ENGINEERING THE NEW AGE
by John J. O'Neill
Ives Washburn, Inc., New York 320 pp. $3.50
Reviewed by R. R. Martel
Professor of Structural Engineering

In Engineering the New Age, John J. O'Neill
sets out to "survey man's past efforts to set up
civilizations and ascertain what happened to them and,
if possible, why—to examine, with a constructively
critical eye, the existing situation, to draw up a state­ment of assets and liabilities and ascertain what we may
salvage for the new construction."

That's a large order for anybody, and though Mr.
O'Neill tackles it with plenty of gusto, he is hardly
able to do it justice.

It is Mr. O'Neill's firm belief that, since engineering
has contributed so much to human welfare in material
ways in the past, the same scientific method can now
be successfully applied to the problems of human rel­ations. "Science and engineering," he says, "are the
twin giant forces in the world today. Both of them, in
their organized aspects, are lacking a social conscious­ness. Development in them of a social consciousness is
the next major step in cultural progress."

As the man who "carries the burden of applying
knowledge to the solution of human problems," the en­gineer is the one who is expected to develop this social
consciousness which will permit him to "evaluate im­artially and efficiently, the desirable direction of human
energy in the same way as he now does with mechanical
energy."

This assumes that the engineer of the future will
know which are the best targets for human endeavor.
It also assumes that human affairs are subject to ra­tional treatment, and that the engineer will be able
to evaluate the long-range effect of present-day actions.
This is highly flattering to the engineering profession—
though it might be noted here that Mr. O'Neill's defi­nition of "engineer" is extremely broad; he includes
"not only those now designated by that term, but econ­omists, sociologists, anthropologists, business execu­tives, bankers and a host of members of other profes­sions." Even in this broad definition, Mr. O'Neill's en­gineer of the future sounds more Superman than or­dinary mortal.

In general, Engineering the New Age consists of a
series of sketches, covering a broad field, of the im­pressive advances of applied science and engineering.
As would be expected from his two-score years as a
newspaper science editor (for the Brooklyn Daily
Eagle, and the New York Herald Tribune,) the author
shows a wide general knowledge of many facets of
science and engineering, and avoids highly technical
terms. Engineers—even in Mr. O'Neill's expansive defi­nition—ought to find the book provocative, if rambling,
and pleasingly complimentary.