Discussions on Compensation of Engineers and Architects

By Mr. Drayer (Representing A. A. E.)

Mr. Drayer: It seems that one of the relations that might with propriety be established between Engineering Council and the American Association of Engineers is that the American Association might take this statistical work of the Engineering Council has done so well, as illustrated by Mr. Baker's excellent paper and use it in operation.

Mr. Baker has said that Engineering Council took a part in the railroad wage hearing before the Board of Wages and Working Conditions at Washington. So it did, a very splendid part. I am going to tell you just what that part was and be entirely frank in the matter. The other ninety percent want better positions for us. We must develop our service department so that we can get the three, four, five, six—yes, up to ten and fifteen thousand dollar jobs. We have more jobs from $125 to $200 a month than we can fill. We haven't enough of the higher positions. We must develop our service department so that we can get the three, four, five, six, seven—yes, up to ten and fifteen thousand dollar jobs to come into our employment department. I might say I got just a little shock when a party came to us the other day and asked me to find a fifteen thousand dollar man.

Another question is this question of licensing. We are going to discuss licensing, or the registration of engineers, which seems to be the better term. Gardner Williams just came in a while ago and he will tell about it and tell from their experience up in Michigan. Now A. A. E. until recently has taken the position of expressed willingness to help the engineers of any state once they have decided that they want the license law, to put the best law possible on the statute books of every state in the Union.

The Engineering Council License Committee has just recently prepared its report. I think it will be ready to announce pretty soon. When we have that report we will have the license laws of the several states. We will have all of the experience that we are going to have for five or six years perhaps. We will be gaining experience in the meantime, and we can certainly decide upon what is the best license bill. That will not arrive until after Mr. Williams discusses the matter.

What I want to say is this: A. A. E. has the machinery to put license laws in the various states. Engineering Council has not. I am going to get together and help each other.

With reference to federal employees, Mr. Baker has told what Council has been doing in connection with the Keating Commission. Our district office in Washington has been helping the Commission too, and as Mr. L. K. Shumway, president of the United States Housing Council, told me in Chicago the other day, one of the members of the Keating Commission has expressed approval of what we were doing. The Keating commission will probably have its authority extended to cover all the engineers in government employ. There is nothing to prevent it.

Our Board of Directors last Saturday authorized a Federal Department of A. A. E. with headquarters in Washington. We will be in position to provide the machinery. We will have the machinery just as we had for the railroad men. We will be able to do for the federal employees, I hope, as much as we have done for the railroad men, provided, of course, the federal employees come in behind us and help us do it, as the railroad men have so generously done.

There is one thing that I want to take very sharp issue with Mr. Baker upon and that is the question whether you should raise the men at the top or raise the men at the bottom. He spoke about the salaries of the chief engineers being cut. The chief engineer of a western road told me that the maximum salary of the chief engineers was twelve thousand dollars a year under the railroad administration; not five or six thousand, but twelve thousand dollars a year. I know one chief engineer was getting eighteen thousand dollars a year. I think he could spare his eight thousand dollars a little better than some who were getting seventy-five dollars a month or a hundred dollars a month could afford to have their dollar cut in half. When we prepared recently our schedule of salaries for state highway engineers, that question was to the fore. Some of the men said, "Let us raise the fellows at the top. The bottom will come up and take care of itself." Don't you believe it. Take care of the men at the bottom. Those are the fellows that need being cared for and they will crowd the fellows up at the top. I am perfectly willing to see the chief engineers raised. My gentlemen, there is a great deal of trouble in the engineering profession is due to the chief engineers. Some of them haven't back bone enough to stand up for their men when it comes to the question of paying them a proper salary.

It is a time for frankly speaking. It is not a time for speaking with carefully selected words and going away with a misunderstanding.

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