

Carlos D. Cerna

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



There's much more to invent, Mr. Duell

As I contemplated drafting my Chairman's Message for this issue of *PCI Journal*, it occurred to me, what more could I say, if anything, about the virtues of precast, prestressed concrete slabs, panels, and hollow-core that has not already been said ad nauseam. What more could I say about the unique and versatile applications of these precast, prestressed concrete elements? Whether used in structures as foundations, walls, ceilings, or roofs or in bridges as decks, what more could I add to the fact that these elements are simple, efficient, economical, long-lasting, and of high quality and are certainly better than alternative methods? What more could I add to the overabundance of qualities that these time-proven precast, prestressed concrete workhorses possess? So is that it for slabs, panels, and hollow-core?

As I further thought about it, Charles H. Duell, the commissioner of the U.S. patent office circa the late 1890s came to mind. He has been notoriously quoted as having stated in 1899 that the U.S. patent office would soon be downsized, and eventually closed, because from his perspective, "Everything that can be invented has been invented." Although many years later some historians have suggested that someone in the U.S. patent office other than Duell actually voiced that closed-minded verbiage, it is Duell's misfortune to have been tagged as owner the infamous quote. Notwithstanding whoever said it, imagine if everyone had taken that perspective and attitude in the midst of the Second Industrial Revolution. Imagine a world that ceased to improve manufacturing technologies, tools, processes, and products and ceased to pursue those inventions, discoveries, and advancements in the 20th and 21st centuries that have collectively enhanced the world's quality of life. It is a preposterous suggestion!

So back to my earlier question. Is that it for slabs, panels, and hollow-core? Certainly not! Our industry is awash with producers, consultant engineers, academics, suppliers, and, yes, students, who are resourceful forward thinkers who constantly challenge the status quo of precast, prestressed concrete. There is much more to tweak in our industry, many more applications for the use of slabs, panels, and hollow-core (and other precast, prestressed concrete products for that matter) to be explored and developed. Our industry's brain trust and imagination will not cease but will continue to build upon past successes. Very simply stated: There's much more to invent, Mr. Duell. **J**



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