

DISCUSSION ON "ENGINEERING HONOR," AT MILWAUKEE, WIS.,
MAY 30, 1906.

C. P. Steinmetz: The day before yesterday we listened to a very interesting dissertation by our worthy President on engineering ethics. I have in the last few days thought over this matter considerably. There is a code of ethics in all other professions. The high standing of the medical profession and of the profession of law is, in my mind, undoubtedly due to their strict code of ethics. Other branches of engineering also have some more or less universally recognized code of ethics. Our profession is the youngest one. There are still amongst us some of the early pioneers, who have seen the beginning of electrical engineering, and they are not so very old yet, either; even in our worthy Secretary we have one—and he is not so old, because as he tells me he is still riding a bicycle—men whose activity began during the times when electrical engineering consisted of telegraphy and nothing else.

While our profession is the youngest, it is one of the most important. Our national organization is the second largest engineering organization in the United States. However, problems have appeared which have to be met by the electrical engineering profession, problems of ethics which are different, to a considerable extent, to those met in other engineering professions. I want to draw your attention to a feature introduced by the fact that a very large percentage of the prominent electrical engineers are more or less closely associated with large manufacturing or large operating companies. Our organization is powerful, is of a very high standing; it is up to us, and it is within our power either to increase the standing of the electrical engineering profession, to put a ban on everything we consider improper, to raise the code of ethics of the electrical engineering profession, or to let matters slide and trust to Providence whether our standing shall rise or otherwise. I believe we should not do that. I believe we should consider the question of establishing ethics for the profession of electrical engineering; and I shall therefore make a motion as follows:

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS, in annual convention assembled, requests the President and the Board of Directors to nominate a committee to consider the advisability of drawing up a code of ethics for the electrical engineering profession, and if this committee considers it advisable to draw up such a code of electrical engineering ethics, to proceed with the work.

I believe as far as this motion goes it will be sufficient, if the committee nominated in this manner considers it inadvisable, to let the matter rest or take it up in annual convention next year. If, as I believe they will, they consider it advisable to proceed, then they can work at the subject tentatively and produce a code for submission to the

members. The method of procedure then, I believe, would undoubtedly be the same which was successfully followed when we started the work of standardization; that is, a tentative code would be worked out by the committee, then submitted to a limited number of engineers in our organization for their opinions, suggestions, and criticisms, and after considering these opinions and suggestions and criticisms, the tentative code could be modified as far as the committee considered it advisable, and would then be submitted once more to the membership at large, to all the members, for their opinions, suggestions and criticisms; and after these suggestions and opinions are in and considered by the Code Committee, then the report would be resubmitted to the Institute at large, probably at the next annual convention.

Dugald C. Jackson: This is a matter that I have thought about frequently, on account of my relations with many young men with whom I am brought in close contact, and I take a great deal of pleasure in supporting the movement, which the President's address has so aptly given us a hint of, of getting together to do some more standardizing, and with that in view I wish to second the excellent motion of Dr. Steinmetz.

President Wheeler: The motion is made and duly seconded. It is now open for consideration. Are there any other remarks?

C. F. Scott: Our INSTITUTE has two general functions; one may be termed engineering activity, the publication of papers, the educational influence of the INSTITUTE among its members, and especially among the younger growing engineers of the country. The second function is a different function, which has aptly been emphasized during the past few days, and principally by the excellent address of President Wheeler, in which he emphasizes the importance of professional ethics in our INSTITUTE. At a meeting which was held last night, and to which I may have occasion to refer a little later, President Wheeler called renewed attention to the authoritative position which our INSTITUTE holds in the publication of its papers, through its Standardization Committee, and the like. We are not merely disseminating papers for their educational influence among our members, but we are disseminating literature which is accepted as standard, as representative of the profession. Even that which appears in the pages of our transactions, possibly presented as the individual views, or the results of work of a member, has a different standing when it appears on these pages from what it would have elsewhere. And in the shaping of the policies of the INSTITUTE for the future, these two things must be kept in mind. I have sometimes thought that those who have had one branch of the work of the INSTITUTE in mind, have minimized the importance of the other branch, or overlooked it; on the other hand, those who have had other things in mind have not seen the importance

and realized the necessity of developing along other lines. I trust, therefore, the motion which has been made will be unanimously carried, as I believe it may be very useful in broadening and holding the proper balance between the different functions which our INSTITUTE should perform.

(President Wheeler put the motion, which was unanimously carried.)

President Wheeler: I need hardly say how glad I am to have the INSTITUTE take this step, because I think it is a very important matter for us all; and I am pleased to have the direction in which I have been thinking approved by my fellow members.
