

## Big lag is seen in translating postwar project plans into reality

At Maryland-Delaware water and sewerage conference Abel Wolman charges that virtually nothing is being accomplished in public works field except the listing of "hopes and desires".

Despite eighteen months of promotional effort, postwar public works planning is still in the "hopes and desires" stage, with relatively little accomplished toward translating dreams into realities, according to Abel Wolman, consulting engineer of Baltimore and chairman of the National Committee on Water and Sewage Works Development.

Although some \$7 billion of public works needs have been listed for attention, less than \$2 billion of these projects have reached the plan preparation stage, he said. "If the \$7 billion estimate is a realistic appraisal of needs, then there is an unnecessarily wide gap between these needs and the measures being taken for their fulfillment," stated Mr. Wolman. His remarks were made before a meeting of the Maryland-Delaware Water and Sewerage Association, which held its annual conference at Baltimore May 19-20.

Postwar planning, charged Mr. Wolman, has gotten little further than the listing of desired projects, these "lists" being simply a reflection of all the wishes of all the individuals who may have had a hand in their compilation. While the formulation of a list of projects is the necessary first step in advance planning, unless it is followed aggressively with the preparation of designs and specifications, the acquisition of funds and the passage of authorizing legislation, postwar planning simply degenerates into a national pastime. That this is becoming a fact is revealed in a recent survey of 867 municipalities which have made postwar project lists; more than 300 cities in this group frankly admit that nothing further has been done to activate their plans and the balance indicate only varying degrees of accomplishment.

In another survey of 167 cities whose postwar lists called for a total of \$3½ billion in sanitation works, steps already taken to finance the projects provided only \$87 million—less than 3 percent of the necessary funds.

Engineers, laymen and legislators face a formidable challenge, concluded Mr. Wolman, in taking such steps as to activate postwar plans to the point where they will prove effective in meeting the needs of the future.

There will be no appreciable relaxation of War Production Board controls

over materials and equipment until success of the European invasion is assured, according to William D. Williams, chief of the water supply section, water division, war utilities section of the WPB. Mr. Williams pointed out that many materials were still in the critical category, among them:

Lumber (all types of form lumber and stock sizes under 2 in. are short); steel (sheet and plate are difficult to obtain but structural shapes and reinforcing steel are available); and fabricated items (manufacture of all types of equipment reflect the shortage of manpower and fabrication facilities).

Cast iron pipe, said Mr. Williams, was available in all sizes, the shipments depending largely on the availability of transportation facilities. The latter are so heavily taxed that in some cases WPB may request the use of substitute materials that can be obtained

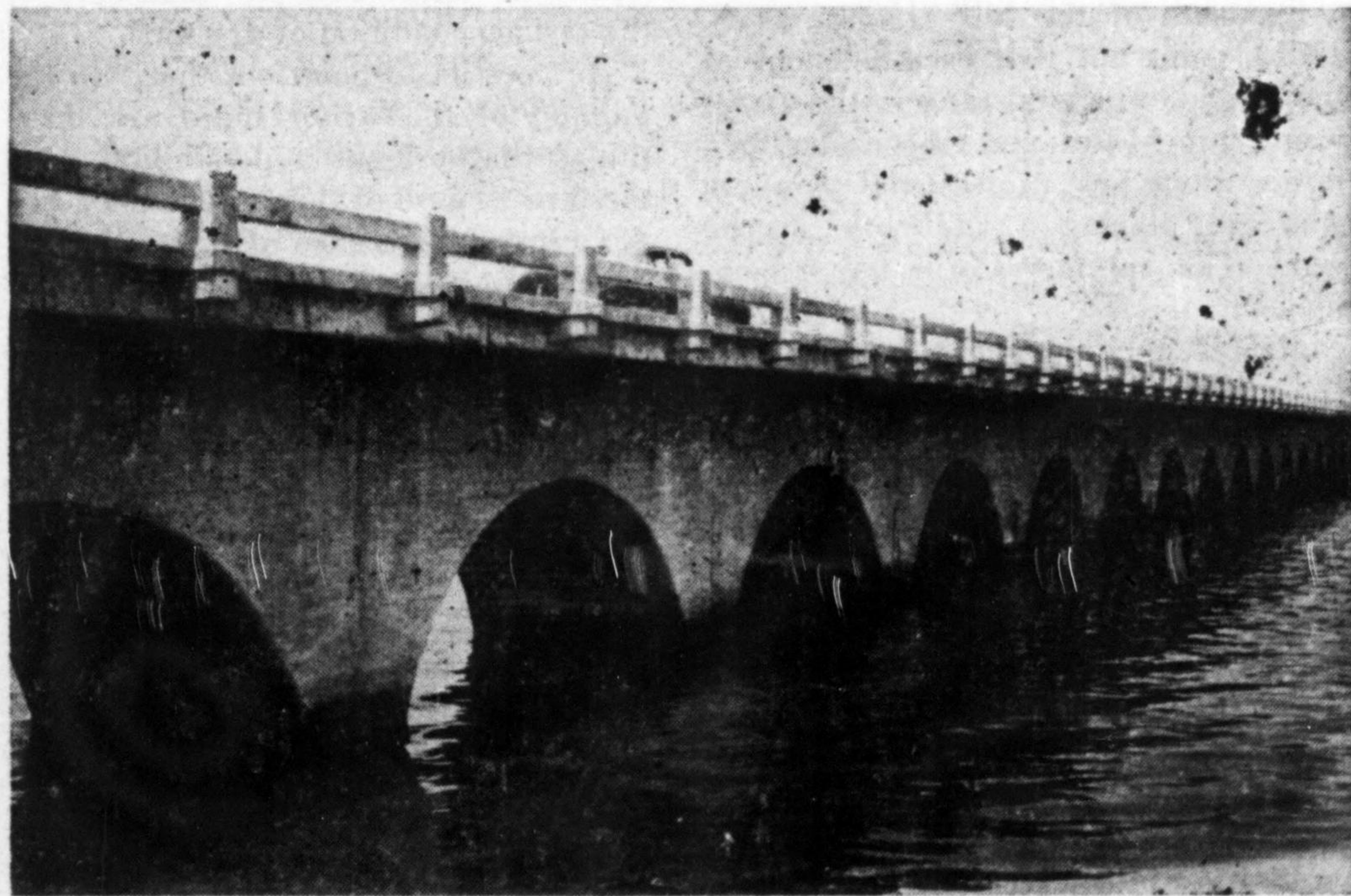
locally rather than permit the delivery of items that will require long railroad hauls.

### An editor looks ahead

Exploring future developments, L. H. Enslow, editor of *Water Works and Sewerage*, pointed out that plant operators should be prepared for stiff competition in their jobs because returning war veterans will have acquired new skills and, in addition, will enjoy civil service prerogatives. Regarding the latter, Mr. Enslow raised a question concerning the position of key utility operating men who were persuaded to remain at their jobs instead of entering the armed services. He asked, "Should not these men be given recognition along with veterans so far as civil service ratings are concerned?"

Among anticipated technical developments Mr. Enslow predicted wider use of cement-lined cast iron pipe, as well as asbestos-cement types, more attention to the practice of pre-treating water prior to filtration, and the application of techniques to "burn out" organic matter in treated water, using breakpoint chlorination, chlorite (a compound that releases nascent oxygen).

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### Improved Overseas Highway opened for full length

Reconstruction of the Overseas Highway to Key West, Fla., which started in 1937 with construction of 32 miles of toll road along the right-of-way of the abandoned Florida East Coast Ry., was completed on May 16, when 91 additional miles of road built on the old railroad location was placed in service. The work just completed, which shortens the route to Key West by 17 miles, required modification of 19 plain-concrete arch railroad bridges for highway use. This was

accomplished by construction of concrete decks overhanging a few feet at each side, as illustrated above.

The project was carried out by the Florida State Road Commission with financial help from the Public Roads Administration. General contractors included Cleary Bros. Construction Co. and Groves, Lundin & Cox.

A detailed description of the work just completed will appear in an early issue of *Engineering News-Record*.