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Editorial comment

YEAR BY YEAR more and more people find that their daily work demands that a large part of their time should be spent concentrating upon a succession of problems of detail. These force themselves upon the attention so rapidly, yet so inconsequently one after the other that it becomes difficult to see one's own achievement as a whole, more difficult still to see it in relation to the work of others. Research workers are, perhaps, as liable as any to suffer from this complaint—indeed, one might also say, it is with them an occupational disease—but designers, builders, administrators and even editors are not immune.

It is well, therefore, that there should be the opportunity, from time to time, to take stock of achievements in one's own particular field by pausing to look at the results of others' work. Just such an opportunity is provided by the exhibition of photographs, "Building

in Concrete", to be held at the Royal Institute of British Architects, 66 Portland Place, London W.1, from 21st to 30th October. This exhibition, which is designed to show the architectural development of concrete and its use in building and civil engineering, has been organized by the Royal Institute in conjunction with the Joint Committee on Structural Concrete representing the Cement and Concrete Association, the Prestressed Concrete Development Group and the Reinforced Concrete Association.

One section of the exhibition will illustrate the early history of concrete as a building material. Although there still exists at least one example in this country of construction in concrete dating from 1877, the introduction of the new material was accompanied by the gravest doubts as to its structural safety and durability, and the discrete nature—or perhaps the conservatism—of the building industry caused its widespread adoption to be greatly delayed. Many of its advantages are only now being realized—the advantages of factory control and standardization of precast units, the variety of surface treatments that can be produced, the variations in colour made possible by careful selection of the aggregate, and the new field of application offered by the technique of prestressing. Some of these are the results of painstaking and methodical research; prestressing is the obvious example. Others arise more as a by-product of practical work in the field: in the drawing offices of engineers and architects throughout the world and, as is sometimes forgotten, on the sites where each new building not following an entirely conventional pattern is itself an experiment in a long-term programme of full-scale research.

As is natural, the larger proportion of the exhibition will be devoted to photographs of buildings completed in the last twenty years. Just how far some buildings in concrete have departed from conventional patterns will be brought home for the first time to many visitors to this exhibition, when they see, displayed in the full light

of the best modern photography, the work of many famous engineers and architects.

As well as photographs from this country, a great deal of material has been gathered from abroad and, in particular, there are a number of photographs of Italian and Swiss buildings which show what the keen imagination of the designer can evolve from concrete in its newer forms. Other European countries which have sent their contributions include Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany and Holland and there are also

photographs from Australia, Brazil, India, Japan and South Africa.

The chief difficulty facing the organizers, indeed, has been an embarrassment of riches, but those who take the opportunity of visiting this exhibition can be assured that the final selection of photographs will show them, in a small compass, the rich rewards of all who, whether by patient fundamental research, by inspired and bold design, or by wise encouragement have put their faith in the progress of building in concrete.