

February 20, 1968

Dear Nels:

A reasonably quick response to your letter of February 17, with more to come later.

The Forum Minutes said that this "distinguished Past-President of AIEE" "spoke from the audience." That rules out Linder, Robertson, Hooven, and Osborne, who are shown on the program as being up on the dais. (Chase and Teare were up there, too, but they weren't Past-Presidents at that date.)

The list of those attending (appended to the Minutes) names also Hickernell, Fairman, Coover, Foote, and LeClair. If I haven't overlooked anybody, the speaker we seek is one of those five.

From the Minutes you will see that the speaker claimed to be reviewing in his mind "a period of 39 years." An old-timer would naturally relate back to the year he became an Associate. Thirty-nine years back of 1962 would be 1923. The only ones of the five qualifying by this test would be Hickernell and LeClair (AM '25 and '24, respectively). Could have been either. The others were way off date.

Looking at the language itself, I'd say Hickernell, of the two. J. J. Anderson on phone, independently, said the same thing. Only one thing bothers me—Hick's being in the audience. The fact that he hadn't been put on some of these Committees of 8, 4, 2 indicates that he couldn't have been too enthusiastic about merger; yet he was a broad-gauged guy and not one to sulk in his tent—he might have been willing to lend his strength to the pushover.

You and I are alike in not remembering who made the statement. At this date I don't even remember why I'd single out any Past-President, among all those present, as being "distinguished," unless the compliment was innocuous by virtue of his being the only one who did speak from the floor.

I haven't entirely dismissed the possibility that it was Hooven (AM '24). It sounds an awful lot like his style, and he was enthusiastic for merger. Could it be he left the dais and "spoke from the floor?"

Andy called back a few minutes ago and says he remembers running the tape but doesn't know what became of it. He and I agree I had it and ran it in the course of preparing my Minutes. But I am dead sure I didn't hang onto it because (1) I was not a tape-collector and had no means of running it again; (2) I appreciated its historical significance and wouldn't have it in any hands but those of the Executive Secretary. Andy says that he was just the man assigned to the job of obtaining the tape; that he also appreciated its historical value and wouldn't have re-used it, as his practice was with less valuable tapes. He thinks that after I used it, it was turned over to you. If you can give us any steer, however remote, as to where tapes of that kind were stored, we want to do all we can to locate it for you.

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Today, as we look back, we wish we could identify ideas with those who presented them. At the time it was the other way around: we wanted participants to speak freely, and to encourage them to do so we announced (see paragraph 5 of Minutes) that "anonymity of speakers from the floor" ~~will be~~ "preserved in the report."

Am pursuing another lead—retrieving (I ~~hope~~) my longhand notes used in planning the Minutes. We have nailed the file number, TOD 1-17. Miss Croce, who is Andy's secretary now, was mine, says she's quite sure she saved it, though her instructions were to "destroy everything." What she salvaged is in storage on 46th Street. Andy and she have to move Standards Committee Minutes the rest of this week, but around February 26, they'll go on a still hunt for "my" Merger file. It may throw some light.

Also asked Miss Croce to get me a list of AIEE and IRE Presidents since the Gold Book of '34. Am sure merging IRE and AIEE was not being considered beyond somebody's wishful thinking that far back. These lists will make it possible to reconstruct a two-column table of Presidential overlaps. The Presidents were almost sure to be involved if any serious thought was being given to merger even if in a very tentative way. As you know, IRE was on a calendar year and AIEE from August to July, hence each President had two opposites. We could ask each living President whether he discussed merger with either of his two opposites, and perhaps nail down some of the rumors. If these discussions really went on, the memory of them ought to be fairly vivid in each case, barring senility's having taken hold. In raising the question, the Forum speaker might be quoted as a reason for the inquiry. If living, someone ought to speak up and say "I said that!" or, "I remember so-and-so as having said that."

Another man to ask is Dr. Goldsmith. I remember distinctly sitting in the audience at an IRE annual banquet and hearing Doc foretell the possibility of future merger, and making a definite suggestion as to what its name should be. A lot of people heard him. I don't recall its ever having been put in print.

At a recent ~~History~~ Committee meeting, Pratt gave some significant testimony as to the circumstances under which Berkner met Chase in Washington. Pratt ought to be invited to reduce his statement to writing, since Berkner is gone. Chase should go on record as to the circumstances under which Berkner made the overture, if he did. Haggerty should be invited to comment on the Pratt and Chase stories and ask for comment or amplification.

You have an interesting assignment thar!      Regards,

*Coggie*

P. S. When I wrote that squib in E.E., I used the word retained in its most unsullied sense: e. g., "In 1966, he was retained to write E.E." Nobody used to IEEE retainers thought he was going to get rich.

In my case they seemed glad to pay me—not in sordid coins but in negotiable paper of the realm, offering me a choice of plain white or yellow with blue lines.

I don't understand how you let them push you into an overprinting deal that destroys the negotiability of paper on the open market.

*J.S.C.*