

# The Canadian Engineer

*A weekly paper for Canadian civil engineers and contractors*

## ENGINEERING PRESTIGE

Relation of Engineering Societies to the Community and to Their Members—Survey of What Is Being and Can Be Done to Improve the Welfare and National Status of Engineers

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IT IS EVIDENT by the action taken by the Engineering Institute of Canada to adopt its present name and to revise its constitution and by-laws, and also by the unrest, not only in Canada but also in other countries, that the question which we have to consider is one which is occupying the attention of engineers generally.

In one form or another, this subject is discussed in addresses, debates and technical journals, for it vitally concerns the profession and is of importance to the public. For reasons which are more or less obvious, engineers do not occupy the status in public estimation to which they are entitled. The Engineering News-Record, of New York, recently referred to an advertisement which appeared in a Dallas, Texas, daily paper, which read: "Wanted at once, forty civil engineers, handymen, cooks, dishwashers and other high-class positions open." We may, of course, dismiss this as a humorous or ludicrous announcement, but it indicates in an ironical manner the estimation in which engineers are held by some people. We, of course, know that the profession is held in esteem by the thoughtful public, but the appreciation generally is not what it should be.

Clemens Herschel, the ex-president of the American Society of Civil Engineers, expressed the opinion that a large part of the lack of recognition was due to the fact that some of the expenditures on public works are made footballs of politics.

The subject of how to increase the prestige and influence of the branch may be considered from two main viewpoints; namely, the relation of the branch to the community, and the relation of the branch to the members. These again may be subdivided under different heads, because the subject covers such a wide field of consideration.

### Relation of the Branch to the Community

W. L. Hichens, one of the foremost authorities in Britain in connection with the ship-building and engineering industries, stated in his Watts Anniversary Lecture for 1918, delivered at Greenock on January 18th, 1918, that "no man can serve two masters. He cannot serve

himself and the community. He can only serve himself by serving the community."

Dr. J. A. L. Waddell, speaking before the Engineers' Society of Western Pennsylvania on February 29th, 1916, said, "It may be stated, without fear of contradiction, that the status of engineering can be improved mainly in one way; namely, by increasing its usefulness to humanity."

The war has produced a great change in the opinions of men and in their conception of citizenship, and possibly changes revolutionary in character and international in magnitude may take place in the early future. This may be postulated by the steps taken to consider questions involving national schemes of reconstruction of social and commercial organizations in Europe and in North America. Statesmen appear to be imbued with the great importance of this subject, and Royal Commissions have already reported in terms which are deemed to be so drastic and unusual that former conceptions of the relations between capital and labor and between the employer and employed have received a severe jolt.

Furthermore, the usefulness of engineers in these matters is being more fully apprehended, inasmuch as it is contended that as it was through their agency that social, commercial and political conditions of almost every country were transformed during the last century. They must play an important part in the affairs of the country to reconstruct the fabric which has been shaken to its very foundation by the war, and to assume their share of the responsibility of adjusting personal, commercial and national affairs. It is manifest that individual engineers can do much in this direction, but their representative organizations can do more, and the more comprehensive the membership and the more united the forces, the greater will be the possibility of promoting the prestige and influence of the branch.

These qualities, however, are not developed in the community without an earnest effort to serve and guide the people and to cultivate a healthy, vigorous and pronounced public opinion.

The shock and stress of the war have introduced many new problems; they have polarized into action many

NOTE.—Last summer the executive committee of the Toronto Branch of the Engineering Institute of Canada, appointed a sub-committee "to study means of increasing the prestige and influence of the branch." The sub-committee consisted of R. O. Wynne-Roberts, chairman and secretary, E. L. Cousins, H. E. T. Haultain, J. G. G. Kerry and W. Storrie. After considerable study by these engineers, and much correspondence, the chairman has prepared a very detailed and comprehensive report of the committee's research work. This report was written with the Toronto Branch

troubles more particularly in mind, but most of its statements are applicable to all branches throughout Canada and to all engineering societies, so the report is of general interest. Instead of abstracting it, we are printing it herewith in full at the special request of the Toronto Branch executive. The executive request each member to read this report carefully so as to be able to discuss it fully at a meeting which will be called at an early date. The committee's shorter official report will be determined largely by the discussion thus aroused.—EDITOR.