

It's mostly uphill from here

Industry in this country is in shabby shape. We're erecting not one, but two of the world's tallest buildings in New York City, and the steel for them comes from Japan. We're the automobile center of the world, but cars can be shipped to the U.S. from Europe and Japan and still beat us on price—if not on quality. In many cases, our products are beaten on quality, too.

Clothing, shoes, TV sets, radios, textiles, nails, optical equipment, electronic devices, chemicals—all these can be made more cheaply in other countries and undersell their U.S. counterparts even after they've been saddled with the costs of transportation.

In 1971 we will import more than we export for the first—probably not the last—time in the 20th Century.

We got this way by coasting, coasting on our abundance of raw materials, the technical and managerial enterprise of earlier generations, and on prosperity that we owed at least in part to wars that never touched our shores. But the free ride is over.

Management has been coasting by inefficient methods, by laziness, by overstaffing, by a willingness to accept second or third best rather than rock the boat, by a preoccupation with immediate profits rather than investment in capital equipment and research and development.

Labor, too, has been coasting. Organized to the point of uncontrolled monopoly, union labor has strong-armed its way into wages, restrictive work practices and resistance to technological progress that defy the most ingenious management. Labor leaders and the rank and file in most cases still hold with the adolescent premise that the company is the enemy.

In the play "Peter Pan," when Tinker Bell, the fairy, is dying, Peter appeals to the audience to demonstrate its belief in fairies by applauding loudly so Tinker Bell will recover. There are all too many persons in the U.S. who think that if everyone hopes hard enough, the economy will get well. It won't. What the economy needs from you is participation—hard, honest work. Inefficiency must be eliminated.

Our economy is in trouble. If you own stock, manage a company, or even appreciate your right and role as a citizen, use your influence to bring about better management, more sensible taxation and productivity in labor laws. Wishing isn't enough.

86-0 isn't necessarily a good score

The Senate last week passed Sen. Edmund Muskie's pollution bill (see p. 7). That in itself was not unexpected (ENR 10/28 p. 13). The surprise was the 86-to-0 vote. When a measure that authorizes \$14 billion in federal funds—and also wrests from the states control over pollution—passes completely unopposed, one wonders if anybody was paying attention.

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This is not to suggest that the bill should have been defeated. It is basically a good bill. It represents the first serious attempt by the federal government to meet its financial commitment in the pollution control field. But it is hard to believe that less than three years ago the total federal appropriation for pollution control nationwide was a miserly \$214 million.

It is just as hard to believe that an entire program, the state-established water quality standard program, could be wiped out by the Muskie bill in favor of federal control without opposition from even one senator. Just as surprising is the apparent willingness of the state governments to relinquish their authority to control pollution within their own borders.

The bill is now in the House where it should get a going over. A bill of this significance deserves thorough review. National policy on pollution control needs to be established—but not unthinkingly.

Will the real (or best) CM please stand up?

The CM, construction manager, is a new kind of guy who, as an owner's agent, is reviewing design, estimating costs, scheduling phased construction and controlling the entire design-construct process on projects where design and construction are being telescoped to save time and dollars.

In private construction, the turnkey operator long has been just this—the manager of his own efforts to deliver the product to the client in the least time and at the least cost. In public works, the competent forces of such federal, state or local agencies that have the capability, do the same thing.

What's new about construction management is that a federal public works agency that lacks the in-house capability, the General Services Administration (GSA), has begun hiring CMs as professional contractors on projects of the Public Buildings Service. And other agencies are pushing the CM concept.

The result is that everybody wants to get into the CM act. And the question is: Who is best equipped to be the CM?

GSA's first CM was the design-construct firm (builder of a turnkey airbase in Vietnam) Walter Kidde Constructors, Inc., with McKee-Berger-Manueto, Inc., the costs-scheduling-management specialists. Gerald McKee of that firm told a construction audience recently that the "good" general contractor (GC) had an edge in getting the CM role. In this week's cover story (p. 22), architect George Heery says the "capable" A-E is the owner's best bet for a construction manager.

The key words are "good" and "capable." The best CMs will be those GCs and, we'd guess, to a lesser extent, those A-E firms that really know costs, schedules, and how to coordinate the team approach to construction.

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