on Methods" presents the following questions to general contractors and others interested, with the desire to secure as much advice as possible in formulating their conclusions on this problem:—

#### Questionnaire

1. Is estimating a service for which a fee should be charged, regardless of who gets the contract?
2. Is it fair to have owners of jobs undertaken pay costs of estimate (a) on projects which are not constructed, or (b) on jobs that his successful contractor has figured for other owners?
3. If selected architects are each paid for architectural competition, would a similar plan work for payment of bidding by selected contractors?
4. If this plan is not universally adopted, will not architects select contractors who do not endorse it to save these bidding fees, and thus possibly eliminate the chances of the latter on such work?

5. Should payments for bidding be based on the lowest bid submitted if work is not awarded; on the accepted bid if awarded; or on what basis?

6. If payment for bidding is appropriate and possible for building work, is it also feasible for railroad work or industrial work let on the unit price basis?

7. Should bids submitted be so itemized as to permit the owners to trade on same to competitors, and thus take possible undue advantage?

8. How many alternates should be included in bids submitted under a plan of payment for estimating?

9. Should bids be opened publicly?

10. Should payments for bidding be made only when all bids are rejected?

11. Should not cubic feet and square feet estimates be included for payment, as competitors otherwise might work out detailed estimates first and then convert same into above units?

12. What provision should be made for re-figuring altered plans?

13. How will each contractor know that another contractor is charging and insisting upon payment of his fee? Is it essential?

14. If this plan is proper for general contractors, shall general contractors extend the same practice to their sub-contractors? How?

15. Will publication of a plan in current technical periodicals bring satisfactory answers; should the letter ballot plan be adopted among responsible contractors; how should a plan be put into operation?

16. Is this plan of duplicate cost of bidding really the most economical for the industry, or should one quantity surveyor be employed by the owner and no charge for pricing such survey then be made by the contractors?

17. What plan do you believe should be advocated for the best service to the public?

#### PROPOSE DAM ACROSS BELLE ISLE STRAITS TO CHANGE NEWFOUNDLAND'S CLIMATE

"NEWFOUNDLAND is contemplating changing its climate," states a despatch from St. Johns, Newfoundland, recently published in a large number of daily newspapers.

"The climate of Newfoundland would be changed if a breakwater were built across the Straits of Belle Isle, between the island and the mainland, and the cold Labrador current were shunted out into the Atlantic Ocean. Such a dam is being seriously considered. It would cost an immense sum of money but engineers say it presents few difficulties.

"The Labrador current at present is the chief factor in moulding the climate, not only of Newfoundland, but of the Maritime Provinces and New England. Coming down from the Arctic Ocean it pours through the Straits of Belle Island, and, circulating around the Gulf of St. Lawrence, washes with its cold flood the coasts of Newfoundland, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Then, passing through Cabot Strait, it turns south and sweeps along New England. Its strong southward flow acts as a cold wedge which pries the Gulf Stream away from all these coasts and shunts that ocean river, bearing the warmth of the tropics, off north-eastward across the ocean.

"If the Belle Isle dam is built, the Labrador current would be blocked out of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and, shearing off south-east, would miss the mainland and continue to affect only the north-eastern coast of Newfoundland. The Gulf Stream then would ease in against the continent and, flowing into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, warm all the surrounding shores and islands.

"The Gulf Stream is responsible for the mild winter climate of England and northern France. England is farther north than Newfoundland. If, after cooling off in its long passage across the northern seas, the Gulf Stream is still such a factor in tempering England's climate, it would have an even greater effect, it is believed, in tempering the winter climate of Eastern Canada and New England."