PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

THE POSITION OF THE ENGINEER TO-DAY IN THE WORLD'S SCHEME.

By MR. H. E. GROVE.

(President).

In presenting my third Presidential Address to the members of the Institute I feel that I should first place on record my deep indebtedness to the officers, Council and members generally, for the help and sympathy that has enabled me to discharge the onerous duties of President.

The past three years have been years of anxiety to me—anxiety that has lately given place to satisfaction. The post war years have been as difficult as the years of the war, though different problems have beset us. It is strange that professional societies should react so quickly to unsettled periods as we have passed and are passing through. It would have been supposed that the converse would have been the case, that the professional societies, including as they do the leaders in the professional world, would have been stimulated the more the more the difficulties arose, and that by the exercise of that steadfastness of purpose which is exhibited in their private professional life they would have been able to infuse into our societies that enthusiasm which is the life-spring of corporate action. It is therefore gratifying to note that we have sloughed off the mantle of inertia that sometime threatened us. Though we regret the resignations that must inevitably occur, it is pleasing to note that the admission of new members continues and that the membership roll is expanding. The Institute financially is very strong, stronger than it would have been had we been able to resume publication. It has been a constant source of regret to the Council that high printing costs should have curtailed our efforts in this very necessary direction. Still the next best action has been taken, and the necessary moneys have been earmarked and authorised for completing our unpublished volumes as early as circumstances permit. I hope that this statement will reassure those members who are chary of presenting valuable and original matter in the fear that it may not reach that large circle of interested readers that our printed proceedings serve.
Once again I strongly urge members to definitely start the preparation of matter for presentation at the Institute's meetings. Members must not forget the debt we owe to our contributors in the past, and that the Institute owes some of its lustre to the valuable material presented to us, and through us circulated over the world.

I find it is a difficult task to leave the subject of our Institution and its life from my address, and it is a task that I have no wish to undertake. My first address, presented to you in 1921, dealt with the "Functions of an Institute," my second, presented last year, took as its theme "The Honour of the Professional Engineering Institutes." These addresses dealt with the policy of our corporate life, and I desire to make some reference to it in this address.

Engineering in all its many phases is the most wonderful of man-made things in this world, of this or of any age. The great bridges, harbours, railway systems, the ingenious and highly intricate machines which perform most amazing evolutions at a speed that the eye cannot follow—all have had their being in the brain of man, and that man the engineer. To-day what is his position in the scheme of things? What is his position to-day in the world; what height has he attained? How does he rank with the great men, of all the ages of all the arts? Again, what is his position to-day? Is he to-day the leader of thought or is he the time-server, the servant, the mere carrier-out of another's policy? There should be no doubt as to what the answer should be: the engineer should be the world's leader. In our hearts we know that this should be, but in our hearts we have, sometimes, the sinking fear that great malign forces have proved and are proving too strong and that the line of least resistance is being taken. By the very nature of his training, by his intimate association with those great forces of nature that the engineer utilises for the service of mankind, the engineer must, of all men, be the exemplar of national and individual probity. The engineer cannot erect his works on a lie or on a half-truth or they will fall. He cannot ignore the fundamental principles of nature, for nature will surely destroy him and his works.

In the world to-day there is a great moral and spiritual deterioration, a deterioration that is not confined to one place or to one people; a deterioration that has spread on the civilised world; and whether it be the natural concomitant of over-civilisation or whether it be the heritage of the war, where those people who gained in extravagant worldly wealth became as soulless as those miserable people that were ground into the dust, there is no evidence to say.
The world morality to-day is on a lower plane, and intrigue and log-rolling seem to be the necessary adjunct to success. Great issues conceived nobly for the greatest good of the whole people soon become measures for the greatest gain of the few. As the national conscience contracts so does the national vision become narrowed. Those giants who pioneered this State and this Commonwealth had minds as noble as their vision was broad and far-seeing. With a great and abiding faith in their race and in the future of this great land they planned nobly and well. Were their like in this land to-day, men noble and unafraid, able to utilise the resources of to-day such as they never knew, then we would have seen the ideal of national development. But though we have not those men we must not lose faith, their like has not disappeared off the earth; they must have bred sons who will give back this great faith and broad vision. It is only by the exercise of this great faith, this broad vision that we shall be freed from the sight of great public edifices standing gaunt and unfinished, an affront to the civic taste; that we shall be freed from the bureaucrat who, because he can ostensibly save three ha'pence, erects his hideous barns in the space nature provided so opportunely for the beautification of a noble city.

Never would the men of that day have allowed parochial interest to pre-empt to itself the controlling interest in great schemes of civic betterment. The greatest intellect would have been given the honour—honour, mind you, and not opportunities for patronage—of controlling and carrying out a worthy scheme.

Where is the engineer standing to-day in the scheme, and what is his standing? Is the world frightened of his probity that he is so studiously neglected? Does any great enquiry on public betterment come forward, the political eye has not power to see higher than a voluble talker with a seat on a council.

Is the engineer always the man who is chosen to investigate highly technical questions abroad—questions involving great engineering problems—which will vitally affect the public?

The world must not always be allowed to consider the engineer as a mere highly trained servant. His mission is to lead, and there is no sphere in which he does not operate nor is there a limit to his activities.

Consider the world without the engineer—in the air, on land and sea and under the sea. Without the engineer no roads, railways, trams would be at our disposal. Our houses would lack water, sewerage, gas, electricity, telephones,
and it is only by the engineer's broad activities that it is possible to build and equip those homes with the standard of comfort such as we now enjoy.

Truly the hand of the engineer is to be seen in every art, in every science, and in every industry in this world to-day. Progress without him is unthinkable. Yet the position is that the engineer now no longer directs—he is more and more being directed by the administrator. Never was the need for strong, unselfish and enthusiastic support of the Institute more apparent than to-day. An institute—that not merely existed for the sole purpose of conferring some material benefit on its own members, but an institute that was a live and dominant factor in the life of the community, an institute that demanded that the development of the State, of the Commonwealth—should be carried out in accordance with the highest ideals of the engineering world. Then, I say, the community would recognise that the engineer was indeed a leader. Luke-warmness will never save us. The Institute must not wait for opportunities, but must be prepared at all times to give its best for the public good. There is a wealth of material all around us, material on which the directing influence of the Institute could be brought to bear, and it should never be forgotten that in the participation of public work for the public good the Institute's influence on its members is incalculable as no one can assess the value to the individual who is lifted from a narrow orbit and is given a broader vision, a greater outlook.

Custom has prescribed that the presidential address shall not be the subject of discussion. I have therefore selected for my theme a subject on which there can be no discussion—a subject which rather demands constructive effort.

There is no need for apologies on my part for the brevity of this address. The thought is there, clothe it as one may.

MR. J. N. REESON, the Senior Vice-President, who occupied the chair during the delivery of the Presidential address, said it was his privilege to move a hearty vote of thanks to the President for his heartening address. It was not often that the Institute had been favoured with a president who served three successive years. But for the unusual conditions that had obtained during the past years Mr. Grove probably would not have been called upon to serve so long. He asked members to accord Mr. Grove a very hearty vote of thanks for his third presidential address.

The vote was carried by acclamation.

The PRESIDENT, in returning thanks, said he had been extremely honoured in being elected for three successive years
to the Presidential chair. He had now much pleasure in inducting the new President, Mr. J. Newell Reeson, to the chair.

The incoming President, Mr. J. N. Reeson, thanked members for the honour conferred upon him. He would endeavour, with the aid of the Council and the members, to carry on the high traditions of the former presidents. He trusted matters would be brought before the Institute that would be not only interesting but beneficial. Their duty was not a personal one. They represented one of the greatest professions in existence—the profession which perhaps came through the recent war with the greatest credit.

Mr. J. T. Noble Anderson said as Senior Past President he was pleased to extend every welcome to the new President. The duties were onerous, but Mr. Reeson was taking up the position on behalf of the profession with a full consciousness of the burden. Members had every confidence that they could not have entrusted the affairs of the Institute into better hands.

The President said a hearty vote of thanks should be accorded the Ex-President for his work during the past three years. They had already passed a vote of thanks for the presidential address, but a record should be placed on the minutes of his splendid work as President of the Institute. The duties of the office during the past three years had been particularly onerous, and Mr. Grove was to be congratulated on the way he had fulfilled those duties.

Mr. W. Ison seconded the motion, and said Mr. Grove's presidential addresses had been valuable for the great thoughts they had expressed.

Mr. J. T. N. Anderson supported the motion, and said there had never been a time in the history of the Institute when so many responsibilities had fallen upon the President.

Mr. W. Reid Bell also supported the motion, and expressed the confidence with which all the members of the Council had sat under Mr. Grove's presidency.

The vote was carried by acclamation.

Mr. Grove briefly returned thanks, and at 9.40 p.m. the meeting closed, after which light refreshments were served.
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