IEEE Group on Engineering Writing and Speech

No. 3
November 1970

TUMULTUOUS APPLAUSE

That's the way Jim Lofkin reported on the reception accorded our playlet, "Not Invented Here," by the audience at IEEE's IGA convention in Chicago, October 5. Actually, Jim said, "If you ask me I'll swear there were a thousand people there and that they greeted every line of the play with prolonged, tumultuous applause." We believe you, Jim. Of course, we realize that, as the author, your credibility is suspect. Our unbiassed sources, however, report the play was well received.

"NII" lays bare the paranoid attitude of the engineer who rejects all work except his own. The three characters in the play were portrayed by Jim Glennon, an industrial psychologist for Standard Oil of Indiana, Nancy Massfield, an industrial psychologist with Vennin Psychological Lab, and Tom Nunam, PR account man for Bur- con-Marsteller. Session chairman and panel discussion moderator was Hal Renne of Encyclopedia Britannica.

The significant difference between this play and its three predecessors authored by Jim Lofkin is that the play demonstrated rather than a communications management problem, and conflated itself to revealing the problem. The hour-long panel discussion dealt with possible solutions.

Next presentation: IEEE International Convention in March.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE VEEP

Every year we select six people to serve on our AdCom for three years. Oftentimes without knowing too much about the candidates. So in one of our upcoming issues we will preview the candidates to give you an advance look before the ballot arrives. But once we elect the new members, they tend to disappear on us. Not because they are inactive but rather because we don't talk about people too often in the Newsletter or Transactions. Well, we hope to correct that situation with "Operation Exposure." Periodically, we'll rattle a bit about some of our AdCom members, and perhaps just a G-EWS member. Like Bob McGubey, our current vice chairman.

Bob is manager of Westinghouse Electric's Technical Publicity Department, where he has been employed since 1949. He directs W's relations with editors in the business and technical press, and plans and places editorial material in these media. He holds a BSEE and an MSEE from Purdue and an MBA from Pitt. He is a charter member and former vice chairman of the Pittsburgh chapter of the Society of Technical Writers and Publishers. Since joining our AdCom, Bob has served as organizer for our session at the 1970 International Convention. He did pretty well in that job. So we handed him the same assignment for '71. And he's so enthusiastic about it that he will be both session organizer and chairman.

Bob keeps his hand in many activities. For example, he has been president of his local PTA, codeveloper and president of a community swim club, president of a Toastmasters' International chapter, an ardent political worker for local candidates and issues, and an active layman in church programs.

That's our Bob.
E D I T O R I A L: ONE VOTE FOR 'I'

We (meaning you and me) are con-

tinually conditioned by editorial

"we," for one, don't like it. Be-

cause it's plonky. What can be more

absurd than a newspaper columnist
talking about "our boat blowing off on

a windy day." Collective ownership of

felt hats nowadays is rare. It was the

columnist's hat and he should say so.

But, instead, he gets hung up on

aesthetic traditions, irrefutable rules

and the cowardice of a writer who

hides his views under a vague plural.

Well, I say, let's (you and me again)
snap a few of these rules, starting

with the editorial "we." Anytime you

find a "we" in our (yours and mine)

Newsletter, you'll know the reference

is either to the several of us who are

publishing the Newsletter or to the

members of AdCom. That means most

of the Newsletter copy will use "we."

If the copy, however, contains my

viewpoint or editorial comment, it

will be first person, singular.

Walt Denzen
P.S. If you have a pet peeve, I'll be

happy to include it in a forthcoming

issue.

A N U N E X P E C T E D — B U T WELCOME — ANSWER

Our Newsletter carried an editorial a couple of issues ago on "Where Do We Go From Here?". One suggested

answer came from John F. Kray, IBM, and editor of the IEEE's publication for the Binghamton Section. He sug-

gested G-EWS prepare a series of slide-cassette tape lectures on oral and written communications, as part of

IEEE's continuing education service. Our AdCom heartily agreed. John Kray is now chairman of our committee to
develop the series. His committee is

already functioning, but if you wish to

join, contact John at IBM, Endicott,
New York 13760, tel. (607) 252-4071.

T H E T I M E S T H E Y A R E

A C H A N G I N G

And so are our constitution and by-
laws. Bob McGately and Bob Woelfle
have been revising the G-EWS docu-
ments in light of our evolution since
our founding in 1956. Copies of the
drafts have been sent to AdCom mem-

bers for review. The drafts will be a

major topic for discussion at the

November AdCom meeting. The pro-
cessed constitution and by-laws will
be reviewed and approved by IEEE
headquarters and then sent to all G-EWS members for ratification.

A N O T H E R V O I C E — A N O T H E R V I E W

Winston N. Coburn has some good

thoughts on EWS aims and purposes;

following are some edited extracts

from his letter (edited, I assure you,

for length, not content):

Editor, EWS Newsletter:

The comments of Olsen,
Woelfle, Michaelson and Seiffman,
(August 1970 Newsletter) raise issues
that need to be faced now. Carl Ol-

sen has a good point: EWS tries to

serve both the IEE and membership

with a limited-distribution Trans-

actions that mainly communicate be-
tween people who are already pro-
fessional communicators. He suggests

we use Spectrum for tutorial papers.
Saying it differently, Spectrum should
be restricted in any paper that ap-
ppeals to enough members of IEEE;
this could certainly include papers on
preparing technical correspondence,
proposals, etc.

Cari Olsen wants to discontinue the

Transactions; Ivy Seiffman wants to

continue them. The EWS Transactions
afford the only outlet for scholarly

papers, since STYP Technical Com-
munications lean more toward brief,

popular articles. Possibly we could

use the Transactions just for those

papers that deal with the interests of

professional communicators, then

prepare another way of dealing with

the other technical people who want
to learn to communicate as a second-
ary interest.

Thus it is

F R O M T H E E D I T O R

(Continued next page)

E. Wolflle has also revised our

membership brochure. The new book-

let, complete with cartoon illustra-

tions, will be available shortly as an

aid to our group recruiting efforts.

Bob McGately is following with the G-EWS programs.

P R O B L E M S

1. Need for guidance from a national

organization with respect to training

and utilizing engineers to avoid the

problems of large-scale lay-offs and
disappointing job markets that dis-

ourage bright students from entering

the profession.

2. Lack of a proper vehicle or offi-

cial voice to express collective views

for engineers.

3. Lack of an organization that

works toward enhancement of the

engineer's professional image and
toward better communication with

society.

4. Lack of portable economic ben-

efits, particularly pensions.

5. Need for providing employment

advisor service and company profiles

and for working toward a contractual

arrangement for employment of engi-

neers.

S O L U T I O N S

1. Do nothing. Let the law of supply

and demand, plus individual initiative,
solve any problem.

2. Increase IEEE's scope to serve

economic as well as technical in-

terests. This solution implies that

IEEE would become a lobbying organ-

ization and therefore lose its tax-

free status. Benefits, of course, would

be long-range.

3. Join the National Society of Pro-

fessional Engineers as an associate

member (see about $40).

4. Create a sister organization to

IEEE to handle the problems. This

solution also has some tax-status dis-

advantages but might prove feasible.

5. Join a labor organization such as

the AFL-CIO.

This ad hoc committee has re-

quested that we rank the problems and

solutions in order of importance. A

postal card or handwritten note will

do. Send your rankings, with any gen-

erations, suggested solutions, or com-

ments to:

Professor Raj Mittra
Department of Electrical Engineering
University of Illinois
Urbana, Ill. 61801

Tell him G-EWS sent you.

H E R B , W E ' V E K N O W N I T
A L L A L O N G

Herb Michaelson, who has been ac-
in G-EWS since its founding in the
1950's and is a member of AdCom,
has been elected to the board of direc-
tors of the Society of Technical

Writers and Publishers. It just proves

we don't have a corner on the prime
talent.

T H A N K Y O U , F R A N K H A Y LO C K

Our last issue ended with a comment

that we hoped you would enjoy our

less formal tone. We said we didn't

expect to be inundated with either

cheers or catcalls. And we weren't.

But eight G-EWS members did take

the time to send informal notes say-

ing they like the different tone. So
to Frank Haylock in Burlingame, Cali-

fornia, Emily Schlesinger in Balti-

more, and the six in between, thank you.
EDITORIAL: ONE VOTE FOR "I"

We (meaning you and me) are continuously conditioned with the editorial "we." For one, don't like it. Because it's phyony. What can be more absurd than a newspaper columnist talking about "our put blowing off on a windy day." Collective ownership of felt hats nowadays is rare. It was the columnist's hat and he should say so. But, instead, he gets hung up on eschias traditions, irrefutable rules and the cowardice of a writer who hides his views under a vague plural.

Well, I say, let's (you and me again) scrap a few of these rules, starting with the editorial "we." Anytime you find a "we" in (our yours and mine) Newsletter, you'll know the reference is either to the several of us who are publishing the Newsletter or to the members of AdCom. That means most of the newsletter copy will use "we." If the copy, however, contains my viewpoint or editorial comment, it will be first person, singular.

Wait Dennen

P.S. If you have a pet pree, I'll be happy to include it in a forthcoming issue.

AN UNEXPECTED - BUT WELCOME - ANSWER

Our Newsletter carried an editorial a couple of issues ago on "Where Do We Go From Here?" One suggested answer came from John F. Kryz, IBM, and editor of the IEEE's publication for the Binghamton Section. He suggested G-EWS prepare a series of slide-cassette tape lectures on oral and written communications, as part of IEEE's continuing education service. Our AdCom heartedly agreed. John Kryz is now chairman of our committee to develop the series. His committee is already functioning, but if you wish to join, contact John at IBM, Endicott, New York 13760, tel. (607) 252-4617.

WHAT THEY ARE: WHAT THEY ARE NOT

We normally don't carry employment opportunities in our Newsletter, but here's one that we can't pass by. The International Correspondence Schools is looking for a qualified engineer or writer to prepare instruction material on a contract basis on the subject of computer and digital printers and devices, as well as installation, servicing and troubleshooting. Material will be used in individual and group training programs directed toward those who are working in industrial maintenance of electronic and electrical equipment. Text is envisioned to run 250-300 pages, plus illustrations.

Are you interested? Contact Joseph A. Risie, director of electronics, Department of Curriculum Development, ICS Division of Intent, Scranton, Pa. 18515.

GOODBYE, PALMER

Some of us don't quite go back to handwritten tests, or even handset type, but our printing methods have been for the most part - rather static. That's all changing now. G-EWS Transactions has been selected to participate in an IEEE pilot project on computer-assisted composition. Under current plans, the three issues in 1971 will be video-composed. To date some Transaction abstracts have been video-composed, but no Transactions themselves.

WHAT'S OUR FUTURE

IEEE has established an ad hoc committee to "delineate the problems and recommend solutions affecting the professional and economic well-being of the electrical engineer." The committee has identified five major problems and five potential solutions. We've been asked to poll our members on how they rank the problems/solutions.

PROBLEMS

1. Need for guidance from a national organization with respect to training and utilizing engineers to avoid the problems of large-scale lay-offs and disappointing job markets that dis- courage bright students from entering the profession.

2. Lack of a proper vehicle or official voice to express collective views for engineers.

3. Lack of an organization that works toward enhancement of the engineer's professional image and toward better communication with society.

4. Lack of portable economic benefits, particularly pensions.

5. Need for providing employment advisory service and company profiles and for working toward a contractual arrangement for employment of engineers.

SOLUTIONS

1. Do nothing. Let the law of supply and demand plus individual initiative, solve any problem.

2. Increase IEEE's scope to serve economic as well as technical interests. This solution implies that IEEE would become a lobbying organization and therefore lose its tax-exempt status. Benefits, of course, would be long-range.

3. Join the National Society of Professional Engineers as an associate member (fee: about $40).

ANOTHER VOICE - ANOTHER VIEW

Winston N. Coburn has some good thoughts on EWS aims and purposes; following are some edited extracts from his letter (edited, I assure you for length, not content).

Editor, EWS Newsletter:

The comments of Olsen, Woelfle, Michaelson and Seidenman (August 1970 Newsletter) raise issues that need to be faced now. Carl Olsen has a good point: EWS tries to serve its members with limited membership with a limited-distribution Transactions that mainly communicate between people who are already professional communicators. He suggests we use Spectrum for tutorial papers. Saying it differently, Spectrum should be interested in any paper that appeals to enough members of IEEE; this could certainly include papers on preparing technical correspondence, proposals, etc.

Bob Woelfle has also revised our membership brochure. The new booklet, complete with cartoon illustrations, will be available shortly as an aid to our group recruiting efforts. The lighter treatment still presents all pertinent information on the why's and wherefore's of G-EWS membership.

Carl Olsen wants to discontinue the Transactions. Irving Seidenman wants to continue them. The EWS Transactions afford the only outlet for scholarly papers, since STW Technical Communications lean more toward brief, popular articles. Possibly we could use the Transactions just for those papers that deal with the interests of professional communicators, then prepare another way of dealing with the other technical people who want to learn to communicate as a secondary interest.

(Ps) Following are a number of suggestions on means of getting tutorial papers and other materials to members in local CHAPTER storage and dissemination. Announcement of such papers could be made through listings distributed with Spectrum and Proceedings.

Winston N. Coburn, 38 Kalina Drive, Rhinebeck, New York 12572

4. Create a sister organization to IEEE to handle the problems. This solution also has some tax-status disadvantages, but might prove feasible.

5. Join a labor organization such as the AFL-CIO.

This ad hoc committee has requested that we rank the problems and solutions in order of importance. A postal card or handwritten note will do. Send your rankings, with any additional problems, suggested solutions, or comments to:

Professor Raj Mittra
Department of Electrical Engineering
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And tell G-EWS sent you.

HERB, WE'VE KNOWN IT ALL ALONG

Herb Michaelson, who has been active in G-EWS since its founding in the 1950's and is a member of AdCom, has been elected the board of directors of the Society of Technical Writers and Publishers. It just proves we don't have a corner on the prime talent.

THANK YOU, FRANK HAYLOCK

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