

## PROBLEMS OF THE DISTRICT ENGINEER — TECHNICAL AND OTHERWISE

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You are glad the subject is the problems of the District Engineer, and not the duties. You know about the problems but about the duties, you are not sure.

In one of your weak moments you said "Yes" when you should have said "No" and thereby caused your friends and yourself to be subject to this ordeal, the ordeal being very much like a shotgun — double barreled.

The problems of a District Engineer are various and numerous. To give you all some idea of these problems, we might rehearse the average day.

The District Engineer is awakened from a fitful sleep some time in the wee small hours by the telephone, and it is Mr. Sam Clay, of Novelty, Kentucky. He says that Willie Smith has another job that pays more money, and he will not be on the Maintenance Crew any longer. He would like to have Willie Smith replaced by George Johnson. You try to explain the reason why the place cannot be filled. As Bulletin No. 2103 happens to be on the telephone stand, you read to him what the Commissioner says on the subject. Sam is disgruntled but is satisfied that he is not being given the run-around. That's something!

The alarm clock goes off, and the District Engineer knows what time it is. (5:00 A.M.) The District Engineer arrives at the office at 6:25 or 6:30 and greets the six or seven on the staff who are waiting for daylight so they can get about their duties. You give them the Kate Smith "Hello, everybody" and the barrage begins. Operator 3 at Senecaville, Operator 5 at Cambridge, Operator 1 at Commerce; call Newton, call Garage 14, call Garage 21. Grader 505 will be ready to go at 9:00. Parts for X-7 shovel arrived. Who is pick-up 4296 to be assigned to?

Operator 3 at Senecaville reports an accident. Operator 5 at Cambridge reporting leaking flues in boiler and car of oil on track. Operator 1 at Commerce wants to know when to expect No. 9 stone on HCT 21675. Newtown Garage is out of coal. Foreman at Garage 14 wants to know, since the equipment employees are on monthly basis, whether to close garage on Saturday or use skeleton force Friday and Satur-

day. Foreman at Garage 21 has completed repairs to D-7 and wants to know when to move it to Aberdeen.

After some discussion with the staff about Maintenance, Rural Highways, Rural Secondary, Construction and Final Estimates, it is time to start the day and the staff scatters. The discussion is for the enlightenment of the District Engineer and to keep him informed as to what is going on. The staff is very competent and capable of attending to their several duties.

The mail has now been opened and brought in. The District Engineer reads it and sees that it is distributed to its proper place. Complaints have AAA priority. Got to keep Mr. Taxpayer happy, and it might be said here that a good many complaints fall in the "recognition" category. (But more about complaints presently.) The District Engineer reads all the mail, incoming and out-going, which is probably not necessary; but he likes to know about various operations so if he is questioned he can give a respectable answer without stuttering or being embarrassed. When Mr. McGee calls from Kankakee, he wants an answer. Therefore, it is necessary to know as many of the details as possible. Approximately five million dollars are spent in each district yearly, and five million dollars are not hay in any league.

The morning mail contains two or three approved Change Orders, an inquiry as to when a certain Final Estimate will be completed. A Resident Engineer wants to know if steel was plant tested. County Road Engineer of Osage County wants to know if we have enough Rural Highway money to buy a car of cement, two hundred tons of stone, and one hundred tons of sand. If the money is available, he asks that Requisitions be made for these materials. The County Judge of Coshocton County is asking for a Rural Highway Supplemental Agreement to include the Buggtown Road, 4.5 miles. There are also four approved Permits and one asking for more information, a complaint from Pottawattime County about a culvert being too small, a complaint from Poke County about a culvert being stopped up by a property owner on the outlet end. Mrs. Smith thinks there should be some kind of sign or something done about speeding at the McDaniels Crossroads, and Mrs. Brown wants a stop light in Pewee.

Mr. Jackson in Wabash County wants to know when you are going to do something about his road. He wrote about it day before yesterday and has not received an answer. If something is not done, he is going to see "Earl". He further says that there are fifty families on that road, and the children cannot get to school in bad weather. All these people are taxpayers; and if something is not done, there will be

a new District Engineer. It so happens that is where the District Engineer was yesterday. You drove up that hollow 1.8 miles, and you came to a perpendicular cliff. In the shadow of this cliff was a two room log house with a lean-to kitchen and a cow shed, and the District Engineer thought to himself, "If there are fifty families in that house and cow shed, it's not a job for the State Highway Department. It's a job for the State Board of Health."

The telephone begins; a dead dog at 7th and Hickory. Two cars of sand have been delivered on a one car HCT order, and the foreman wants to know whether or not to unload the second car. You tell him "Hell, no" and thank your lucky stars for that foreman. In fact, you consider the possibility of getting a raise for him. Resident Engineer calls and advises concrete stone fails gradation and asks what to do. The answer is, "Nothing". Contractor calls and says that Resident Engineer did not get a representative sample. That's one for the book. What is a representative sample? Who knows! We all know that Dr. Gallup didn't know. Resident Engineer reports that M-16 bars, of which there are 117, are 18 inches short and you ask whose fault that is; and he says he does not know. You ask what is the length shown on the plan, and he says they are 18 inches short of plan length. That's your answer.

The teleprinter unlimbers, and the Director of Rural Highways says that you have overspent your allotment in Black County by 272.17 and wants to know where the money is coming from. You realize that the guy who thought of the contingent reserve had something on the ball. The Director of Accounts wants to know where the 14-R is for lodging on the 14th. The Director of Construction wants to know why Maintenance Acceptance Report on RSC 65-69-3 has not been received. Maintenance Director wants to know if mud pump is in working order; and if you have any cement on hand; how soon you can get mud pump, compressor, cement and crew to Central Garage. Director of Materials wants to know how soon you can get another sample of RT-6 from car UTLX 38759. The sample submitted has failed.

A message from the Commissioner says that on Highway 85 there is a bad drainage condition, according to information received in his office. Please investigate, eliminate and advise. A message from the Chief Highway Engineer stating that there is a hazardous break in the pavement on Highway 119, four miles north of Amsterdam. That's the only lucky break you have had today. It was repaired yesterday. The Director of Traffic says that a sign has been displaced at Duganville and asks that it be replaced today and his office be notified. He wants



replacement at once. It is just ninety miles to Duganville, and the Sign Crew is in Novelty.

Judge Riley, by telephone, wants to know if you will be in the office the rest of the day, and a Field Engineer wants you to meet him at Middletown. That's a dilemma, and contrary to the well-known law of Physics — that no two objects can occupy the same space at the same time. The converse of which is true. This dilemma is solved by barber shop etiquette: FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED. You wait for Judge Riley.

Mr. Jones wants to construct drive-in theatre on Highway 16 and thinks the Highway Department should furnish three hundred feet of pipe and blacktop the entrance. He says that when he gave the right of way agent promised to do this; and if it is not done, he will get his attorney to sue. (That was the telephone again.)

The Bridge Engineer gets on the teleprinter and says that the lights are out on the High Level Bridge.

Three telephone calls come in about employment and seven personal calls on the same subject. Bulletin 2103 to the rescue again!

Resident Engineer informs you by telephone that truck 2708 has been wrecked. Engineering Aide Palooka was injured and is in the hospital. A ripe dog is at the corner of 6th and Elm. Mr. Shirley says that the construction of the road has ruined his spring; that every time it rains his spring is muddy. You happen to know the spring is approximately four hundred feet from the highway. You also remember that the spring is higher than the road, and you explain this to him and tell him that the highway could not have injured his spring. That does not satisfy him, and he is going to sue unless something is done. It's a free country!

Mr. Henry is building a new house and is building his house approximately 30 feet from the outlet end of a 36-inch pipe, and the water is causing some damage to his new house. The fact of the matter is the house is being destroyed. Unless this pipe is removed, he says he will stop it up. You remind him that the pipe antedates the house and that it is not on his property, and you tell him not to stop it up. He tells you about his attorney. It seems that attorneys are as numerous as people. Everybody has one.

Judge Riley arrives and wants to know if we can get a road built from Highway 219 to Pea Ridge Cemetery with Rural Secondary funds. You tell him that nine miles of road are already under contract with Secondary funds, and you check to see if there is anything left in the account and find that there is probably twelve thousand dollars. You

tell him that you think we have twelve thousand dollars left, and you will have to refer him to the "Military Engineer". He wants to make an appointment for tomorrow at 9:00 o'clock, which you do, and you also reserve him a room at the Hotel for the night so he can stay in town.

The Tool Clerk reports that the inventory of Special Crew Foreman Jones shows that he has lost an allen end wrench. County Foreman O'Day has reported that two flares have been stolen, which were left to mark a break in the pavement; and the Time Clerk reports that Special Crew Foreman Hughes has erroneously indicated on the payroll the high rate for the Crew February 17th.

Mr. Tom Adkins calls you from Plaquemine, requesting that the Maintenance Crew dig a grave for Bill Bailey, who died yesterday. Bill finally come home.

Mrs. Jenson in Cuyahoga County says her driveway is unsatisfactory and wants something done about it; and Judge Young says the road over the Big Rock Candy Mountain in Auglaze County, on which there is a mail route, a bus route, and a milk route, is impassable and wants something done to it.

The afternoon mail arrives, and the Director of Construction wants to know why Cylinder 11 on RSC 65-120-3 shows poor compressive strength. There is a long distance telephone call from the Central Office, and the Director of Maintenance says there is a hole in the Turtle Creek Bridge floor and directs that same be repaired at once. The Receptionist says that there is a man in the reception room who seems to be very much perturbed and upset. You tell her to send him in, because you don't think that waiting in the reception room will reduce his blood pressure any. This gentleman's complaint is that he was promised by somebody that steps would be constructed in front of his house. This is not shown on the plan, nor mentioned in the deed. You try to trace it down to ascertain whether or not there is any merit in his contention, and you promise to give him an answer tomorrow.

Mrs. Hubbub calls and says that in the construction of the new road through her property they are taking her dirt — that is, the dirt off of the right of way that she has deeded — and using it over on the right of way that has been deeded by Mr. Thompson. She says that she does not want any of her dirt used on Thompson's place. You try to explain to her that the dirt is being used to make a fill and there isn't any thing to do but to take her dirt and fill in the property of Thompson. She says her back pasture is low, and she wants her dirt back and that the dirt on Thompson's place should come from Thompson's

place and not from hers. You try to explain, but you don't make any progress.

"O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts,  
And men have lost their reason."

And this means women, too.

A letter from the Commissioner's Office. Mr. Napper Tandy of Economy, in Delaware County, has written the Governor and complained of the condition of the road between Economy and Crystal Springs. Mr. Tandy lives on this road and he says that it is a school bus route and milk route and mail route and it is impassable and wants something done about it. The Governor has referred the letter to the Commissioner, and the Commissioner has sent it to the District. You know, without asking, that the Economy-Crystal Springs Road is not on State-Maintained system. You are not sure whether it is included in the Rural Highway Contract or not. So you look up the Rural Highway Contract for Delaware County and find that it is not included. Therefore, it is a county obligation. However, you are forced to make an inspection of the road, see Mr. Tandy and explain to him that it is not a state obligation and answer the Commissioner's letter so that he may answer the Governor.

Many stresses and strains have to be analyzed and adjudicated by the District Engineer, but these stresses and strains are not amendable to the ordinary laws of Physics, Mechanics, Mathematics or Graphic Statics.

"The Nine Old Men" should have a theme song, and that theme song should be "Ain't We Got Fun"?

It has not been a bad day; just been fired once and sued three times. Five o'clock. Just as well go home..

When you get home, a note on the desk; call Operator 3 at Kankakee, Operator 4 at Kokomo, Operator 8 at Decatur. Telephone rings, but you have had enough and you let it ring. Just as you are ready to go to bed, it rings again. (10:00 P.M.) You decide to answer it once for luck. The operator asks you if you will accept a collect call from Indianola. Who is it? Mr. G. W. Jenkins. What does he want to talk about? He wants to know why he was taken off the payroll. Now the District Engineer is a very simple-minded person, but you are not simple-minded enough to pay \$1.50 or \$2.00 to let Mr. George Jenkins tell you what he thinks of you; and besides, you might have some trouble with the Division of Accounts about the 14-R. Well, it is about time to call it a day. Another day; another dollar. Now for some more fitful sleep.



You might say that a District Engineer is the Commissioner's spare tire or flat tire. Take your choice.

These are some "Don'ts" that I can think of for the District Engineers: Don't be a "yes" man. Most generally the answer is "no". Don't lose your temper. Don't take yourself too damn seriously.

"I have spoken the tale of our lives,  
For a sheltered people's mirth,  
In a jesting guise, but ye are wise,  
And ye know what the jest is worth."