

February 29, 1968

Dear Nelson:

As you know, I was delighted to learn that you had consented to writing the History of the Merger. I enjoyed thoroughly your letter of February 19th. I have had time to think a lot about it and about the questions you asked but have not yet had the opportunity to do any research or to look up any files. In order to help you in the fastest fashion possible, I shall go through your letter attempting to answer the questions raised without trying to be particularly consistent or orderly in my answers. I shall be very careful to avoid any semblance of leading your thoughts. If your recollection, in a given instance, differs from mine, please cancel mine out or, if you consider it important, ask that I defend my position.

First, let me answer the note attached to your letter. "The Electrical Engineering Profession in the Past Century" is the title of my contribution to the Civils' Centennial Celebration in Chicago in 1952. I am sure what you have must be a copy of the speech I gave out there.

I like your proposal to design a questionnaire to extract a recollection from the section chairmen as to how they proceeded in getting their sections together. I suspect that if you carried it to the next logical step, that is to the student branch advisors, you would find that most student branches had very little history of separateness--that perhaps there never was any room for the two separate institutes in the colleges.

From here on I shall number my answers to correspond to your numbered questions.

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- 1) I can find no omissions in your outline. As you indicate it is emphasis on the proper points about which we should be concerned. My own inclination is to de-emphasize the personalities involved, after due and proper mention, because there is no doubt in my mind that if Clio were to author this work, she would say that the merger was predestined by the situation; that the puny efforts of the humans involved did little but hasten or retard a conclusion that had to come about in any event.
- 2) I don't think that, if I were you, I should even read the reports of the two-man task forces to which you refer. I doubt very much that anyone ever did read them. I know that Ferdinand Hamburger and I worked desperately hard to get our recommendations on one page; that we were rather shocked to find that nothing whatever was done with them as the main committee did not have the time to devote even to a one-page analysis. To answer you directly, I do not think that the two-man task force contributed in any way except perhaps to give a kind of mock-up picture of the idea of unity.
- 3) As I have already indicated, I agree with your hypothesis that the environmental forces were such as to work towards an inevitable merger. I am not at all sure that the coincidence of favorably inclined leadership provided much acceleration. There were, of course, over a long period of years a number of dolts who, like I, continually boosted unification on ideological grounds; there were persons similarly endowed with good will and high intelligence (!) who continually opposed the merger.

People like Jim Fairman and Don Quarles were never impressed with the arguments for merger--neither was Elgin Robinson at that moment in history. We cannot check the other two but I would bet a cookie that Elgin swung toward the merger idea after the year of his presidential experiences in boondocks. I repeat: Personalities had little to do with the urge for merger; they had too much to do with the organizational compromises adopted as conditions of the marriage.

- 4) Of course there were earlier merger talks. The merger really started in World War II or perhaps with the Pressures of the Peace which followed it. The sainted Wickenden had the merger very definitely and openly in mind when he established Fairman as Chairman of his P&C Committee with satellites LeClair and Hooven as Chairmen of Professional Activities and Technical Activities respectively. Consolidation and reorganization, as eventually adopted by the Board several years later in the form of the Ashville Resolution, were definitely predicated on the supposition that the profession would unify without too much delay. If you should touch upon this in your history, you should refer also to the equally sainted WRG Baker of IRE fame who was perhaps the intellectual leader of the Technical Activities study. WRG was Chairman of our Communications Group during that period and an ardent advocate of a combination of unification and divided technical activities. Upon being defeated for a directorship in AIEE by the Barrett-Bower section-minded group, WRG transferred his organizational ideas and activities to IRE,

there establishing the Professional Groups which contributed so largely to postwar IRE growth.

Sometime in that period, the New York sections or program groups of each Institute met together to plan and to hold a common winter convention, AIEE's terminating on Thursday and IRE's starting on Wednesday. This went on for a year or two when IRE's Exhibit got out of hand and into the money.

In my own administration, as you well remember, I called for an extra day's meeting of the Board in San Francisco to discuss two subjects--one, unification of the Founder Societies, and two, unity with IRE. The two Boards attempted to meet together and I remember that Jack Ryder, in his IRE presidential year, took us on a tour of the IRE's new buildings. An incident of that trip was that, unplanned for, we ran into a joint meeting of two standards committee, IRE and AIEE, held at IRE headquarters. Technology preceeded politics.

The times were ripe for an ecumenical approach. In the colleges, bread boards were replacing the heavy laboratory equipment. The Vets who were students had no time for two electrical engineering organizations. There were heavy pressures from the colleges for one student operation. The technological explosion (excuse my use of the hackneyed words) was more dramatic in our field than in any other. The word "electronic" was conscientiously drummed into people's ears by those Radio Institute people who were anxious to get rid of the word "radio" and were trying to find one that was closely allied to "electrical".

(Before the war, our accepted definition of electronic was, I believe, something having to do with an electron tube). I recapitulate: Both Institutes entered the war in a reasonably healthy state with IRE still somewhat provincial and AIEE still a little smug about its heavy equipment position. The war inventions gave both Institutes a chance to expand to the weaker current field. It was then impossible for either one not to trespass on the other's territories.

If one should bring personalities into the picture, one could say that the AIEE opponents to unification generally took the position that IRE's membership was diluted by its large number of associate members without a semblance of professional background. IRE opponents would take the position that AIEE Fellows were not as erudite as IRE Fellows. Ole Singstadt, of the ECPD committee on Professional Grades, wiped out this distinction by the adoption of an additional grade.

The 1950's, therefore, saw two Institutes covering the same field and with the same membership qualifications. The differences began to lie only in the personalities within the administrations. You cannot go, of course, into personalities but the most important items that held the two Institutes apart were people like George Bailey of IRE and his ilk on the AIEE side.

- 5.) It is true that in the decade after the war, when I wore the electrical hat in this company, I had as many people engaged in weak current design work as in strong current. It took as many men to design protection and control as it did to design the heavy power station equipment layouts.

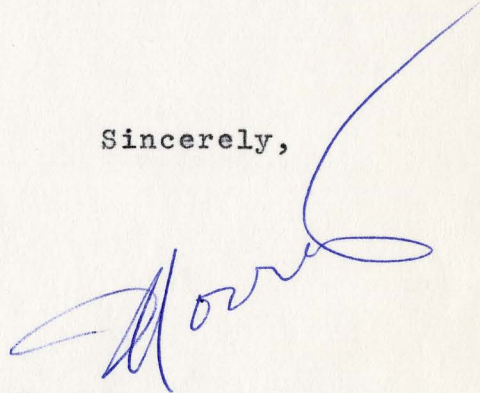
6.) I remember when Charlie Scott stated that much of the significant work in electrical engineering progress was made by NELA and NEMA bypassing AIEE, the same was true in the period of radio growth of RMA and REMA. Both Institutes had a tendency to pretend to be too highly technical.

7.) I have already alluded to the effect of the reorganization of AIEE's technical work on the merger. This, as I pointed out, was not the initiation of a step toward unification but a development of a long accepted aim in that direction.

I am sure that old Grand Dad will be of more help to your authorship than I could be. However, I shall be glad to share with you the aid of your more important helper.

Love to Adeline.

Sincerely,



MDH:jmg

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