69

IRE and AIEE Plan Merger

3.15.172

Two largest electrical societies with 150,000 members move to explore new international engineering body

It has been announced that first steps to consider consolidation of the two largest engineering societies in the world—IRE and AIEE—have been taken. In a resolution passed by the boards of directors of both societies, a committee has been formed to determine the feasibility and form of such consolidation.

The proposed new organization would be international in scope and would involve 150,000 engineers, scientists, educators and industrialists.

The announcement was made jointly by Lloyd V. Berkner, president of IRE, and Warren H. Chase, president of AIEE. The resolution was first approved by the board of directors of IRE in New York on October 18. Approval of the board of AIEE was given at the close of the Fall General meeting of that organization in Detroit on October 20.

The resolution pointed out that "the advancement of the theory and practice of electrical and radio engineering and the educational and scientific objectives of both Institutes may be better served by merger or consolidation . . . into one organization in which all present members would be included, and in which they would enjoy the same rights and privileges now conferred on them by their separate organizations.

The resolution further stated that the boards of directors of the two Institutes deem it advisable, in accordance with the stated objectives of each society "to move actively toward the consolidation of the activities and organization" of the IRE and AIEE, "by consolidation or otherwise, provided that the legal and operational problems incident to such consolidation can be satisfactorily resolved."

Both societies appointed members to the committee "which shall be authorized and directed to undertake such studies as they shall deem necessary and appropriate to determine the feasibility, practicability and form of such consolidation." The committee is to submit a report to the boards of both societies not later than February 15, 1962, for their approval "with a view to submission to a vote of the memberships of the two Institutes and consumption, if so approved, by January 1, 1963." The committee was also authorized to prepare a proposed constitution and bylaws "in consultation with representatives" of both societies.

Dr. Lloyd V. Berkner

Dr. Lloyd V. Berkner, president of IRE, wrote to our Section chairman, Herbert W. Pollack, giving details of the reasons that have led IRE to adopt this course of action. Some excerpts from this letter are printed below.

Dr. Berkner's Letter To the Section Chairman

"Formation of a single professional radio and electrical engineering society through combination of IRE and AIEE is a matter of major international professional importance. I shall endeavor to outline the reasons that have led the IRE and AIEE Boards to join in discussions that open the potentiality of merger of the two societies into a single professional society in our field of technology. All related factors deserve the most mature consideration. But above all, the decision should be reached primarily on the judgment of that course of action that would lead the radio, electrical and electronic profession to develop in the most healthy and fruitful fashion.

"The AIEE was founded as a New York corporation in 1884 to meet the professional needs represented in a growing power, telephone and telegraph industry. AIEE now has about 65,000 members, headquarters in the new Engineering Building in New York, and resources of about $1.5 million.

"As you well know, the IRE was founded as a New York corporation in 1912 to meet the professional needs represented in radio communications. IRE now has about 92,000 members, its own headquarters in New York and resources of about $4.5 million.

"Because of the basic evolution of each Institute toward the broad methods of electronics, on which both societies are founded, there has been an increasing overlap of

interest in the two societies. This overlap has been in evidence in a number of ways:

1. Between 5,000 and 6,000 engineers are members of both AIEE and IRE.

2. Some technical standards committees of the two societies deal with similar standards problems that have produced conflicts. This has led to establishment of joint AIEE-IRE standards committees. Both societies deal with overlapping standards in the international field through ASA and IEC.

3. Standards for admission in the two societies are generally equivalent and by agreement members in a given grade of one society are admitted, upon application, to the corresponding grade in the other without further examination.

4. AIEE and IRE have formed joint student branches at many universities and technical institutes to avoid the obvious conflicts of common interest that arise from similar student interests in the same university departments.

5. Both IRE and AIEE are members of the Engineers' Council for Professional Development (ECPD), where their interests are very similar. Moreover, the rapid evolution of training in radio, electrical and electronic engineering and in applied physics, in the universities and in industry is toward an identical curriculum for members of the two societies.

6. There is a broad overlap of much of the material published by the two societies.

7. A large number of local and U. S. national meetings are jointly sponsored by IRE and AIEE. The two societies have a major problem in avoiding the duplication and unnecessary proliferation of meetings on similar subjects.

8. AIEE is evolving toward formation of technical groups, very similar in purpose to the Professional Groups of IRE. This evolution promises a great increase in the area of conflict and duplication between the two societies.

"The administration of these joint activities is complex and necessarily incomplete and consuming of major time and effort of the profession. Equivalent time on positive professional programs would greatly strengthen the profession.

"Moreover, the areas of conflict are steadily enlarging as the advance of electronics brings both societies ever more into the same areas of interest. Typical examples of the problems that could be avoided by synthesis of the two societies are mentioned below:

1. Under one society and one editorial board, the publications of the two societies could be tailored for much better coverage of our professional field. Members would have a wider choice of the type of publications individually desired.

2. Meetings in the whole field could be simplified and duplication automatically avoided. Attendance would be improved.

3. The danger of increasing overlap and conflict of the IRE's professional groups and AIEE's technical groups could be avoided. The whole field of professional specialized technical societies could be more rationally covered by 35 to 40 professional groups of the new society.

4. The administration of student sections would be simplified, and one publication, such as the IRE Student Quarterly, would serve the combined student needs.

5. Sectional activities would be simplified, the strengths of small sections enhanced, and activities in professional group chapters would become more rational.

6. Standards activities would be simplified, and dangers of conflict entirely removed, especially in view of IRE's vigorous participation in international standardization.

7. The new society would enjoy the international character of IRE with its attendant advantages. Likewise, it would carry the mantle of a "founder" society brought to it by AIEE.

8. The combined headquarters staffs could provide a much broadened service to our membership, our section organization, our professional group structure, our regional, national and international meetings, our technical committees, and our publication structure through reduction in duplication.

"The synthesis of the new society would create an international professional institute with a membership of more than 150,000, an annual budget of about $6,000,000, and publications of great breadth and depth with wider opportunity for choice. The opportunities of its membership would be substantially increased within the new framework that is promised.

"I have consulted personally with many leaders and Section Chairmen of IRE. In the balance I have encountered a most favorable and enthusiastic response to the preliminary proposals. The feeling seems general that so much professional strength could be acquired by suitable action, that the mechanical problems should be appropriately solved in the interest of professional advantage.

"I came away from the discussions of September 13, with the feeling that amalgamation could be accomplished without losing the vital aspects of IRE organization that has made it great. Both AIEE and IRE negotiators have approached the problem with a sense of statesmanship that would look to creation of a new institute having the best characteristics of both IRE and AIEE, at the same time dropping outmoded procedures."