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Ohio State Engineer

Title: Engineers in Building Construction

Issue Date: Feb-1930

Publisher: Ohio State University, College of Engineering

Citation: Ohio State Engineer, vol. 13, no. 4 (February, 1930), 13.

URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/1811/34673>

Appears in Collections: [Ohio State Engineer: Volume 13, no. 4 \(February, 1930\)](#)

ENGINEERS IN BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

Pointing the engineer's need for a cultural background by declaring that "the slide rule must be made to fit the pocket of a dinner coat," Colonel William A. Starrett told the Fourth Michigan Engineering Conference meeting at Ann Arbor recently that engineers had failed in the past to become fundamental leaders in the building construction industry, which they made possible, because they had deprecated the human element.

The ideal leader in the construction industry, Colonel Starrett maintained, is a trained engineer with a genius for business, human relations, banking and administration. Such men, he said, are forging to the front today and taking their places as capable executives in great building organizations. And in respect to training this type of engineering leader, he said in part:

"The graduate might have courses in the development of imagination, the projecting the mind forward to vision accurately the effect of his acts. This interweaves with the even more subtle accomplishment of divining human nature, the probable effect of his manner, conduct and expression and knowledge of his subject on those who have power of decision. Then there is the great handicap that besets every scientist in the practical application of his subject. The thing he knows is too obvious to him. It grates and jars to introduce any element of contradiction.

"Something like that is the constant accompaniment of building, and there is nothing so stupefying to the consummation of a great structural project as the dominant insistence on scientific perfection and logic in every move. Remember that builders were originally regarded as glorified artisans and a measure of that regard still lingers in the business mind. Human relationships play a large part and engineers must adjust to that and realize that the occasional, well considered contempt for engineering conservatism has developed some very practical triumphs.

"The need for cultural background is vitally apparent, for after all, one must be *persona grata* to obtain the initial audiences and nothing counts more than good address. Our magnificent mother tongue is still the open sesame to almost any situation, and consciously or unconsciously, we love to hear it well spoken and well written. All of those are but some of the elements which must be the outward expression of real ability. The slide rule must be made to fit the pocket of a dinner coat if we seek opportunity to show what we can do."

Speaking of the growing importance of engineers, Colonel Starrett said:

"We have as a national president one of our great and distinguished engineers. The world is becoming engineer conscious and it is not too much to venture the prediction that we are at the threshold of an era of engineering recognition so vast as to affect the very fundamental concept of government itself, comparable to the change of public attitude from monarchy to democracy."

The dominant note of the Chicago Centennial, in 1933, will be scientific progress—especially related to industry.