

Technology and Sociology

Let's Do Something About It!

The engineer is due to take a greater role in the influence of technology on political, sociological, and international relations. Obviously our civilization can become only more dependent upon technology. At the same time many people believe that engineers and scientists cannot contribute to the sociological ramifications of technology because of their lack of education in humanities, political science, etc. In fact, engineers and scientists tend to believe this themselves.

Let me emphatically state that this should not be, and is not, true. The engineer because of his training and logical thought should be extremely valuable in this area, particularly when it comes to the application of technology for the benefit of mankind. Furthermore, by far the majority of leaders who are influential in determining the application of technology, nationally and internationally, have practically no basic training in engineering and science; therefore it is unfair to criticize the engineer for what people believe to be his shortcomings in the understanding of sociology.

The American Institute of Chemical Engineers can lead toward influencing the application of our technology to national and international affairs, but to do this it will need the vital assistance of a much greater percentage of the membership. It needs suggestions, too, on how to do the job.

There is a great need throughout the world for more industrialization, concomitant with the demand for greater food production per capita. This is true even in our highly industrialized United States. The drain on the world's natural resources can only accelerate and this will mean the development of better and cheaper processes for using lower grade raw materials and new and improved substitutes. These are just two of the problems, but it is obvious that technology must solve a major part of these and the many others that face our world.

Engineers have always been concerned with new ideas and the improvement of old ones. Engineering technology is vigorously sought by all countries in their desire to provide an improved standard of living for their people. And it is the engineers who understand people who can really contribute to the application of technology. Engineering alone without the appreciation of the sociological impact tends to be sterile. But when one considers the sociological influences, it can be exciting and invigorating.

The A.I.Ch.E. is embarking on programs involving governmental relations, international relations, and new research activities which must be concerned with the chemical engineer's influence upon society. The challenge that lies ahead of it is a great one. The enthusiasm of chemical engineers and their record in answering past challenges point to success. But everyone must help.

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