

Editorial

COMMUNION OF ENGINEERS.

One of the most prominent weaknesses of the engineering profession is the need of communion among its members. Other professions and also many crafts have established communion for their own benefit and for the protection of the public. It is not absolutely necessary that engineering should be a closed profession for this purpose. Engineers, by the nature of their calling, tend to isolation; their duty often entails a more or less prolonged absence from the company of their confreres. Engineering as a distinct and recognized profession, is a comparatively recent development, although individually, engineers have done much for the public for centuries past. Still, they have their representative organizations in different parts of the world, and are loyal to them, although we must recognize the fact that passive loyalty has not the same value as active co-operation.

A representative organization must necessarily be a reflex of the attitude of its members. A vigorous constitution is seldom found in a languid body. Likewise if members desire to see something tangible and enterprising done by their institution it must be done by themselves or, more correctly, they must see that their representatives are imbued with similar desires.

The Canadian Society of Civil Engineers is the premier organization of the Dominion, and as such, all engineers in this country naturally desire to see it occupy the position it deserves and should demand in the organized life of Canada. If it does not attain the eminence wished for by the members, the fault lies with themselves. The Canadian Society of Civil Engineers has over 3,000 members of all classes, who are engaged on all branches of engineering works. Excellent papers are read at the meetings, but the contributions to the discussions are very limited. If this Society is to fulfil the primary function of its existence, which is to disseminate knowledge, that can only be done by communion among engineers; by a steadfast determination that the Society shall be supported by the united efforts of its members to exchange information on engineering subjects.

It is the experience of engineers that counts in life's work, and no two engineers meet with similar experience, neither do they apply established principles in the same manner, otherwise individualism would be lost and engineering would become more mechanical than mental exercise of judgment. If, then, engineers gain different experience, its value is extremely limited if it is to be hidden in obscurity. The value of experience lies in publicity. For example, if the knowledge gained by experience of sewage treatment, water purification, reinforced concrete construction, and so on, were to be locked up in individuals and denied their confreres, there would be very little progress. We hope no engineer has descended to the level of the secretive miser whose hoarded treasures were not available during his life and could not be found when he died; nor do we believe there is an engineer like Mr. Tite Barnacle, whom Dickens describes as always a "buttoned-up man" lest his information might evaporate and his personal value depreciate. We prefer to think of engineers whose fund of knowledge increases as they impart it to others.

One reason why the remarkable strength of mortar used by the Romans is a forgotten mixture is due to the fact that the information was not imparted to others. It is acknowledged by all engineers that to-day we must rely on co-operation in order that the profession shall not only be abreast of the times, but maintain a slight lead. We can all lag behind if we so chose, but the sentiment is assuredly to be in the van; and to do this, each member must give of his best, and give freely of his own volition, in the belief that by so doing, however humble and insignificant the service may be, he contributes something which may not only confer an inestimable boon on his fellows, but also redounds to his own credit and increases the measure of confidence in himself and others.

Lastly, the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers has just issued its list of nominees for officers and members of the Council for the year 1916. These are the men who are to administer the affairs of the Society next year, and as such we firmly believe that not one of them would resent being out-voted by better men, supposing such were to be found. These men appreciate the honor of representing their fellow engineers exactly in proportion to the confidence which is reposed in them. To be elected simply on the nomination of the committee without a tangible expression of confidence from the members at large is not comparable with an emphatic confirmation of the committee's selection on the part of the members.

CANADIAN OVERSEAS RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION CORPS.

AS announced in a recent issue, the Canadian Overseas Railway Construction Corps returned to England from the Belgian front and encamped at Longmoor, Hampshire, Eng., prior to departing for one of the eastern lines of battle. It will be remembered that the formation of this special corps was the result of a request from the British Government to the Canadian Government for a corps of railway experts. The request was handed over to the Canadian Pacific Railway, and Mr. G. J. Bury, vice-president, at once took the matter up. He called for 500 men, and the applicants who came from all parts of Canada—from Halifax to Vancouver—numbered 5,000. Of the men selected the majority were Canadian Pacific Railway men; but the Grand Trunk Pacific and the Canadian Northern also supplied men. The selected men were bridge designers, civil engineers, construction experts, and so forth. Not a man was taken who was not highly trained. The Canadian Pacific Railway furnished the officers, and Colonel C. W. P. Ramsay, who had charge of the construction of the Eastern lines of the Canadian Pacific Railway, was given the command, while Mr. F. L. Wanklyn was made honorary colonel. Recruiting was started in March, and the corps was completed and equipped by May. It went over to England with 1,000 tons of construction plant in June, and went to Belgium in August. On the way across the corps had a narrow escape from a torpedo, as a freighter which was following the transport was struck and sunk.