

Mr. Hishman



EDITORIAL NOTES

THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

At the last meeting of the Northern New Jersey Section Executive Committee I was asked to be the Devil's Advocate and to write any objections I might see to a merger of the IRE and AIEE. I protested that since I was in favor of such a merger, I should not do so but the more I have been thinking about the matter the more it appears that I should write something. It should be understood, however, that rather than arguments why there should not be a merger, what I write should be taken as a statement of some of the problems that need to be worked out with some care in order to make such a merger successful.

The biggest objection that I see to the proposed merger lies in the very size of the group that would result. The new organization would have a virtual monopoly in the electric power and electronics fields and as such would wield more power than either of the present organizations. With this power would come the temptation to use it arbitrarily. With the larger organization there would probably be more tendency for individuals and groups to try to sieze control and play politics. Even if a considerable number of members objected to a course that the organization was taking, it would be extremely difficult for them to sway the action in the face of the majority and the easy solution would be to overrule the minority, leaving large numbers discontent. The only effective means of dissent might be for them to withdraw and form a separate organization, reestablishing something like the present situation.

The few common members which the two organizations now have is some indication of the differences of viewpoint of the organizations and their members. The present situation which the merger is expected to cure came about from the AIEE originally preempting the whole electrical engineering field and then being too conservative to recognize changing conditions within the field and meeting them. The AIEE has a large number of power engineers who probably have little in common with many of the electronic engineers of the IRE. If there were no established organizations in the field today it seems likely that the power engineers would establish one organization and the electronic engineers another. A joint organization can be successful only if such diverse groups can feel they have adequate freedom within the main structure.

There have in the past been some fundamental differences in policy between the IRE and AIEE and these need to be resolved in some manner. An example is the present policy of the AIEE to speak for its membership in matters which are related to the social aspects of the profession whereas the IRE has carefully avoided taking positions in other than technical matters. This is fundamentally a matter of whether union or guild types of activities should be combined with technical matters or whether they should be left to separate groups. There are presently legal limits to which groups can go in the direction of influencing legislation without endangering their tax exemptions as technical societies.

It is believed that in the past the AIEE has had a tendency to select its officers on account of their position in industry and consequent position of influence while the IRE has shown more tendency to select officers for their contributions to their technical fields and the IRE. Much can be said for both ways but it is essential that every man in the organization should feel that the organization is for people like him and that he



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1961-1962 Meeting Schedule

Section Meetings	Exec. Comm. Meetings
April 11, 1962	April 25, 1962
May 9, 1962	May 23, 1962
June—Field Trip	June 27, 1962

has a chance of holding a position of responsibility, even though it might not be at the top.

In an organization having a diverse type of membership it is difficult to set up standards for membership ranks that are satisfactory to everyone. In the new organization there will be people who are essentially mechanical power engineers who must be ranked along with physicists, which poses something of a problem.

I have not drawn any final conclusions as to how best to overcome the objections which have been raised but it would appear that with more diverse groups within the larger organization the Technical Groups are destined to play a bigger role in the society. The form of organization might be a fairly loose federation of these technical groups so as to allow considerable freedom of action to the groups.

FRANK A. POLKINGHORN

COVER . . .

Shown in test at RCA's David Sarnoff Research Center, Princeton, N. J., is a new thermoelectric material that produces more electricity directly from high-temperature heat on a practical basis than can the best previously known materials. Here, Dr. Benjamin Abeles, RCA Laboratories scientist, observes operation of a small electric motor powered by a 3-watt test thermocouple, comprising two $\frac{1}{4}$ by $\frac{1}{4}$ by $\frac{1}{2}$ inch elements of the new material, an alloy of germanium and silicon, mounted in a high-temperature laboratory heater.