

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University

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Discussion 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 hearing was sprung on us before we were ready for it. I was in New York in the McAlpine Hotel when word was forwarded by wire from Chicago that the hearing was called, and believe me, there was some scrambling. We proceeded to buy the Western Union by sections, it seemed, the way we sent wires and got our chapters and our railroad committee to working. We worked Sunday and nights. The committee worked on the train going to Washington. We worked until about one o'clock on Sunday night and were ready at two o'clock on Monday afternoon, and at the hearing, set ahead of time, we thought we could be ready for it. The rest of the record is written and may be read by anyone as the court stenographer took the testimony. Council said, "We represent forty thousand engineers." They asked us how many we represented. We said, "Forty thousand railroad engineers, because of the national conference we had on March 17 in Chicago. We organized a railroad department and followed that case through the Board of Wages and Working Conditions, until it was derricked for a very good reason from the Board and passed on to the Regional Directors. We were on the job at Washington and found out about the change a few days after. We took it up with the various Regional Directors and I am very happy to say at the present time we have had increases granted in the Northwestern Region, the Central Western Region and the Allegheny Region. Mr. Bush, Director of the Southwestern Region told us at the beginning that things were all right in his Region. "Now kindly do not butt in" was the tenor of his letters. Lately he has promised to put into effect schedule not less favorable than the one adopted in the Northwestern Region. The way we found out what conditions were in the Southwestern Region was to send a questionnaire to all the engineers in that region. We spent a lot of time tabulating those questionnaires and presenting them.

That is a measure of the history of the railroad case.

What I said a moment ago was that the American Association of Engineers has got the machinery to do these things and that is demonstrated by the fact that it is not going to do but it has done.

In some of these things we and Council have worked at cross purposes. Let us forget our differences. Let us find out the way for us to work together and let us have 100,000 strong so that we may have a truly national voice for the engineering profession.

We have an employment department in the country. We are placing thirty of forty men in positions each week. Of the five hundred to six hundred that are listed in our employment bureau, about ten percent are out of work. The other ninety percent want better positions and obtaining better positions is one of the things we aim to do for them. 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. Now we mean to change our position. We are going to become militant on licensing and we are going to see before a very great while a license law upon 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. But I will not anticipate. Whatever I may have to say on licensing further I will wait 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. Let us get together and help each other.

With reference to federal employes, 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. Sherman, president of the United States Housing Commission, 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 Committee 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. And we will be able to do for the federal employes, I hope, as much as we have done for the railroad men, provided, of course, the federal employes 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 or twenty 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. But gentlemen a great deal of trouble in the engineering profession is due to the chief engineers. Some of them haven't backbone 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.