

ENGINEERING PRESTIGE

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The question of public ownership of various utilities is one of importance. The branch could doubtless do much to clarify the situation and to show the public the merits and demerits of public ownership.

There are, doubtless, opportunities in connection with the food and fuel problems which we might help to solve.

We could study the subject of producing denatured alcohol for industrial and power purposes.

The question of how to prepare for post-bellum days is of paramount importance from the social, commercial and national points of view.

Problems of transportation, town planning, natural resources, engineering projects, industries and developments, taxation, and many other matters are capable of exhaustive treatment by the branch, and these intimately concern the community.

It might be possible to arrange a bursary for a poor lad to pass through the university, by the assistance of the branch.

Publicity

One important feature in the relation between the branch and the community is concerned with the matter of publicity. Our meetings generally are held privately, attended by members only, and not much information is given to the daily press with respect to what is being done. There are, of course, exceptions, but they are recent and rare.

Cleveland, Providence, Rochester, Philadelphia, Ottawa and other societies have recognized methods of gaining publicity in the daily papers. Some also arrange for public lantern lectures on engineering works for schools, libraries, churches, societies, etc., with a view to instructing and educating the people in matters which are of importance to them. Some societies have done a great amount of work in this direction, Cleveland being a prominent example.

The American Association of Engineers, which was established in June, 1915, and has nearly 3,000 members, "goes into publicity because it believes that engineers as a whole will be benefitted to the extent that the public knows about their work already performed or of the position largely achieved which can be realized when the public really understands what can be gained in greater health, comfort and prosperity."

Dr. J. A. L. Waddell says: "To secure greater recognition (which is tantamount to increased prestige and influence) requires that a more extended publicity be given to the work of engineers and to the results and effects thereof upon the community in which those works exist. It is not sufficient merely to describe the technical details of a structure or other piece of construction work; but it should be shown how such a structure or construction affects the community, by drawing a sharp contrast between the conditions preceding the improvements and those subsequent thereto. It is thus that the public can best understand and appreciate."

This is now partially done by the newspapers, and it is appreciated by the public and the engineering profession, but it requires a persistent, consistent and organized publicity to "establish our profession in its rightful position of leadership by educating public opinion."

Certain daily newspapers make engineering a special feature of certain issues, and publish articles of undoubted merit and originality. Others, again, have occasional items, prepared for popular consumption, but these are often inaccurate and misleading. The description of the

expansion and contraction of the Quebec Bridge is a recent example. The profession welcomes the services rendered by the press, and we feel sure it would give every assistance to newspaper representatives if the opportunity was afforded. Engineers are not always absorbed in the technicalities of their work; they are often able to give ideas. In fact, they have always to organize in advance, and are compelled to be visionary in a practical sense of the word. They have to see ahead and prepare. Who, then, can furnish more abundantly ideas for the communities to aspire to realize?

Gardner S. Williams, a prominent engineer in the United States, recently stated that "the man who conceives, who dreams the dream, is of vastly more importance and value to the world than he who merely makes it a reality. It is ideas that are needed—there are plenty who are ready to execute them. So the greatest in engineering are the designers, those who conceive and produce that which has not been conceived or produced before. The time has come when recognition must be given both to the dreamer and to the builder. Those who have made possible the present condition of human existence, upon whom the world depends for its morning meal and its evening light, for its daily news and its weekly bath, are entitled to the acknowledgment of the debt their fellows owe, and they must get it."

Engineers can become less prosaic and more imaginative and they can succeed in gripping the imagination and appreciation of the public by means of judicious publicity.

W. F. Tye said, "One of the attributes of a great people is to have a thorough belief in themselves." He might have said that the other is to impress this fact on the public mind.

Relation of the Branch to Its Members

The other phase of the question which we are asked to consider is the relation of the branch to the members. The estimation of the prestige and influence of the Branch in the minds of the members is one of great importance, because, while the branch may survive in the absence of a general public recognition, it cannot live long if the members are not satisfied. At any rate, its existence would be that of languor and emasculation if its prestige and influence were inappreciable.

It will be observed that four out of the five objects of the Engineering Institute of Canada, and therefore of the branch, are primarily personal in their significance. We have already dealt with the fifth object, namely, the relation of the profession to the public.

Prestige and influence of the branch are ultimately associated with each of the objects and we will endeavor to present our ideas in connection with each of them.

To facilitate the acquirement and interchange of professional knowledge among its members is a very important function of the Institute, and when fully developed, affords the members an excellent scope for service.

The brotherhood or masonic sentiment of placing the knowledge and experience gained at the disposal of others, should be cultivated, and furthermore, it is even more important that the members should take a greater part in the discussions and papers than has hitherto been the case; it offers an excellent opportunity of enforced study to correct deficiencies. Those who are seeking information should not be reluctant to make enquiries, and those who are in the fortunate position of being able to impart information should be generous in giving it. Free discussions and candid criticisms have made other engineering organizations of greater value to their members. It may be affirmed generally that the value of a paper and