

PANEL DISCUSSION ON ETHICS

JANUARY 15, 1958

DETROIT CHAPTER MSPE

PART I

Introduction

The NSPE was founded in 1934. Its fundamental purpose ^{has} ~~was~~ to provide ^{the engineer} an organizational expression of professional desires and actions.

The membership concept ^{of the NSPE} ~~is~~ considered that registration, being an acceptable criteria for professional practice by the majority of the states, also was acceptable for the Society.

NSPE has grown until its membership is now near the 40,000 mark. It was conceived as, and remains, a grass roots organization. The National Society, the State Society, and the local Chapter provide the opportunity for autonomous action within a framework of national sanction. It should be clearly understood that the Society is not a

licencing body. It does, however, cooperate with the technical societies to provide material for, and supervision and checking of, registration examinations.

There are several estimates of total percentage of membership in NSPE relative to total number of registered engineers. It appears that this ratio generally runs between 40 and 60 per cent. Of the total engineering profession, now numbering between 500 and 600 thousand, the NSPE membership constitutes about 7 to 9 per cent.

$\frac{40}{500} = .08$

Maintenance of standards in the Society is generally the responsibility of local Chapters. ^{since} It is at this level ~~where~~ ^{the} committee action can be made effective. Naturally, State Society, and occasionally National Society, support ~~can be~~ ^{is} provided when appropriate. However, this support is given cautiously and only after considerable deliberation regarding the situation, particularly if it is a controversial one.

PART II

How Do We Effectively Police Our Profession Ethically and Legally

Policing, as I am using it tonight, means effectively enforcing a set of standards which ^{have} achieved general acceptance of the Society. / The problem of policing is complicated by many things.

At

As an illustration, last year, we were called by a client who informed us that an engineer of his acquaintance had suggested certain changes to a design prepared by us. Since our client was a good one ~~and his request was logical~~, we, at considerable expense, flew three men to the West Coast for a conference. Upon arriving and sitting down with the owner, the engineer who had made the suggestion to him promptly attacked our structural system, claiming that it did not make full use of the inherent ~~inherent~~ capacity of the frame. He went on to demonstrate how he had been able to design the system in a preliminary ~~design~~ so that considerable economies were gained in the wall structures.

*The Annals of the
American Academy of Political and
Social Science
Jan 1955
Ethical Standards and
Professional Conduct.*

As we reviewed his methods, his criticisms, and comments, it became increasingly obvious that they had been predicated on total inadequate knowledge of the conditions which had prompted our design. Many of these ~~items~~ ^{conditions} had been incorporated to accommodate a contractual procedure, the time of year construction occurred, and, ~~most important,~~ a ~~terribly~~ difficult and tight construction schedule.

In addition, we found that his design, when using ~~assumptions~~ ^{assumptions} consistent with ours, did not effect the economies claimed for it.

Now, the procedure followed by this engineer was clearly a violation of Section 23, 24 and 25 of the E.C.P.D. Canon of Ethics^{submitted to by NSPE}. In addition, it was a specific violation of parts 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10 of Part IV in the document "Specific Principles of Good Professional Conduct". Yet, despite all of these, this man remains unreported by ~~me~~ ^{me} so far as professional organizations are

concerned. Undoubtedly, this situation is duplicated daily in other offices throughout the country. It is one of the weaknesses that makes policing so difficult.

*Mention we →
Have difficulty
not in punishing
violations but
finding out
about them*

For effective police action we must not only gain strength through proper public and professional recognition, but we must constantly enforce our Canon and Ethics and Standards of Performance by our individual actions.

The weakness shown by reluctance to punish, by consideration of expulsion and/or revoking of license can have nothing but serious demands on our enforcement policies.

Thus, we must establish clear-cut principles to guide us if we are ^{ever} to properly police:

1. We should exhaustively and objectively investigate each apparent violation which comes to our attention.
2. We must ~~then~~ prove to ourselves logically and within a consistent framework of standards that a violation has been committed.

3. We must then report the violation with such proof as has been used to convince ourselves ^{to the} appropriate party.

In the case of our Professional Society, ^{this party} ~~it~~ is the Ethics and Practice Committee. If ~~it is~~ a legal violation, it must be presented to our State Board of Registration.

The above procedure, followed carefully and judiciously, would do more to promote effective policing than any other single action we as professional people could take.

PART III

How Are Fees and Salaries Maintained in the Profession

1. Discuss origin of fee and salary schedules
2. Give example of delicate balance between competitive establishment of fees and competitive payment of salaries:
 - a. Common agreement on amount *by contract*
 - b. Careful detailing of scope of work
 - c. Adherence to non-bidding procedures

→ see green sheet

Fees - 1. *Article by fee schedule*
2. *Workman's fair & eq. schedule*
3. *A.I.A.*

Salaries - 1. *Employer should abide by schedule*
2. *Periodic survey done by NSPE*
3. *NSPE should distribute schedule*

Do the above sound strange???? They shouldn't, since they are quotes from several of eighteen half, full, and two page advertising spreads in the October 1957 issue of FORTUNE.

Section II of the Canon of Ethics states, and I quote, "He will not advertise his work or merit in a self-laudatory manner, and he will avoid all conduct and practice likely to discredit or do injury to the dignity and honor of the profession.

The National Society of Professional Engineers has further stated that all advertising shall satisfy in all respects the dictate and intent of the Canons.

Certainly, it does not take much stretching ^{of the point} to consider such a full page ad as this (point 2 ad) as a violation of our Canon of Ethics. True, it can be argued that this is corporate advertising of a fabrication process; however, more and more we find a trend toward the competitive necessity for shouting louder than our competitors (some times known as our fellow engineers).

A full page ~~color~~ spread, such as might appear in Fortune costs \$6,325. I am certain there are few people in this room, and I would include our organization among those present, that could afford such an expense month in and month out. Yet it is demonstrated conclusively by the month in and month out use of such advertising that it is effective.

In this area, I can offer few, if any suggestions. Unfortunately, our profession of engineering, despite statements to the contrary, does not always enjoy the intimate person-to-person relationship which forms the basis of many of the professional relationships enjoyed by Dr. Lytle and Mr. Kavanaugh.

We are too often faced with the problem so aptly defined in Mr. William White's recent book, "The Organization Man".

Too often our policies and standards have become archaic and undermine unnecessarily our economic position simply because such policies do not permit flexibility of action. Ethical and moral standards are reasonably consistent yardsticks. However, I have serious doubts as to the ethical or moral

implications on advertising campaign.

If we deny proper expression of capabilities and talents within our profession, it has been proven time and time again that such expression will occur in other and more serious ways. This may take the form of behind-the-back criticism, cutting of fees, job stealing, and all of the other truly unethical and morally unacceptable acts considered by our **Canon of Ethics.**

I would like to call for a total re-examination by the Society of its advertising and solicitation policies. I would like also to urge that this re-examination be conducted with an eye toward the true results of discouragement of advertising *and soliciting.*