

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS

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Dear Jack:

I read your February 22 letter with interest and concern,- interest because the subject matter has been among my heaviest extra-curricular duties for many years, and concern because of your conclusions.

I realize, of course, that our product is uneven,- it is a penalty that goes with large numbers. Large numbers of papers must be concomittant with large numbers of members. Should we limit our membership? There is a school of thought that inclines to that point of view, but I am not one of its adherents. The Institute exists only to serve the profession. If the profession grows, should not our service to members grow with it? Electrical engineering is growing in both size and complexity. It follows that there must be developed forums for discussions of narrow technical interests,- narrow as compared with the profession as a whole, but not necessarily of themselves lacking either breadth or depth.

To continue on the defensive. Could it be that your longing for the old days (and I admit I have that feeling too) is in the same category as the-steps-are-getting-higher feeling? Life in many other aspects than electrical engineering seemed fresher and fuller in the past. And I do not mean to refer only to your and my chronological age. For instance, I enjoy reading the deliberations of the first Constitutional Convention more than I do a present-day Congressional Record. The problems were more basic and fundamental. And I need not ask,- in answer to your rhetorical question of where are the fundamental papers by the Halls, Langmuirs, Steinmetzes of today,- where are the Halls Langmuirs, Steinmetzes. They aren't. I do not mean at all to imply that the gods are dead. They are just different.

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Let me state some disagreements, or at least some differing personal experiences. My own office has produced only two papers in the past year, each of narrow technical interest,- one on Throwovers (auxiliaries from one system to another), the other on Bus Stresses. Both hackneyed subjects one might say. They were not solicited,- they were horse-whipped out of the boys by me. Each contained some pioneering work. Each represented hundreds of man days of thought, results of many careful tests, oscillograms nowhere else on record. While neither basic nor fundamental, they were brought about by the recent increase in size of generators and, as such, were basic or fundamental to the next step.

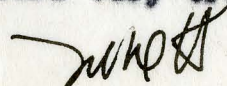
In my own palace guard, there are some 50 engineers, all capable people in my opinion. Most of them attended the Winter Meeting. Immediately thereafter we had an office meeting for a report on sessions attended. While reports on some sessions showed them to be as dull and uninspiring as you feel, most of them to have been, many were reported on enthusiastically. Parenthetically I must add that age did have something to do with the degree of enthusiasm shown. Reported as helpful were such diverse sessions as Carrier Current, Ethics, System Engineering, Instruments and Measurements, Management, Research, Radio Communication, as well as the more expected ones of T&D, Switchgear, and Relays. If I can believe my own people, I must testify that time was not wasted.

Where I am in agreement with you, however, is in the mechanics of presentation. Under the sainted Wickenden and the spur of volumes of released classified material, there was a distinct effort to conserve time by limiting presentation. The same thing had happened in the before-the-war growth period under Conwell's TP Chairmanship. Shortened presentation is not all bad in that it gives more time to the discussors who are sometimes more interesting than the authors.

Another tradition that I hesitate to attack is the before-presentation review. We are, of course, trying CP's in which only the general subject matter is reviewed with the Chairman before the session. This should limit tendencies toward commercialism or extreme aberrancies.

Concluding, I think I should say that I am glad you are dissatisfied, because dissatisfaction is often a forerunner of improvement. I do feel, however, that you are extreme in some of your criticisms.

Yours very truly,



M. D. Hooven