Slab on Grade

Clem Starck
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Abstract
Poem

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redefined the nature of the industry and the role of unions in it. The future position of labor organizations in the building trades rests on union willingness to shed outdated assumptions and practices, to reassess the new conditions that operate in the industry, and to exchange a policy of exclusion for one of inclusion.

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At dawn the concrete trucks are already there: revving their engines, rumbling and throbbing, one by one manoeuvring into position.

Enormous insects, on command
they ooze from their huge revolving abdomens
a thick grey slime.

Insects attending to insects,
the crew fusses over them, nursing wet concrete into the forms.

Someone to handle the chute,
a couple laborers mucking, one pulling mesh, and two finishers working the screed rod—this is called pouring slab on grade.

What could be flatter or more nondescript than a concrete slab?
For years people will walk on it,
hardly considering that it was put there on purpose,
on a Thursday in August by men on their knees.

Clem Starck

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