INSTITUTE BRANCH MEETINGS. THEIR ORGANIZATION, DEVELOPMENT AND INFLUENCE.

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To any one looking over the work of the INSTITUTE of this year and comparing it with that of previous years, there will immediately appear an increased scope of usefulness of the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS. The situation is seen at a glance by looking at the last pages of your program for this meeting, showing the magnificent array of local branches installed and regularly conducting meetings. The credit for the activity is very much due to your President, Mr. Scott. It has been one of the features of his year's work, the broadening of the influence of the INSTITUTE, and on a very high plane.

The idea of branch organizations was given a number of years ago, and the Secretary, Mr. Pope, made a report on it. However, the President at that time did not favor the movement as he was fearful that it would weaken rather than strengthen the INSTITUTE. Some thought has been given to this contingency, yet at no time has the Committee considered it serious. We have gone ahead on the principle that the work is right, that it is for the benefit of the INSTITUTE and of Engineering and that if we properly conduct our meetings there will be strength in them; and one need not fear that the movement will promote separate engineering societies in the different cities which will divorce themselves from the central organization.

The oldest local branch is the one in Chicago. This was established in 1893, and has been regularly maintained. An average of 7 meetings has been held each year with an average attendance this last year of 70. The next one to be established was at Minneapolis, April, 1902. The larger number, however,

were established in the fall of last year, and the spring of this year. The largest number of meetings held was at the University of Wisconsin where during the last year 30 meetings have been held.

It was thought at the beginning of the year that the organization of local branches should be in accord with a definite pre-arranged plan and it was proposed to map out a specific plan to be adopted by each branch. On account of pressure of business, the Committee on Local Organization was unable to go into all the details of organization, and it has since proved that perhaps this was an advantage, rather than a detriment. Greater spontaneity has thereby been secured and a variety of successful methods have been developed, adapted to various conditions.

I wish that time permitted the reading of all of the reports which have been received from the several branches. These have been prepared with care, sometimes the entire Executive Committee met together to formulate the report and recommendations, and the INSTITUTE owes its thanks to them for all the work they have done

Some of the principal features that one notes in reading the reports and in our general observation of the progress of the year, is that, whereas meetings in New York may be technical or special, meetings in Local Branches must be general. In all the reports, one finds that to maintain interest, there must be more than one set of people on whom we may draw for our audience. Quite a number advocate, very properly, joint meetings with other engineers. Some others are positive that in their locality our meetings should be conducted independently of other societies, but this opinion is in the minority.

A very interesting feature of the work has been the large attendance of non-members of the INSTITUTE at the meetings. Outsiders are attracted to the meetings. Ten or a dozen members may manage a meeting of a hundred. This illustrates the power we have within us if actuated by the right principles and on the right plane.

It is generally suggested, as mentioned above, that all engineers, regardless of their affiliations, should be invited to our meetings. It may be that we do not care to join in their meetings, but we should invariably invite all engineers to and make them welcome in our meetings.

It has been almost universally reported that the papers of the last year have been so diversified and of such an interesting char-

acter that in but one or two cases has there been any necessity for papers to be prepared on local subjects in order to maintain interest. I think this is speaking a great deal for the variety of subjects and general usefulness of the papers presented during the last year. Special thanks also are here given, and we trust the word will be passed along to the speakers themselves, to those authors who have not only inconvenienced themselves to write papers, but to come to New York to read them, and have again read them at some of our branches, all of which has tended to promote the very best interest in the INSTITUTE work.

A very good suggestion is that in the branch meetings the New York papers be read by abstract only, and that well-informed men be called upon to give the abstract of the paper and of the original discussion. It is quite uniformly agreed that the discussion, when the same as that in New York, need not be printed, but it is recommended that the Editing Committee give credit to each speaker who gave opinions along the same lines. One good suggestion is that the editing of each Local Branch be done the next day after the meeting by the Committee in charge of that branch. Another suggestion is that all papers should be sent to the local branches with the abstract prepared. These abstracts and the papers themselves to be sent out earlier, and still greater efforts should be made on the part of the Committee on Papers the coming year to try to get the papers sent well in advance of the meeting.

One of the evidences of the substantial work done is the request even now for next year's program and also in the suggestion that in Universities the members of the junior class be put on the committee to take part, so that next year a working committee will already have had some experience.

One special point made in the suggestions received is that definite responsibility for the success of the meetings should be placed upon some one individual. He may have a Committee to assist, but some one person should feel that the success of the meeting is dependent on him.

An indication of the work of the year has been the increase in membership, the work of these branches being carried on hand in hand with the Membership Committee and the other influences of the INSTITUTE. In the May announcement, you will find the increase in membership in half a dozen cities alone, where we have local branches, has been about 350. The total increase for the year up to May 1st has been stated in the April

announcement in the neighborhood of 850. Whereas it would not be fair to assume that the whole credit should be given to any one feature of the INSTITUTE, still, it is hoped that the INSTITUTE will give due credit to the hard work of the various local executive committees and secretaries who have kept up the interest throughout the year in the meetings at various branch centers and thus made the INSTITUTE felt as it never before has been.

At the beginning of the year an appropriation of \$1,000 was asked to carry on the work of the season. The expenses of the year, as reported in the Secretary's statement of June 19th, have been \$849.64. It has been the uniform practice to offer to meet the reasonable and necessary expenses of Local Branches, it being considered that we should do this, for the reason that the members that have subscribed their yearly dues should not be further called upon to contribute. At one point, the local membership have been assessed one dollar by their own committee; such contributions should be voluntary rather than obligatory.

From a financial point of view, therefore, upwards of 300 members have been either influenced or encouraged to join the INSTITUTE, due to the activity of the Local Organizations, bringing into the INSTITUTE immediately \$1,500 and a probable permanent annual income of \$3,000, and at an outlay of less than \$1,000; this without reference to the Student enrolment. This statement is simply to show that the movement has been self-supporting, to say nothing of the remarkable increase of influence and power of the INSTITUTE.

I cannot do better in closing this report than to quote the remarks of the secretary, Mr. Philander Betts, of the Washington Branch: "We are unanimous in our desire to have our meetings so conducted that they will become a common meeting ground for all engineers."