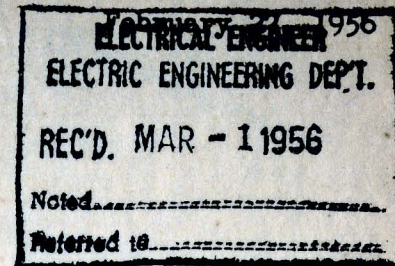


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IOWA STATE COLLEGE
OF AGRICULTURE AND MECHANIC ARTS
AMES, IOWA

DIVISION OF ENGINEERING
OFFICE OF THE DEAN

Mr. M. D. Hooven, President
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Dear Morris:

An opportunity came yesterday to review the copy of your November 14, 1955 letter to Secretary Hibshman. I note in the third sentence of the first paragraph "- - - and each of us promised the other at the first opportunity to set down on paper an unbiased review of the principles involved and the practices that might develop." If Nelson has set his thoughts down for you, I wonder if I might have the benefit of a copy.

First of all let me commend you on the thoroughness and conciseness with which you have recorded the salient elements on the subject of unification of the engineering profession. Whenever I review the complexities that are involved in striving to attain unification, I sometimes wonder if engineers collectively may be moving slowly in the right direction or whether we are allowing ourselves to lose sight of the goal with the team disintegrating and some of them moving by groups toward the indistinct side lines leaving only a few struggling toward the goal line or whether collectively we are still advancing as a team. I hope that I am not entertaining an erroneous impression and that actually some progress is being made, although on the surface it does appear to be discouragingly slow.

As a matter of information, of which no doubt you are aware, the AIEE Board of Directors in the early 1940s appropriated a sum of money to be used by the P&C Committee for the purpose of making a serious study of the possibilities of developing a program of action that ultimately might bring into being real unification of the engineering profession. The subcommittee of P&C appointed to actively pursue the assignment was composed of Titus LeClair, Chairman; M. S. Coover; W. S. Hill; B. D. Hull; and F. E. Sanford. As time progressed our discussions centered around the four (4) clearly separate plans which were presented in our progress report, published in ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING, Volume 64, No. 4, April 1946, pages 169-173. The subcommittee made its final report in January 1947. Since that time my only active participation in the movement has been as an individual engineer, though intensely interested in watching developments, especially ECPD, EJC and NSPE.

My conviction is that for the most part engineers want unification of the profession but there are at least four (4) high hurdles that the great majority do not seem to be trying to negotiate:

- (1) The future of their own group identity.
- (2) Uniform grades of membership.
- (3) How to integrate state engineering societies or councils.
- (4) The matter of an overall topping administrative structure.

For my part, I do not believe that we will make any significant progress immediately by advocating the consolidation of area-group organizations such as A.I.E.E., I.R.E and I.E.S., nor do I think it to be essential, at least at the outset. I think that for a time at least each of our present national bodies can continue as now constituted. However, I do believe that much can be gained by identifying our overlapping technical activities and by working together in these areas rather than by independent duplication. The only reason that I can see for not accomplishing the second point is that no one seems to want to do anything constructive about it except A.I.E.E., as far as I can learn. Uniform grades of members should be established all the way across the board and including the state engineering organizations. When item 2 becomes a reality at the national level then I believe we will find the state groups following the pattern.

To develop a workable proposal to implement item 3 that can engulf all engineers seems to defy resolution. The movement in progress to associate state engineering societies or councils with N.S.P.E. may prove to be the long-range answer but I am still concerned about the license restriction. If engineers universally should become registration conscious then the N.S.P.E. plan conceivably could be the answer.

On item 4 above, I do not qualify to make sound judgment for the reason that I have never had either direct association with EJC or have I had opportunity to follow its developments closely during recent years. However, I do feel reasonably familiar with ECPD. It seems to me that there is justification for a study on the possibility of consolidation here and whatever the outcome may be, it might very well be shaped to be "The Congress" of the engineering profession. From all that I can gather, the individual member seems to want the realization that he has identity from his local section or chapter up through his state organization and on through his profession-area organization to "The Congress," or whatever the top administrative group eventually may be called.

Right now you probably are wondering what my thoughts are on how NSPE would fit into such a structure. It must be realized that a great many engineers do not need to be licensed in order to hold their jobs.

Some of those in that category have qualified for registration and, if you asked them why, for the most part their answers to me will catalog into the column of "just because I thought that it would be a good thing to do." I am not yet convinced that we should limit unification to registration. It may be that NSPE is trying to develop some change in policy or philosophy, or an organization to help bring about unification, but then I do not quite see how the individual member can be sold on the idea of the simile of going from Chicago to New York by two different routes simultaneously.

This gives me a feeling that I am preparing to make a speech on the subject, which in fact I do at every opportunity. I am firmly of the conviction that greater unity is highly desirable and I do sincerely believe that somehow sometime it will become a reality. The point is that if we wait until we get a perfect fit from the first hat, I am afraid that we will be waiting forever. Why are we not as engineers bold enough to first try on one hat, then another until there is one that begins to feel comfortable. I am indeed proud that our organization, the A.I.E.E., made the first really constructive effort to move the mountain and I am equally proud that it does not seem entirely ready to quit the job.

And now for your question "have you any suggestions on how I should move." I really don't, Morris. There are more levers than pedals to be operated than one can possibly manipulate simultaneously. It does seem to me that with your numerous representations and associations perhaps you can exert real influence through ECPD, EJC and NSPE in particular. My apology for the length of this, but I am deeply concerned and strongly interested.

Sincerely,



M. S. Coover
Associate Dean

MSC:mbp