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THE DEAN SPEAKS

The following remarks are taken from Dean MacQuigg's address of welcome to the Engineers of '41. Although addressed to the Freshmen, we think that some of the thoughts are timely for all of our readers:

"A word or two as to what it means to be an engineer. There are really two aspects—one the external, or objective, and the other the internal, or subjective. For the former, engineers may be divided into different kinds—the electrical, the chemical, the mechanical, the civil, etc., etc. Such a classification is the objective one.

"The other aspect of being an engineer concerns that part of engineering which is even more important, if possible, than earning a living for 'what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' I refer to the concept of engineering which may almost be said to be a state of mind, or habit of thought. This is mentioned because you must at once get the idea that engineering has a higher significance than the mere learning of routine, or study of the set of rules governing natural phenomena. You must get the idea that in many ways the profession of engineering is on the same high plane as, for example, medicine, or that highest plane—the ministry. You all know that society demands the highest standard of moral conduct for the ministry; it also expects the physician to give his last measure of skill and nervous energy to the alleviation of human suffering. In no less a degree there is demanded of the engineer the highest standard of intellectual integrity.

"Later, you will know better what I mean when you begin to practice your chosen engineering profession. You will feel sorry for the incompetency of a brother engineer, or for his mistaken judgment, but if you ever hear of an engineer prostituting his engineering intellect you will be deeply shocked. It is a tribute to our habit of thought that this is so, and we can be thankful that such occasions are rare. I realize that it is much too early to open your minds to

the intricacies of professional ethics, but you must always have before you this intangible standard of what society expects in the way of clear thinking from the engineer.

"The poet has the gift of stating truths in word pictures which are more apt than when told in prose. Rudyard Kipling sensed the responsibility which society has placed on the engineer, in his "Hymn of Breaking Strain,"* of which I quote the first verse:

"The careful text-books measure
(Let all who build beware!)
The load, the shock, the pressure
Material can bear.
So when the buckled girder
Lets down the grinding span,
The blame of loss or murder
Is laid upon the man.
Not the stuff—the Man!"

Amplifying the above in an interview for the Ohio State Engineer, Dean MacQuigg pointed out that the scientist, the engineer and the technologist had been criticized, especially in the past decade, because of some of the ills of society. It had even been proposed that science take a holiday—no more mechanization—no more inventions—a moratorium on mass production—in other words, a forced escape from what such people conceive as being due to the machinations of scientific progress. This view, he claims, is suggesting an illogical remedy. In the first place, an overwhelming majority of sane people today would not be satisfied to do without the mechanisms of modern life. As someone has expressed it—"We do not want to go back and live in a cave with bugs in our hair." Is not the logical project one directed toward placing the responsibility where it belongs, namely on Man rather than on the machine? In other words, should the careful driver be penalized by being denied the beautiful and convenient modern automobile because of its misuse in the hands of relatively few nitwits?

Since engineering progress is challenged in this manner, and because of his mental training, it seems that the engineer is to be sought more and more for his advice and guidance; signs are not lacking that the threshold of this demand of society upon the engineer has been crossed.

*The Engineer (London) March 15, 1935.