

**Reader Comment**

**A Vote for Professionalism**

SIR—Your excellent article on Jacob Feld (ENR Nov. 9, 1961, p. 50) pinpoints the deficiencies of the "spot check" system so widely used for maintaining quality control in the construction industry. While the emphasis was placed on the problems of building construction in the New York Metropolitan area, it is equally applicable to many other segments of the construction industry.

In recent years, responsible public officials have come increasingly to recognize the economic necessity of competent engineering supervision of construction. It would seem that the prohibitive costs of maintenance where owning agencies have not been adequately represented by competent construction engineers would be sufficient evidence to eliminate the short cut methods of "periodic inspection visits." Where it hasn't, the limelight of publicity now acts to force the issue on public works, to the everlasting chagrin of that vast majority of the industry, which has acted honorably and efficiently, and needs no investigations to motivate it.

If recognition of the professional requirements for construction engineering

comes now, only belatedly, to the field of privately financed construction, it is no reflection on the owners who have tried to save whatever they can on construction costs. It is more an indictment of the architects and engineers who have been willing to cross their fingers, and hope for the best, in order to deliver a design plus nominal supervision to the owner at the customary low fee rates. The complexities of modern construction are such that this could be nearly equivalent to no supervision at all. What is really needed is a determination on the part of the engineers to sell the owners a fully engineered product—well built and well designed. The slight additional cost of good engineering supervision in the field will be readily accepted by owners enlightened by their professional advisors, just as an owner accepts the need for insurance coverage on his property or a medical examination for himself.

We applaud Mr. Feld's courage and forthrightness in working to this end.

M. M. SPECTER  
Construction Engineer  
Highway & Bridge Division  
Seelye Stevenson Value & Kuecht  
New Rochelle, N. Y.

**Russian Statistics Distorted**

SIR—Your article Russian Highways Aren't The Best. But They're Good Enough (ENR Oct. 19, 1961, p. 26) made interesting reading. However, allow me to question some of the facts and conclusions.

Several engineers here have had the opportunity of seeing Russian highways also, and perhaps under different circumstances—they were not making an official inspection tour. In the USSR all official inspectors are toured only in places considered exhibitable to foreigners.

Likewise, statistical data supplied by the government is always distorted. Therefore, your statement that "About 25% of Russian roads are surfaced, 10% paved," according to our observation is far from being true when applied to Russia proper, not including its occupied territories.

Your other statement that an "excellent railroad system" exists in the USSR is definitely incorrect. Adequate service can be found only on the Moscow-Leningrad and Berlin-Odessa runs.

I hope this letter may help to disclose the futility of "official" inspections and that most Russian statistics or guided tours do not necessarily represent actual conditions:

V. J. SLIUPAS  
Muscatine, Iowa

Editor's Note.—ENR asked Frank Turner, Assistant Federal Highway Ad-

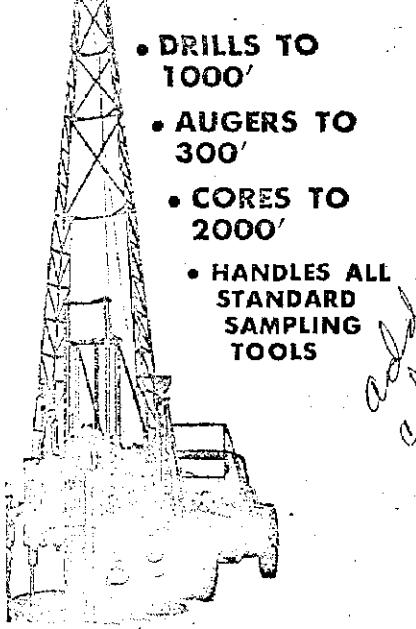
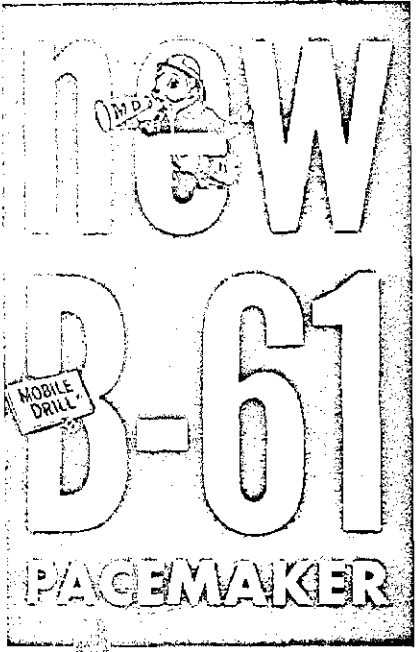
ministrator, who led the American delegation, to comment on Mr. Sliupas' letter. The following is Mr. Turner's reply:

We were well aware of the "reliability" of the Soviet statistics as well as the fact that our Soviet hosts develop for their visitors prepared itineraries with which to show only what they may wish. (And so do we.) However, it should be pointed out that the itinerary, with subjects and areas to be covered, was the subject of negotiation between our two governments over a three-year period before any agreement was reached.

An exchange would not have occurred unless there had been advance agreement as to where we would be allowed to go.

We had much information not publicly available, and this we could both compare with statistics published by (Reader Comment continued p. 14)

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### . . . Reader Comment

the Soviets and check by sample personal observation.

In connection with the comments by Mr. Sliupas about railroads, it should be pointed out that a U. S. team visited the Soviet railroad system the previous year, and one of our interpreters was also on that trip. They covered many miles of the Soviet railroad system and saw some of the sections mentioned by Mr. Sliupas.

In short, I don't believe we and other official delegations have been "misled" very far by Soviet "statistics" and the official "guidance" we necessarily received. But we cannot report publicly everything we observed or our conclusions thereon.

The important point that Mr. Sliupas overlooks is not the accuracy of any statistical figures we were given while in the USSR, but rather the opportunity to make direct personal contacts with our Soviet counterparts and exchange personal views, impressions, and information. This was the real basic reason for this and similar exchanges, and I am firmly convinced that in this we were eminently successful.

### **More Mining Engineers?**

SIR—We note with interest that the increase in engineers required in the mining industry will rise from the present 18,000 to 55,800 by 1970 (ENR Dec. 7, 1961, p. 28).

This is preposterous! These figures quoted were presented by the National Science Foundation and United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, but we wonder about the factual basis of such a conclusion. We feel that such a study must have been highly theoretical. There has been, and certainly appears that there will continue to be, a lessening of the need for mining engineers. A look at the decrease in the number of mining engineers graduated in the last ten years indicates the lack of demand. Surveys have disclosed that mining engineering has the highest percentage of men leaving their field to enter other fields of engineering.

The figures presented seem even more unbelievable when we see the reports of mines closing down in West Virginia and other areas of the country.

It is a sad commentary of our times, as well as unfortunate, that young men may be misled by such statistics.

WILLIAM G. MCEVILLY  
City Engineer  
City of Newburgh, N. Y.

### **You've Confused Millions**

SIR—Your headline said "Pentagon Plans \$500-Billion Shelter Aid" (ENR Dec. 21, 1961, p. 45). I was much relieved to discover in the text that shelter spending for fiscal 1963 will only be \$500 million.

Five hundred billion dollars would build 1,000 Columbia Basin Projects—including Grand Coulee Dam.

IVAN DECKER  
Soap Lake, Wash.