

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir:

Exploration of the possibilities of a merger with the American Institute of Electrical Engineers has so rapidly exceeded the exploration phase that we are now faced with an imminent merger, without any specific details of what we are getting into.

In its enthusiasm to effect a merger of the Institute of Radio Engineers with the AIEE, our headquarters has neglected to devote a sufficient effort for providing for an open discussion of the pros and cons of the proposed merger by the membership at large. Since the merger has been under investigation for some 15 years, it hardly seems possible to believe a report appearing in Electronic News that only two months will be available for an examination and discussion of the proposed merger.

The Electronic News issue of Jan. 15 provided more news of the proposed merger than has yet been available in any IRE publication. It is reported that a membership vote is scheduled for early June, yet the details of the merger will not be available until April 1.

Electronic News reported that Patrick A. Haggarty, president of IRE, said about 95 of the 112 IRE sections have discussed the proposed consolidation with their members, and of those involved, about 85 per cent are in favor of the proposed consolidation. However, consider the following:

No serious attempt has been made to poll the membership; that a poll at the Cleveland Section rendered a completely contrary result. An IRE headquarters letter to Section Chairmen dated Dec. 28, 1961, states:

"By mid-December more than 75 of our 112 sections, and dozens of individual members, had responded to our proposed consolidation . . . almost the whole membership represented by the response (certainly more than 85 per cent) would favor consolidation in the framework presented in my earlier letter."

An article in the IRE Cleveland Section News reports that a poll taken at a section meeting showed a "two-to-one opposition to the merger . . ." The contributing editor of this publication charges that " . . . all the promotional material from Headquarters is one-sided . . .," expresses concern

over "Headquarters methods in proceeding with the proposals without informing the members of the pitfalls," and classifies headquarters tactics as "Steamroller."

Certain key issues have not been illuminated, though. There is, for example, the proposed change in the name of our organization and publications leading to a possible loss of our identity. Who knows how we will come out, since our new name apparently has not been definitely approved. Also lost would be the enviable prestige that the Proceedings of the IRE has established as a scientific journal. Many years would be required for a new publication, with a new name and a new editorial board to establish for itself the prestige that the IRE enjoys today.

The reasons presented for the merger range from the commercial to the ridiculous. One of the points made is the amount of money that will become available from the resources of the AIEE, and the many economies that can be effected by the merger. These are indeed important objectives in the business world. But the IRE is not a business, nor does it compete with other business organizations. The IRE is a professional society. As such, its aims are to be achieved through diligence, high standards and self criticism, not through money.

In the ridiculous department, we are given as reasons for the merger that "students are confused by the existence of two large societies in the profession in which they are so new." Of course, the solution is for the IRE to merge with the AIEE so as to relieve the students' confusion. Would that the other sources of confusion were so obligingly removed for the young student.

The short period proposed for a consideration of the pros and cons of the merger clearly puts the proponents in an unfair position, since they have had years to plan and organize their merger, yet it appears that only two months or less will be available to the other

side to muster its forces and present its side of the case.

Also significant is the proposed release date of the by-laws and final details of the proposed merger. April 1 comes just after the big national meeting in New York.

Neither have the ground rules for the merger been made public. Would the constitutional clause governing Amendments apply? After all a merger is hardly an Amendment. Would a simple majority of say 10 per cent of the membership who took the trouble to vote be considered authorization for a merger? Certainly, one must consider the fact that only a fraction of the total membership will cast a vote. In the absence of free and open discussion, this in itself gives an unfair advantage to the organized group pushing the merger.

A firm position for or against the merger is not possible at this time, since the details of the proposed merger are not available. One can, however, be highly critical of tactics that would push a vote without adequate time for consideration, discussion and criticism by the membership at large. If the proposed merger is in our best interest, it will bear open discussion, both pro and con. Only in this way can we base a step to merge on a sure footing.

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

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