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The President's Address*

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It is customary in the American Concrete Institute for the retiring president to address the members in convention and to choose his own subject. I, therefore, have this to say. Last year when you elected me to be president I pointed out to you that you had broken precedent in choosing a craftsman. That I would naturally see things from that point of view and that I would try to interest other craftsmen in the Institute. After a year in office I wish to supplement that statement and to speak to you about craftsmen in the Institute.

When a man is president he is conscious of the Institute with a consciousness not known in any other office. It is as if a window had been opened to him through which he sees a more complete and more extended Institute. What I have seen has given me the impression that the American Concrete Institute is becoming more academic in character than its charter permits. I feel that it is not properly disseminating the knowledge acquired, which is one of its vital functions. When the vital functions of the Institute are well balanced it is in good health, but when they are unbalanced the Institute is ill. And I feel that the function of dissemination is not good and I fear that unless a suitable remedy be applied atrophy will slowly creep through the whole organism.

The American Concrete Institute is a corporation created by a legal convention and given certain powers or functions more or less closely defined by a charter. The charter of the American Concrete Institute says that the particular business and objects of the corporation shall be to disseminate information and experience upon and to promote the best methods to be employed in the various uses of cement

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by means of convention, the reading and discussion of papers upon materials of a cement nature and their uses, by social and friendly intercourse at such conventions, the exhibition and study of materials, machinery and methods and to circulate among its members by means of publication the information thus obtained.

I have long been convinced that the American Concrete Institute by the normal exercise of its functions has obtained the greatest single store of knowledge and experience upon concrete which now exists. This is the talent of the Institute. It is recognized by the concrete industry of the world; and on it rests the prestige of the Institute. This knowledge and experience is made available to all members of the Institute and is to them a source of power and a mark of distinction. They are known and respected and employed because of this knowledge. Many have received national or even international recognition. Around such men are found other men hungry for knowledge and distinction. Around these men are other men hoping to find what will help them in their business. This is the vital function of the Institute, to gather the talents of all and distribute them to each and the experience of each and to distribute it to all.

Ills may befall any creature even if it be a legal entity. Any disorder occurring in its constitution or its function may be regarded as an illness. For example, if the Institute gathered knowledge without experience by greatly increasing the number of scientists and decreasing the number of craftsmen, it might become a purely scientific society and change the norm of its own existence. On the other hand the number of craftsmen could be increased and the number of scientists decreased until the society became a craft guild. In either case the society would no longer be the American Concrete Institute. Again, if the American Concrete Institute developed a mode of dissemination of knowledge and experience on concrete which was a precisely correct expression of scientific knowledge but which was unintelligible to its craftsmen; or if the Institute developed an impressionistic expression of experience on making concrete, which was without reasonable foundation to its scientists then the Institute's channels of dissemination would have become clogged, a function of the Institute would have been impaired and the Institute would be sick.

As a member of the American Concrete Institute for about twenty years, and an officer, off and on, for nine years, I have become conscious, very conscious, of a tendency in the operations of the Institute to accent the accumulation of scientific knowledge and to slur the accumulation of practical experience. I am also conscious that the expression

of scientific knowledge has been perfected in form until it is no longer intelligible in the arts. As a result of this the American Concrete Institute is in my opinion slowly but surely changing its character towards that of a close society of professional and scientific men interested in the nature of portland cement, its relations to other materials and the design of plain and reinforced concrete structures. The work which this group of men has been doing is of the best, its value cannot be denied, too much credit cannot be given to them. The results of their work have been incorporated into the records of the Institute where they may rest without value, to those, who make concrete until some one with leisure and ability and what Harvey Whipple calls "the urge" reforms them for use in the arts.

Perhaps it is too much to expect that someone will undertake to recast the great accumulation of matter in the records of the Institute but surely it is not too much to expect that the Institute, assuming that it does not wish to change its constitution to that of a purely scientific society, will cause its present and future scientific accumulations to be both *precisely* expressed for the scientific group and *descriptively* expressed for the use of craftsmen. It is also to be hoped that descriptions of experiences in the field will be gathered and suggestively related to scientific principles for the benefit of the scientific group.

In a society such as the American Concrete Institute, it is not possible to cure in one year maladies which have already become chronic but it is possible to point out and to make a beginning of the necessary corrections. It has not been difficult to direct the attention of the officers of the Institute to the symptoms. It is not difficult for you to see them. Look about this convention and ask yourselves where are the manufacturers of cast stone, where are the makers of concrete blocks and pipe, how many here run mixing plants? And where are the field superintendents of contractors and foremen under them? All such people need the knowledge of how to make good concrete and it is a function proper to the American Concrete Institute to give it to them.

The officers of the Institute have begun to re-establish proper balance in the functions of the Institute by means of its technical committees. A new technical committee, 412, has been established. It has been given one of the most difficult assignments ever given to an Institute committee. It has been instructed to review all that is known in its field, and to produce a specification and recommended practice which will be equally intelligible and useful in science, in art,

and in industry. The report of this committee is looked for hopefully by the officers of the Institute. If it be satisfactory the organization and operation of other technical committees will be patterned after it, in order that the work of the American Concrete Institute may be extended in an ever widening circle, which will include owners, architects, field engineers, foremen and craftsmen who are the makers of concrete.

I think this is all that I wish to say. We will have no exhortations to make. The matter is before you for your information and what you will do about it is in the hands of future administrations.