

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING
33 West Thirty-Ninth Street
New York 18, N. Y.

To the Chairman of an
AIEE Transfers Committee:

Why Transfer?

....., you said your District Transfers Committeemen were running into the question from their prospects: "Why should I Transfer from Associate Member? What do I get as a Member that I don't have now?" I promised to send whatever I could find on the subject that might be helpful. Unfortunately, most of our literature is devoted to "how to transfer", and "who can transfer", and very little is said about "why". It seems as though we have pretty much taken for granted that the reasons are obvious, although largely intangible.

The Constitution (C3) says, "Fellows, Members, and Associate Members shall be equally entitled to all the rights and privileges of the Institute, except that Fellows only, shall be eligible for the office of President, and Fellows and Members only, shall be eligible for the offices of Vice-President, Director and Treasurer." In C4 we find, "A Fellow shall at the time of transfer..... have been in good standing in the Member grade for at least 10 consecutive years immediately prior to the date of proposal.....". I don't know how many Associate Members aspire to office in the Institute, but I do know that not a few have discovered that their neglect to transfer to Member, early in their careers, closed the door to the Fellow grade at a time when they would have liked very much to have it. This is in a way something like the professional license, which many are persuaded to get on the basis that, "some day you may need it".

It is much more the practice abroad than here for members to use their grade designation on their letterheads and signatures, as provided in Bylaw 1. In our country, consulting engineers use it. The value to them is obvious. They deal more with the public than do engineers employed in industry. While not so obvious, I believe that the whole area of public acceptance and recognition of engineering as a profession would be further developed, if our members were more grade conscious. Diamond Jim Brady used to say, "Them as has 'em wears 'em". We have of recent years become self conscious about this sort of thing. By and large, I don't think that the general disappearance of the honor society keys is wholly the result of the trend away from vests and the ascendance of the wrist watch. Whether they wear them or not, "them as has 'em" still, I believe, get a good deal of satisfaction out of recognition, especially when it is given by those competent to judge and consistent in their standards of evaluation. In the matter of competence and consistency, I don't believe that you will find a better court anywhere than our Board of Examiners. In a sense, as matters stand now, the whole membership passes judgment on the candidate for transfer to Member. His name is posted in ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING and objections are invited. We get a few. The fact that it is only a few does not mean indifference on the part of the membership; it is evidence of the care with which the Board of Examiners works.

We don't promise anyone that the \$5.00 he spends to transfer to Member will come back with interest. From the standpoint of his personal, tangible advantage it is rather a speculation. When you stop to think how many people use the AIEE Directory, for all kinds of purposes, inside and outside AIEE, it doesn't take too much imagination to see how a man may be passed over for want of the evidence of maturity and professional consciousness that the designation "M" after his name conveys.

Engineers in general, and especially the young fellows, have been so much courted and flattered recently that they are understandably confident that opportunity will seek them out even though they don't trouble to put a "knocker" on their door. The \$5.00 price of this "knocker" isn't too much to risk. It should also be remembered that, for this year at least, the candidate for transfer is patronizing "home industry", if he buys a Member "knocker". His transfer fee stays in the Section. It seems to me that the Transfers Committee could perform a valuable educational service to some of their prospects, if they were to point out some of these things.

I think that there is a good deal that can be said for the values that the individual member can get for himself out of this transfer. I am sure that if the Transfers Committee gives the matter some thought, they can find clear answers to the "why" questions. The answers are there. We have taken them for granted and not thought through what words to use. I don't know whether the present generation is smarter or dumber than we were, but they sure like to have it all spelled out for them. However, I don't think that the matter rests there, by any means. There is a lot more to the answer than the few semi-tangible items that I have suggested.

(over)

8.44.399

We are not approaching this man to make a "sale" in the commercial sense. We are rather coming closer to inviting him to "stand up and be counted" as one who believes that he is a living part of a live profession with a great fund of knowledge and skill and a record of service second to none; and further suggesting that, when he stands up, he take his proper place in line, so that everyone may see the real strength of the company. It is a shame and a threat to morale to have stalwart veterans hiding among the recruits.

If that sounds like a corny pep talk, alright; put it in your own words. The fact is, as I see it, this whole thing needs to be put on a higher plane than the Associate Member is thinking, when he asks, "What do I get out of it?" I would say that if we can't show him, that besides the tangibles and semi-tangibles there is an obligation to make himself a more effective part of the profession, and to put himself in a position to contribute in proportion to his age and status; then perhaps he is not ready to be a Member anyway. You can't "sell" them all.

One can't avoid thinking about the job of the Transfers Committee in terms of "selling". To a point, the analogy is valid, but it is only an analogy. Perhaps we sometimes go at it too much like commercial selling, feeling the obligation to prove that the "customer" is going to get his tangible money's worth. That is bound to be frustrating, because you just can't prove it. You can offer testimony and illustrations, but no guarantees. Then when you run into a hard boiled case, it is upsetting. That is what seems to have happened to some of your people. Even when you put the thing on a high plane, there will be plenty who can't see it.

Let's talk in "sales" terms for another minute, then I'll let go your ear. Every salesman knows he can't sell every prospect. What every good salesman knows is that his sales are in proportion to the calls he makes. When he sees he can't make a sale, he tries to leave the door open for a return call, and goes on his way cheerfully. He tries to forget that he couldn't convince the last prospect and looks forward to the next one, who will probably be an entirely different case. In other words, the salesman can't panic and throw in the sponge the first time he runs into an unanswerable argument.

There will be plenty of "hard cases", but the field is huge. With 40% of our membership in the six-year Associate Member class, there are so many more prospects than this, or several more hard-working Transfers Committees will ever see, that you can well afford to forget the "hard cases", and move on. When we get the six-year crop down to 5,000 or even 10,000, instead of the present 20,000 the "prospects" may be getting scarce enough to begin to worry about the stubborn ones.

I'm enclosing a copy of some thoughts on "selling" that were addressed to the Membership Committee a year or so ago. Maybe some of it is applicable to your committee's problem too. I insist, however, the term "selling" must not be taken literally. What we are doing in both Membership and Transfers, is "inviting" ..., "persuading"..., and "educating" electrical engineers to see that AIEE offers a channel-the best channel-through which they can make their personal contribution to the profession. If the first one just can't see it, when put that way, why shucks, he ain't bright enough to be a Member anyhow. Move on to the next one. There's a'plenty of 'em.

Cordially yours,

Secretary