

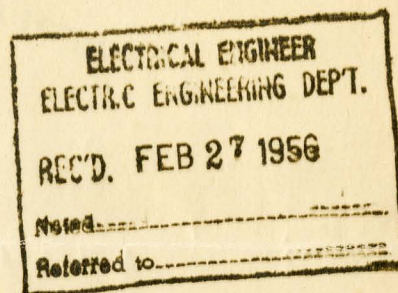
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE • EAST LANSING

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING • OFFICE OF THE DEAN

February 22, 1956

Mr. Morris D. Hooven, President
American Institute of Electrical Engineers
Public Service Electric and Gas Company
Newark 1, New Jersey



9.48, 412

Dear Morris:

Now that I am no longer IRE President, perhaps this letter may be accepted as coming only from an AIEE member. It is intended only as such, and to convey to you the thoughts and worries engendered by close reading of the Winter Meeting program, augmented by the severe feeling of depression the latter produced.

I am particularly disappointed in the Winter Meeting program, although I believe it to be only a symptom of deeper illness. I am struck first by the lack of truly basic material - I may be blasé after the past year, but I found only two papers in which I felt enough interest to order copies. There seems a great lack of the new, the original, and a great surplus of old questions being rehashed for the umpteenth time, such as the classic of all classics: "Determination of Stray-Load Loss in D-C Machines".

There is a great excess of papers of narrow technical interest - read the titles - ask yourself how many people will be interested in given papers. Do they justify 22 sessions a day for five days? There is difficulty in finding facilities for large simultaneous meetings, so the answer seems to be to make more sessions, each of narrower and narrower interest, cutting the attendance to less and less per session until we have 2,000 simultaneous meetings in 2,000 hotel rooms, each author talking to himself!

Why do we have so many papers? Do we want fewer good papers? Or do we want more and poorer papers? None of these questions have been asked, and so we go along toward the more and poorer end of the scale by default. I spent time on CTO and there was worry as to increases in papers - but no one asked why. There should be a group - independent of CTO, by all means - asking the number one question.



"IT IS FOR US THE LIVING . . . TO BE DEDICATED HERE TO THE UNFINISHED WORK . . ."

LINCOLN

Is it, by chance, the result of our method -- a committee to stay alive must appear active and sponsor sessions (?), it searches for a subject, it then searches for some authors -- and ultimately it searches for an audience. Where is the spontaneity in these papers? Is there good work in them pressing to be presented? Or are they presented because someone was sandbagged? How much would the winter meeting or other programs be cut down if solicitation of this nature was stopped or reduced? Would we thereby lose any good papers? Has anyone asked these questions? Has he received any really well-thought-out answers?

More questions on papers and their quality: My personal opinion is that our ten-minute presentation of a TP is about as uninteresting and uninspiring as can be had. In fact, I will listen to CP's in preference to TP's any time. Why are we going to such a high percentage of CP's on our programs? Has anyone ever asked why a paper should be reviewed in final form before presentation? Is not an abstract enough, as is done by so many other organizations? Who is harmed by presentation of a paper containing a technical error? There is no record made, and the audience present can protect themselves by attacking the logic of the author. Is an unreviewed paper suspect because it might contain sales material? Would not an abstract suffice, since an author can always vary his presentation to suit his purpose anyway? Or is an unreviewed paper suspect because it might allow someone to get a technical lead, without his competitor being ready with an immediate answer? How many times have you heard a discussor start out "Mr. So-and-So has a very excellent paper and we congratulate him on his work with the super-detonator allotropic Q-bomb -- but our company believes that a better approach to the Q-bomb would be to paint them green in the first place and. . . ." and so on for more time than it is worth.

This may all sound like I do not care for TP's. I don't; as a rule they seem a result of an author wanting or being ordered to get into print -- not a result of an idea, forcing itself into print!

Where are the fundamental papers by the Hulls, Langmuirs, Steinmetzes of today? They aren't presented and they are not printed in Electrical Engineering -- but they were there in the 1920's and 1930's. Look back and see them!

What has happened to the AIEE?

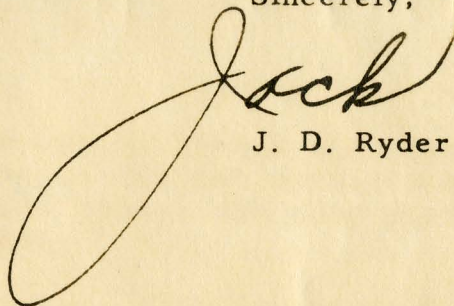
Mr. Morris D. Hooven

- 3 -

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There seems to be insufficient question asking, and too few people really looking for answers. Ideas which may be upsetting to tradition are particularly not sought -- especially any challenging the TP situation. As I said, I am depressed by the Winter Program, and it has been made worse by the publication of the "all's right with the world" Opinion Survey. You mentioned last fall that you were disappointed and depressed about inter-society relations -- move over and let me join you to worry about intra-society matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jack", with a large, sweeping loop extending from the end of the signature.

J. D. Ryder

JDR::nm