

Concrete Research

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Editorial comment

MANY PEOPLE have for many years advocated instructional courses on concrete for those directly concerned with the making and placing of concrete on the site. It is perhaps surprising that although such care is taken in the manufacture of the cement, although such intricate calculations are made in the design of the structure, and although much time and trouble go into the design of the mix of concrete to be used for a construction of any importance, the actual mixing and placing of the concrete is entrusted to unskilled men whose only knowledge of concrete has been picked up on the job. Nevertheless this is the case to-day. Supervision is exercised, certainly; but it is impossible for the supervisory staff to be everywhere at once, and to remedy this by increasing the number of supervisors would obviously be out of the question, for both psychological and economic reasons.

The solution to the problem is transparently obvious:

train the foreman, the ganger, the charge-hand. They are the men who work in intimate contact with the labourers. If they know what is wanted—and why—they will get it. As Mr Spanton said in his paper presented at the Symposium on Mix Design and Quality Control of Concrete held in London last May: "Get the men interested; let them see that you practise what you preach; and when a man shows enough interest in the work to ask a question, do not blind him by science, but take time off yourself and get down to earth and explain in simple terms so that the man knows what you mean; he will put it into practice, and air his knowledge with his mates, so that in the long run you will receive good payment for the time spent."

The move has now been made. The City and Guilds of London Institute has set out the syllabus for a course on "Concrete Practice", which is designed for the lower supervisory staff, and an examination is to be held in May next year, on the results of which a City and Guilds Certificate will be awarded. The course is of twenty-four weekly lectures, each lecture being of two hours' duration. The Technical Colleges up and down the country have shown their willingness to hold the courses, and at least a dozen will be starting next session. This is an encouraging beginning, but unless the courses are well attended it will also be a dismal failure. It is now up to the industry—for it is the industry which will reap the benefit—to ensure the success and the perpetuation of the scheme by encouraging their men to attend.

It is perhaps fitting that the inauguration of these courses on Concrete Practice should coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of Brixton School of Building. During the last half-century Brixton has occupied a position of ever-increasing importance in the building industry, and the School is taking this opportunity to review and put on record the achievements to date. The Golden Jubilee Celebrations start with an exhibition "Fifty Years of Building Education" which will be held at The Building Centre, Store Street, London W.C.1,

from 11th November to 9th December. The exhibition is to be opened by the Right Hon. Sir David Eccles, K.C.V.O., Minister of Works, at 11.30 a.m. on Thursday, 11th November.

An opportunity of visiting the School itself (in Ferndale Road, London S.W.4) is provided by the Open Week, from 29th November to 3rd December. During this time visitors will be able to see the facilities which have been built up at Brixton over the years; demonstrations are to be held in the laboratories and workshops, and

samples of the work of the students will be exhibited. This open week is the ideal occasion for those concerned in the building industry to see something of the conditions in which their future employees and colleagues receive their early training. Those who have never had the opportunity to see the work of the students at Brixton will be very impressed by their high standard of workmanship. Congratulations to the Principal, Mr D. A. G. Reid, and all his staff, on their fine achievement.