

# The Canadian Engineer

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## TORONTO ENGINEERS DISCUSS SALARIES

"WHAT the Institute Can Do," was the subject of four papers read last Friday evening before the Toronto branch of the Engineering Institute of Canada. The papers were by E. M. Proctor, H. A. Goldman, J. C. N. B. Krumm and Geo. Phelps. A. H. Harkness, chairman of the branch, presided. About fifty were present.

Mr. Proctor stated the fundamental aims of the institute and suggested visits to engineering works, the visits to be preceded the day before by a technical paper describing the works. He also urged that debates on engineering questions should be held by the branches, choosing subjects such as the following:—

Is the building of the Georgian Bay canal advisable?

Should municipalities own and operate all public utilities?

Are deeper and wider canals on the St. Lawrence Canal advisable and economical?

Mr. Proctor also suggested that the engineers organize in such a manner that they can insist upon being paid a respectable sum, so as to cause people to have some respect for their opinions. He favored the preparation of a schedule of salaries. He also urged the appointment of at least one capable engineer on every commission dealing with engineering matters, and advocated the encouragement by manufacturers of research work.

Mr. Goldman said that it is no secret that the small financial returns for engineering services have contributed more than anything else to the degradation of the engineering profession. "It is idle and useless," he claimed, "to blame the public for not giving the engineer the proper recognition.

"We must not forget that the public at large knows nothing of the amount of training that one has to go through to qualify himself for an engineer. The public has no idea of the nature of the problems that daily confront the engineer,

and the sound judgment and skill that he must exercise in order to solve these problems. The public knows nothing of these things and therefore cannot appreciate the importance of the engineer in terms of these attainments.

"The public has but one method whereby to determine the value and importance of any commodity, or any class of people whose services the community requires, and that method is by means of the usual medium of exchange, dollars and cents. The standing, importance and prestige of any class in the community is in direct proportion to the value of the services of the members of that class. If, then, the engineers themselves establish a low rate of pay for their services, the public can only take them at their own valuation and can only place them in a class and in a position to which such valuation entitles them.

"It must be evident, then, that never will the engineers as a class occupy the same position in the community as the doctors or lawyers, until they raise the value of their services to the same extent as that of the men of other professions.

"When speaking of the services of the engineer to the community, W. H. Finley suggests that the engineer, because of the nature of his education and training, would be the best qualified to solve the difficulties between labor and capital. It is surprising that such suggestion should be made at all, for what class of labor is there that has sufficient confidence in the engineers, as a class, to entrust them with their financial interests, when as a matter of fact, under the present economic condition, organized labor considers the engineers inferior to themselves. More than that, they consider the engineer as a hopeless economic failure.

"It is realized, of course, that the adoption of Dominion-wide standards of salaries would at first entail some difficulties in the enforcement of same. But on the other hand we must not forget that the question of pay is not an issue between the engineer and the public. As a matter of fact it is only a family affair, requiring just a little adjustment among the engineers themselves; because in nearly all cases the pay and salary of one engineer is usually entrusted to the hands and to the judgment of another engineer, and if that second engineer could have a guide as to what is actually the value of such services as he requires from his applicant, and since such a schedule would serve as a guide, there should be no difficulty in getting a square deal.

"Furthermore, the mistake must not be made that the demand for a square deal is confined merely to the younger men, as some seem to be inclined to think. The truth of the matter is that the profession is underpaid all the way up the line; that many men in full charge of departments, with great responsibilities, are just as much underpaid as their subordinates."

Mr. Krumm urged that a close corporation be formed along lines similar to those enjoyed by physicians, lawyers, dentists, druggists, etc. He suggested a standard schedule of minimum fees to be charged by consulting engineers and urged that municipal engineers be supported to a greater extent by the institute.

Mr. Phelps suggested that a committee be appointed to prepare a list of the municipal engineering staffs in Canada, and to secure full information regarding their salaries, for the purpose of preparing a standard schedule of salaries from the chief engineer to the lowest paid assistant.

R. O. Wynne-Roberts advocated the establishment of an employment bureau. He declared that he is against the idea of close corporation, but at the same time is in favor of being closely united and of ostracizing any engineer who does not live up to the ethics of the profession and the schedule of fees and salaries.

He introduced a resolution calling upon the executive committee of the branch to appoint a committee of five members to discuss how best to organize an employment bureau and to report on same for further discussion at a future meeting. The resolution was adopted.

Mr. Goldman moved that a salary committee be appointed by the branch to study the question thoroughly, and prepare a schedule of minimum salaries and fees for engineering services. This motion was adopted.