

Letters to the Editor

[Readers are invited to write to the editors, giving opinion on any matter of industry interest.]

Dear Sir:

As a member of the radio engineering profession I wish to express thanks for your printing of pros and cons regarding the proposed IRE-AIEE merger. So far the only other opportunities to hear carefully thought-out negative opinions have been through IRE Section meetings, and at the special session at the March Convention. These involve only a small fraction of the nearly 100,000 membership; there is no substitute for wide circulation of printed opinions.

I have believed that a genuine merger of AIEE and IRE would eliminate some duplication, and would strengthen the profession, although Dean Radius has aptly pointed out that more natural merger partners for IRE might lie in the physics field. At this time my concern is about whether a genuine merger will be achieved, or whether the proposal will just linearly add the two societies together.

The headquarters staffs will be consolidated, and this is good. However, the IEEE will have Regions and Districts both, because IRE wanted to retain Regions and AIEE wanted to retain Districts. The resulting representation structure is somewhat less than ideal. The IEEE will have both Directors-at-Large and Directors elected at the annual meeting. The latter will be elected with a geographical bias unless the annual meeting moves each year.

Again the consolidation of IRE Professional Groups and AIEE Technical Groups will be encouraged. But IRE itself has encouraged the merging of PG's, where appropriate (and deletion where appropriate), with no success at all. Due to normal human vested interests, it is nearly impossible to accomplish consolidations of PG type in the steady state.

During a merger of societies, though, many things suddenly become possible. For example, a relatively inactive PG could be dropped with no loss of face to the officers of the Group. Here the Joint Committee (on consolidation) attitude is most disappointing. Instead of utilizing the opportunity presented by the merger to state firmly that overlaps will be settled immediately, the Principles of Consolidation are at best permissive on this point, and indicate that PG problems will be handled after some of the transients have died out. By this time normal human factors will again be in force, and any PG consolidation will be very difficult.

In the matter of publications, the policy is to keep both Proceedings and Electrical Engineering (because of extant advertising contracts) and allow time for transition, depending on the editorial board and management to sort things out. Here again, since firm plans have not been agreed to in principle, the probability of successful action will decrease rapidly with time past the voting.

For a successful merger in the PG area, the AIEE Technical Operating Department should have been reduced to the Standards Committee operation, and all functions of PG's (Transactions, and formation of PG's) left to the PG Committee. Instead, it has not even been possible to achieve a sensible name; Professional Technical Group is again a linear sum, and what is needed is a product operation with narrow-band filtering.

In summary, a genuine merger embodying the best features of each society appears not to have been proposed. For those details that have been decided, the result looks like an aggregation instead of a merger. Other vital details "will be worked out later." IRE now enjoys a majority position, but in spite of this strength we have not been able to produce Principles of Consolidation which would give a true merger. After consolidation, IRE will have only a 50 per cent representation on governing and policy-making boards of the IEEE. Hence it will be very difficult if not impossible to work out any post-merger changes which might really amalgamate the two societies. Because the existing Principles of Consolidation do not provide for an effective merger, the only course is to vote NO on the aggregation of IRE and AIEE.

R. C. HANSEN,
Fellow, IRE
Manhattan Beach, Calif.

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