

DISCUSSION ON "LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS," AT MILWAUKEE, WIS.
MAY 30, 1906.

President Wheeler: The INSTITUTE has given a great deal of attention to the interests of the members who are located at a distance from New York. The proposed revised Constitution which was recently put before you, and which was not adopted, principally because a large proportion of the members did not think to send in their ballots, made some additional provisions for local organizations. I hope that in another year or two this Constitution, or something similar to it, will be adopted by the INSTITUTE. The summer conventions of the INSTITUTE are, as you know, held outside of New York, to bring us into closer contact with the members who live at a distance from that city. Our meeting held in Milwaukee this week is with that object.

We have a Committee on Local Organizations, and we have chosen as the chairman of that committee one of our past presidents who was particularly active and successful in developing the INSTITUTE along the directions which drew the local members into the parent organization. We will now have the report on that subject, and I have pleasure in introducing to you a distinguished past president of the INSTITUTE, Mr. Charles F. Scott, of Pittsburg.

C. F. Scott: The Committee on Local Organizations held a meeting three weeks ago at which it was decided to bring up the general subject of Local Organizations for discussion at this meeting of the INSTITUTE. There was an informal dinner last evening, at which representatives of local organizations were present. A general discussion took place, almost all of the twenty or twenty-five present expressing their views. In this way those particularly interested have had an opportunity to interchange ideas. I will endeavor presently to give a general summary both of the expressions of those present last night and also of those which have come in reply to a circular letter sent to the officers of the local organizations about a month ago.

I have found in my own mind a change of ideas regarding local organizations. The expectations and plans of a few years ago have been subject to modification as the subject has grown and the branches assumed a new relation to the INSTITUTE. The initial purpose was to provide means by which INSTITUTE members could get together locally, as a kind of adjunct to the regular work of INSTITUTE. It was difficult to lay out a definite scheme and plan of work, because conditions were difficult to foresee and were different in different places. I felt then that we were somewhat at fault in not being able to tell just how the work ought to be done, but now I believe it was wise not to prescribe definite plans, but to allow freedom for development. The branches are becoming an important organic part of the INSTITUTE, which makes necessary a change in our general policy.

BRANCHES AND INSTITUTE DEVELOPMENT.

Before entering into details and methods, let us first take a general view of the situation. The problem presents itself to the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS of dealing with a membership which in the last five years, since Mr. Steinmetz was chosen president, has grown over threefold, from approximately 1250 to 3800. How to get the best results for the engineering profession and the INSTITUTE as a whole on the one side, and for the individual member on the other side, is the problem now before us. It is a different problem now from what it was when our INSTITUTE began some twenty or more years ago. It is different because our membership is larger, because it is more widely scattered, and also because of the number of men in many different centers is becoming sufficiently great to enable these centers to begin a development of their own, to cultivate a self-sustaining interest and life in their local centers. This is something which was obviously impossible a few years ago. I need not discourse on the rapid development, quantitatively and qualitatively, of electrical engineering work in general, of the new lead it has taken in industrial and commercial life; the discussion on papers at this meeting shows how methods and apparatus which were known several years ago, but were not used to any extent, have within the past year or two received a new impetus, a new opening, a new opportunity, on account of this wonderful development. This is indicative of the new conditions which now confront us.

Here is our INSTITUTE, grown three times as large in five years. In the same time electrical industries, as measured by their output, or by the capital invested, have doubled. In five years more, if this rate of progress goes on, the industrial output will again be doubled, the demand for men will be doubled, our responsibilities as engineers will be doubled, and the opportunities and responsibilities of the INSTITUTE will be doubled. How shall we look forward to meet them? What new developments, what new kinds of work, what new methods, are to be adopted by our INSTITUTE, which have not been necessary in the past? It seems to me that considerations like these are the large and important questions of policy and method which lie before us unstudied. It seems to me also that one method of meeting these new conditions is by a broadened and general activity among our membership, and that that activity can come largely through the medium of local organizations. Here are a dozen or twenty cities of considerable size situated here and there with large electrical interests, and electrical men increasing in numbers and ability. Electrical societies are soon going to spring up. These men are getting together. There is a common interest which will be an attractive force drawing them together for social acquaintance and professional intercourse.

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS has the opportunity of continuing to take the leadership by assisting

in the cultivation and development of these local groups, and at the same time drawing unto itself a new strength by making itself a national aggregation of these many societies.

LETTERS FROM BRANCHES.

The recent letters received from branch officers indicate, both by their general tenor and their suggestions, the lines along which this work may be profitably developed. In these letters I have noted three things in general in addition to the discussion of specific topics.

First: the branches consider themselves a definite, established, integral part of the INSTITUTE. The question discussed is not whether branches should exist, but what relationship between the INSTITUTE and its branches and what methods will increase the effectiveness of their work.

Secondly: every local organization stands on its own merits; its success depends upon its own activity. In one letter it is summarized thus:

The success of all the local branches will depend entirely upon the number, character, and ability of the men composing them.

Thirdly: It is recognized that the New York membership, by whatever name it may be called will, on account of the number and character of those resident in New York, continue to be the large and controlling factor in the INSTITUTE. This relationship is expressed in one report in this way:

The entire INSTITUTE should be considered as made up of unit branches, each of the relative importance it makes itself and each having proportionate representation and rights in the general management of the INSTITUTE. The parent organization should be the medium through which the efforts of the individual members may be transmitted to each other.

The views thus summarized show a prevailing sentiment which is significant. The branches are not merely experimental adjuncts, but they are representative of a large and substantial portion of the INSTITUTE membership, and are ready and anxious to share in its work and contribute to its success.

PAPERS.

It is the practically unanimous view that the papers and discussions of the branch meetings should be placed on the same basis of merit with regard to publication as the papers which are presented in New York.

Many branches find that original papers, either based upon the topics taken up in the New York meetings or entirely independent subjects, are preferable to the reading and discussion of the papers which have been presented in New York. Papers of local interest, sometimes when coupled with excursions, are found profitable.

A wide field is afforded by the branches for securing material for the INSTITUTE. One report says:

The greatest good can be obtained in the branch meetings by having papers on technical subjects by engineers who apply theory to practice in their everyday work.

These practical engineers are widely scattered, and practically the only way by which the INSTITUTE can secure contributions from many of them is through contributions to the branch meetings. A wealth of experience should be procurable in this way, which is not likely to come through the meetings in the metropolis.

LOCAL METHODS

Leaders: One report says:

There has been an excellent attendance and a live interest. I must confess, however, that the burden of the work has fallen on a few men.

The same confession could probably be made with regard to every branch and, in fact, to the operation of the INSTITUTE management. The work will always fall upon a few men, and success depends in a large measure upon the securing of right men as leaders and upon their activity. There must be an active leadership which can secure interest and coöperation from many busy men.

Subjects of Papers: The kind of material, whether INSTITUTE papers or original papers or topical discussions, must be determined by particular conditions. Subjects and methods which may be the best in one case are not useful in others. The success of a branch depends largely upon the discretion and judgment exercised in the laying out of the programs. In some cases a division of the work of arranging for meetings has been made, by which different members of the executive committee take charge of particular meetings. The definite placing of responsibility and, to some extent, the rivalry which results is found to be stimulating.

Much depends upon the snap and tact of the presiding officer in making the meetings attractive and interesting. Occasionally a man of dignity and reputation is chosen, who lacks interest and enthusiasm. I am inclined to think that the latter qualities are more important than the former.

Social Functions: Occasional dinners or the serving of light refreshments after meetings, or visits to electrical or other installations are found to be helpful in various places.

Such matters as regularity of meetings, and attractive and explanatory notices of meetings to be held are helpful in sustaining a definite interest.

RELATION TO INSTITUTE MANAGEMENT.

Several suggestions are made by which the management of the INSTITUTE may be made helpful to the branches and they in turn may be useful to the INSTITUTE.

Papers Committee: A close relation between the papers committee and the local secretaries will enable an exchange of suggestions of topics and of authors. If a given topic is taken up in a number of places it will draw from many sources.

Affiliation with Other Societies: The INSTITUTE branches should be the local electrical societies, making unnecessary other electrical organizations. They should coöperate with local engineering societies, often taking the general relationship of electrical sections in them. The holding of electrical meetings which all members of the local society may attend may be found ample compensation for the use of the society's rooms as a meeting place.

Visits. Personal visits to the branches by officers or representatives of the INSTITUTE or by lectures should be extended. Such visits have been found quite stimulating to a number of the branches. The labor and expense involved make this difficult to carry out on a comprehensive scale. On the other hand, if attention be given to the matter it will be practicable to make a number of appointments, particularly through the agency of members who are traveling.

The routine management of the INSTITUTE's affairs have in the past not taken much account of the branches. They however, have developed and afford an opportunity for the administration of the INSTITUTE upon a broader basis. The best ways and means for carrying out this new relationship must be developed by experience. The income of the INSTITUTE does not justify a very large expenditure on account of the branches. The dues were fixed before the formation of branches was contemplated. Such matters as club features, reading rooms, refreshments, paid lecturers and the like, may be very desirable, yet the INSTITUTE treasury certainly cannot be called upon to meet expenses other than ordinary "meeting" expenses.

University Branches: The meetings in universities meet with quite a wide variety of conditions. In some the INSTITUTE meetings are substantially an organic part of the educational system; in others they are of less moment, precedence in certain institutions being given to local electrical or engineering societies.

In general our electrical professors regard the local INSTITUTE meetings, and the connection of their young men with the INSTITUTE as members of its student class, as profitable and stimulating, particularly as it awakens a definite interest in practical engineering affairs.

Professor Norris, of Cornell University, a member of the Local Organization Committee, reports as follows:

The results of the Ithaca work during the present year have been satisfactory indeed. The discussions have been animated and helpful and the branch is recognized as an important aid in our educational work. The presence of the branch greatly stimulates interest in the INSTITUTE, which is evidenced by the number of applications for associate membership and student membership sent in from Ithaca. Our plan is to distribute advance copies before the meeting and to assign the presentation of the papers to students or members who have had experience in the field covered by the paper. A feature which we have found useful is to present biographical sketches of the writers of the papers.

A report from the University of Wisconsin shows that the meetings have been well attended and a considerable interest developed. The attendance has been greater than in former years.

From these and other reports the value of the relationship between the universities and technical schools and the INSTITUTE is shown to be well established. The principal problem in this work, as in that of the regular branches, is in the selection of methods which are best applicable to the particular conditions and to carry on the work in such a way as to make it live, interesting, and profitable.

FUTURE PROSPECTS.

There has never been an occasion in which the two elements, the officers of the INSTITUTE on the one hand, and the representatives of the Branches on the other, have ever gotten together as they did last night. In a measure I combine the two. I have been closely identified with the New York management, and I am also not a New Yorker, and have the outside point of view. But some of my New York friends have had the strictly New York view; they have not appreciated the point of view of the man outside of New York. On the other hand, the men in the branches have not seen some of the administrative difficulties; they have not had quite the view of the outside work as a whole which they should have. There has been something of misapprehension, something of criticism, now and then, which is a condition which will be removed when the two sides get together and talk it over as they did last night.

There is apparent on both sides, among the men from the outside and among the officers from New York at this time, a firm conviction that the branches constitute one of the strong elements of the INSTITUTE which must be fostered and developed; that the means of carrying this out and the methods which should be used are hard to prescribe, and must be worked out one by one as a matter of development or evolution. I believe we have now, as we never had before, the conviction that the time is ripe for the branches, that this is the broad policy upon which to develop the INSTITUTE, and also the determination on both sides to work it out along the very best lines.

These, then, are some of the elements of general policy: first, that the branches must be self-reliant; secondly, that the branches must be an important, recognized part of the INSTITUTE, making it in fact as well as in name a national organization; and thirdly, that the future methods of the INSTITUTE must be such as to carry out these ideas, to help the individual branch as an individual thing and to incorporate into it an important feature of the work of the whole INSTITUTE, so that the branch itself can profit from the INSTITUTE, and so that the INSTITUTE as a whole can get the best results from the strength which comes from its branches. These are the general lines of policy upon which I think all are substantially agreed.

George O. Squier : There seems to be no doubt as to the value of the branches, and the question is as to the method of carrying out the suggestions for improvement. I was far enough away in California to have an outside view of the matter. About a year ago an attempt was made to start a local organization. We all knew we had plenty of material there, men who rank high in the engineering profession, but we had peculiar circumstances to meet. We had two rival universities close together, and each of them in close proximity to the city, and we had other men who had been connected with the universities and were at the time connected with commercial organizations, so that on the whole, for some reason not clearly definable, the branch in San Francisco was not started as early as it might have been. About a year ago, as I remember, the matter was agitated, and post-cards were sent around to get the views of the men who might be interested, and we were surprised to find the number of people ready to coöperate. A hall was given us, the Mechanics Institute Hall in the Library Building there, and the meetings began, and it was really surprising to find how beneficial they were. We found the monthly meetings afforded an occasion for not only studying the *TRANSACTIONS* of the *INSTITUTE*, but of preparing something definite to present at these meetings, and thereby getting the opinions of good men, which we all wanted on certain subjects, and which we would not get otherwise.

These were forwarded, of course, to the Secretary, and some of them have appeared in the *PROCEEDINGS* of the *INSTITUTE*. Another feature was that the engineering students of the universities came into our branch in comparatively large numbers, so we started these young men who intended to make the profession their life work, we got hold of them early in life, they learned what the *INSTITUTE* is, and they got acquainted with some of the men high in the profession, and altogether it was a very successful affair.

Another feature was that it encouraged original ideas. The members were induced to present ideas which would not have been brought out had there not been some occasion of that sort. We started with practically no rules; we thought we would allow the matter of rules to develop. I think that is an excellent idea, not to have too many rules, in fact very few, as circumstances vary in different parts of the country. We found people would bring out their experiences in one branch or another of the profession, and some of the discussions were excellent.

Up to the time I left there about a year ago, the attendance was large and the whole matter was considered by every one as a perfect success. I believe that in view of the recent disaster things have had a temporary setback, but I have no doubt the work will be taken up and will be continued, and I for one, from personal experience, know the value of these opportunities to get into touch with the parent institution. If you are kept for

several consecutive years outside of New York, you find the PROCEEDINGS coming in year after year, but the distance away from headquarters tends to lessen the general interest in these things, but you find there is very much interest in having a meeting and discussion at some definite place and time. As far as my individual experience goes, I testify to the great success and value of this sort of thing, and think it is one of the greatest objects we have or can have in view, and that is to nationalize this institution by a more vigorous coöperation among the branches.

Kempster B. Miller: I am a great believer in local branch work and have had much opportunity to study it. I have been actively connected with the committee in Chicago for four years, and chairman of it for two years. I believe that I can say our work in Chicago is successful. We have good attendance, usually over 100, and lively discussions are the rule.

In regard to the kind of man at the head of a local organization, I think reputation *per se* has little to do with it. The proper kind of man is the busy man. It is my experience, after four years' work, that it is the busy men, the men who ought to be doing something else, who have given us the best work on the committees.

Local branch work involves a great deal of work on a few men. That makes me believe that the committees as a rule are too large. I think ours in Chicago is too large. I think five good, strong men would make an ideal committee.

Our plan in Chicago has been to have the committee meet occasionally at luncheon, when we could all spare a little time, to talk over the program for the next meeting and to delegate to two of our members the responsibility of arranging for each meeting and making all necessary provisions regarding it. In that way we have somewhat minimized the labor and also secured definite responsibility for each meeting.

The greatest fault I see in the present method of handling the branch work is the lack of any sort of real coöperation between the branches and the main organization. I do not put the blame or lack of coöperation anywhere. I am willing to take a good deal of the blame myself; but I believe that if some method could be had whereby the men in charge of the local branches could feel that they were part of the big organization, not only in name, but in fact, it would result in great good.

I do not believe our branch in Chicago needs "nursing," to apply Mr. Scott's term, but I do think that when any number or group of people are trying to further the interest of a great body, they can do a great deal better work if they all pull together. I believe one good way to bring about this coöperation would be to have a representative in every important branch at least on the Committee on Papers. I think that would give an important working connection between the organizations. I think also it would be well to have some good committee in New York,

with perhaps an assistant secretary, to take up with the various branches in a suggestive way, an advisory way, and above all things in a helpful way, the work which the various branches are doing.

C. P. Steinmetz: From my experience with local branches, and as a result of listening to the discussion, I believe there are two classes of local branches, educational branches and originating branches. Some of the very active branches are mostly engaged in educational work, and closely connected with universities. Their work consists in reading and discussing our papers with the students, using them for educational purposes, and they are related to the INSTITUTE as a feeder of the membership; they are interesting the students and the local engineers in the INSTITUTE, and inducing them to join it. These branches rarely have original papers read before them, and it is not the purpose they are aiming at. A representative of these branches on the Committee on Papers would be of less utility, and would hardly be asked for. The other class of branches are those which read papers of their own, more or less original. These branches are of the same character as the Institute at large do the same class of work, only to a lesser degree in quantity, though not quality, in accordance with the lesser number of members. These branches may well be put on a certain equality with the New York branch by giving them representation on the Committee on Papers, or, what I should consider preferable, by permitting these branches to have a local committee on papers and giving this local committee on papers power to correspond with and be represented in the national committee on papers.

There is one more feature which might well be considered, which I have not heard referred to, and which appears to me of importance in establishing the relations between the local organizations and the national body more closely. By the Constitution it is required that the vice-presidents should be distributed geographically. This has not always worked out well and is difficult to do, because a quorum of the Board of Directors is required at the meetings which are held in New York. The chairman or delegate of every local branch should be informed of every meeting of the Board of Directors and should have the right to be present at the meeting of the Board of Directors, have no vote, but merely the right to consult with the Board of Directors. In this connection I believe it might not be a bad scheme to extend representation in the Board of Directors, as consulting members without vote, to all the past presidents of the INSTITUTE. The Board of Directors, which is the central executive and administrative body, should be in more continuous and close touch with the past history of the policy of the INSTITUTE as represented by the past presidents, as well as with the present history of the INSTITUTE at large, as represented in its local branches, by having representatives of both on the Board for

consultation. The INSTITUTE is growing so large and important, that something of this kind appears to me desirable. I do not believe you can establish rigid rules for the local branches, but must let the local branches work out their own salvation; but in this direction a very flexible committee on local branches in New York City, with considerable power, would very greatly assist the local organizations. The different experiences with different branches appears to me due to largely those two main characteristics; a meeting in Philadelphia and a meeting at the Wisconsin University, while of the same intellectual standing, are inherently different in character and class of the work they do, and their organization and relation to the national body must therefore also be different, and different again must be the local organization in a place such as Schenectady, which essentially represents an electrical manufacturing company. You cannot make rigid rules to cover all these cases.

Samuel Sheldon: I think it is conceded by all that we have the success of the INSTITUTE at heart and, as suggested by Mr. Miller, the advance of its interests can best be accomplished by coöperation between the local organizations and the central executive board, which, by accident, happens to be in New York.

Now, in order best to coöperate, we should consider what the elements of the success of the INSTITUTE are. From various criticisms and suggestions it appears that the success of the INSTITUTE is variously considered by various minds. Some consider that a large excess of income over outgo determines it; others that a large volume of transactions is representative of success, for each member gets more in return for his dues; another class considers that superior quality of transactions, giving great prestige, is the element of success which is of the greatest importance. I consider that the social and instructional element is also of great importance. Another element which we all appreciate is the size and comprehensiveness of our membership. Concerning the number of members of the INSTITUTE, when the local organization movement had its resurrection under President Scott, he expressed the opinion, in his opening address, that the potentiality of our membership was 25,000. He may have been too enthusiastic; he may have been correct. At any rate, that figure is much larger than our present membership, which is approximately 4000. The local branches can greatly assist in increasing the roll of membership. They know of those who reside in their districts, the ones that are eligible as associates, and they can persuade these gentlemen, if they will, to join the INSTITUTE. If our present members would each one bring in a single new member during the coming year, next year we could boast of 8000 members, and in a short time we would have our full complement.

As concerns the income of the INSTITUTE, there are two things that the local organizations can do. They can attend to their financial obligations to the INSTITUTE and

they can ascertain the INSTITUTE requirements for transfer from Associate to Membership, one of which entails an increase in dues, and they can for themselves determine whether they are qualified for transfer. Should they find such to be the case, and should they merely communicate this fact to the Secretary, giving what evidence they have to sustain their positions, there will be no difficulty in their being transferred. There seems to be a great misunderstanding on the part of the members as to the work of the Examining Board. If Associates, who have in mind making application for transfer to the grade of Member, would carefully read over the INSTITUTE requirements, they could from these settle for themselves without any difficulty all questions as to eligibility. The duty of the Board of Examiners would then be largely of a clerical rather than of a judicial nature.

The determination of the bulk of the TRANSACTIONS, and the quantity of material which is to be published, is a question of policy. It can be made larger if it be desirable within reasonable limits, that are dictated by cost, or it can be made smaller. The quality of the subject matter in the printed publications of the INSTITUTE is a very important factor. The local organizations can assist in improving that quality by corraling the talent in their vicinities. The Constitution, as I read it, in connection with the By-laws, limits the membership of the Committee on Papers to five. The number of volunteered papers read before the INSTITUTE is about 10 per cent. of those presented; that leaves 90 per cent. to be secured upon suggestion and invitation from the Committee on Papers. Having a membership of only five, and a necessarily limited acquaintance with the profession at large and with individual abilities, it can be seen how the committee is hampered by the conditions under which it is forced to act.

Consider this other element which may be called social or instructive; as we nurture our children and instruct them when they are young and before they take hold of the heavy battles of life, and as we advise them in their later problems and studies, so it is desirable that our great and growing mass of younger members should be nurtured and advised. A proper sphere of activity of the local branches is to instruct, advise, and encourage; and a great deal of material which none of us would care to have published in our TRANSACTIONS can be locally presented and yet be of great value to the younger members.

It seems perfectly feasible and not very difficult to arrange so that the papers and discussions of the local branches shall receive the same editorial treatment as those occurring at New York or at the annual conventions; to arrange an equable distribution of the expenditures, after deducting publication, executive, and reserve expenditures; and to arrange for the local original presentation of papers from our best contributors.
