

# (E) Employee Relations Memo

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FEDERATED EMPLOYERS OF THE BAY AREA



2 FINE STREET  
SAN FRANCISCO 4#  
CALIFORNIA

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## RENEWED EFFORTS TO ORGANIZE PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL EMPLOYEES

The national organizing meeting in San Francisco on March 27, 1969, of the newly-formed Council of Engineers and Scientists Organizations illustrates the renewed efforts under way to organize professional and technical employees. Of the ten million or more professional and technical employees in the Nation, approximately 600,000 are represented by unions and only about half are actually members of unions. Clearly, the potential for organizing professional and technical employees is very great and has been barely touched by unions.

One view is that professional and technical employees have no interest in unions, especially orthodox trade unions. Another view is that trade unions will modify their structure and attitudes sufficiently to attract such employees into their ranks. A third view is that professional and technical societies will modify their functions and attitudes sufficiently to provide an acceptable alternative to trade union membership. There is much discussion of these three views but no definitive answers as yet. Nevertheless, one conclusion is apparent. The numbers of professional and technical employees are growing rapidly and they are interested in organizations responsive to their needs and aspirations.

### Types of Organizations

There are several different types of organizations seeking professional and/or technical employees as members. Some like the American Federation of Technical Engineers are affiliated with the AFL-CIO and others like the Engineers and Scientists of California are independent. Some organizations are clearly unions, whereas others are clearly professional societies, such as the National Society of Professional Engineers. However, these distinctions are increasingly blurred as more and more associations engage in activities and exhibit attitudes typical of labor unions.

There are four major types of organizations discernible who seek professional and technical employees as members. These are: (1) the affiliated union, (2) the unaffiliated association, (3) the professional and/or technical society, and (4) the "sounding board" or local group which serves as a specialized communications channel between the management and employees of a company.

Affiliated Union: Unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO reflect both craft and industrial type unions. The American Federation of Technical Engineers is the largest and most influential of the craft type unions. It holds the AFL-CIO charter to organize engineers and scientists. It does not accept production or clerical employees as members. The AFTE represents about 42,000 engineers and technicians in its bargaining units. Actual membership, however,



is only about 15,000 of which 13,000 are technicians and 2,000 engineers. About 3,000 are Federally employed. In addition, this union has two locals of state employees and five locals of municipal employees. About 65 percent of its members are in the Eastern States; 12 percent in the Midwest; 10 percent in Canada; and 10 percent in the West. In 1963, this union was reported to have 168 contracts in force.

A substantial number of industrial unions have technical employees as members and a few have professional and scientific employees. Included are the United Auto Workers, the United Steelworkers, Intl. Union of Electrical Workers, Intl. Assn. of Machinists, Intl. Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the Operating Engineers Union, the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, the Office and Professional Employees Union, the Service Workers Union, the Teamsters, Insurance Workers Intl. Union and others.

Most of these unions have created separate locals and some have established separate divisions for professional and technical employees. About 86 percent of the membership is in the technical groups and only 14 percent in professional groups. In 1967, these affiliated unions were involved in 107 NLRB elections for technical employees, winning 75 and losing 32. They had 20 elections for professional employees in 1967 and lost only 3 elections.

In December 1966, the AFL-CIO took a big step in the direction of establishing a federation-wide body concerned with professional and technical employees as union members. Thirteen unions meeting in Washington, D. C. formed the Council of AFL-CIO Unions for Professional, Scientific and Cultural Employees. The Council announced that it would undertake four types of activities in behalf of its members. These were: (1) preparation of literature explaining the place of the professional, scientific and cultural employee in the labor movement; (2) research in problems common to professional employees such as licensing, work standards, voice in policy decisions, portable pensions, fringe benefits, and the role of government as it affects unions and their members; (3) conferences to further the interests of professional, scientific and cultural employees, and (4) information on legislation and joint action on legislation.

Unaffiliated Associations: The structure and programs of unaffiliated associations or professional and technical employees resemble that of orthodox unions in several respects, but there is one major difference. There is very little evidence of any commitment to the labor movement or to any sense of class conflict. There is, instead, a strong identification with the group or "craft" involved and the use of union tactics to accomplish the objectives of the association.

Some groups, such as the Seattle Professional Engineering Employees Assn. exclude the strike as a means of attaining their objectives and accept the view that there is no basic conflict between the interests of the employer and his employees. Other groups such as the RCA Assn. of Scientists and Professional Engineering Personnel have used the strike and strike threat as part of their tactics.

Some professional associations exclude technical employees as members, whereas others make no distinction. Despite these differences among the numerous unaffiliated associations, they have recently formed a new national body, the Council of Engineers and Scientists Organizations. At a three-day meeting in San Francisco in March 1969, the theme of the conference was "how to get the vast army of engineers, scientists and related technicians on the move in some orderly fashion in order to begin to have a voice in the management of our working lives."

In addition to planning an organizing drive, the Council representatives discussed these objectives:

1. Raising salaries of publicly employed engineers and scientists to the levels of those in private employment.
2. Creating an income continuity program for those laid off at firms that lose government contracts.
3. Establish a nation-wide placement service for scientists and engineers.
4. Establish a program for portable pension credits from firm to firm when jobs are changed.
5. Curtailing the emigration and employment of alien scientists and engineers.
6. Establish and publish a national publication.

President of the new Council is Charles M. Brindley, president of the Association of Scientists and Professional Engineering Personnel, representing a bargaining unit of about 1400 professionals at RCA Corp. in Camden, N.J. Secretary-Treasurer of the Council is Res Hijman, president of the Seattle Professional Engineering Employees Assn., representing about 13,000 professionals at the Boeing Co. Other charter members of the Council are: Engineers and Scientists Guild-Lockheed, bargaining agent for about 4,500 engineering employees at Lockheed-California Corp. plants in Los Angeles County and the Lockheed Air Service Co. at Ontario, Calif.; Tennessee Valley Authority Engineers Assn. representing about 2,800 engineers; the Engineers and Architects Assn. Civic Center Chapter, representing about 3000 City of Los Angeles and Water and Power Authority employees; the Faculty Association bargaining for 200 instructors at RCA Institutes in New York City; and the Westinghouse Engineers Assn., claiming a membership of several hundred at Westinghouse Electric Corp. Also a member is the Salaried Employees Assn. of Marconi Radio, Ltd., Montreal, Canada. Other members are Aerospace Professional and Technical Assn. from the Autonetics Division of North American-Rockwell Corp. in Los Angeles, the Engineers and Architects Assn. -Pomona Chapter, bargaining agent for technicians at General Dynamics Corp. plant in Pomona, and the Southern California Professional Engineering Assn., representing about 7,500 engineers, scientists and technicians at McDonnell-Douglas in Santa Monica.

Groups having observers at the San Francisco meeting of the Council were the Engineers and Scientists of California, which bargains with Pacific Gas and Electric Co., the Association of Scientists at Shell Oil Co., Emeryville, California, and a non-bargaining group, the Conference of Professional and Technical Personnel at Bell Laboratories in New Jersey.

Professional Societies: The role of professional and technical societies vis-a-vis trade unions in the past was very clearly anti-union or at best indifference on the assumption that each had a distinct and different purpose. Today, however, some societies have become unions and bargain for their members. For example, the California Nurses Assn. in its early years was not a bargaining agency but became so in self-defense against attacks by the old CIO Office and Professional Workers Union. Teachers' Associations face similar critical decisions under similar attack from unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO. The National Educational Assn. has moved far in the direction of being a union. Its recent announcement in support of collective bargaining and the use of strikes removes all doubt of its intentions to be union-like.

Other major societies such as the National Society of Professional Engineers have in recent years adopted more vigorous programs to meet the needs of professional members. In addition, while union membership is not prohibited by such societies, it is not favored. The NSPE program is one which "is in the interest of advancing the engineering profession in industry through

improved standards, sound employment practices, professional development programs, continued encouragement of registration and cooperative relations between professional engineers and their employers. "

Professional societies have been classified into four types: (1) learned societies, which seek only to advance knowledge; (2) technical societies, which aim to advance both the knowledge and professional interests of those who wish this knowledge; (3) professional organizations such as the NSPE, which are concerned mainly with professional advancement, and (4) "sounding boards, " which meet with management to discuss personnel problems, but which are not bargaining agents. Sounding boards are viewed as alternatives to unions, but professional societies such as NSPE strongly support them.

Milton F. Lunch, Director of Professional Services for the NSPE recently told a group of six professional engineering and architectural societies meeting in conference that sounding boards can bridge the gap between completely individualized employee-employer relationships and full-blown unionism. NSPE defines a sounding board as "a non-bargaining association of engineers, including those in management, employed by one employer, whose purpose is to improve communications between professional engineering employees by serving as an objective fact-finding body, and whose activities are carried out in accordance with the professional concepts of NSPE. "

The growth of sounding boards as alternatives to unions had led to the National Labor Relations Board finding in NLRB vs. Cabot Carbon Co. and Cabot Shops, 360 U. S. 203 (1950) that such an employee organization was a labor organization as defined by the Act, because it handled grievances. NSPE subsequently has proposed amendments to the Act to exempt organizations of professional personnel which are not certified by the Board nor recognized by the employer as bargaining agents under Section 9 of the Act. The problem for such societies is that if they function like a union, the NLRB will view them as a union, whereas, if they do not function like a union, their members may seek union membership.

#### Conclusions:

1. Recent events suggest that engineers, scientists and other professionals are more favorable toward some features associated with unionism but they also hold attitudes of strong resistance to orthodox unions, especially unions which include persons of lower prestige than themselves.
2. The trade unions movement has yet to accommodate its structure and procedures in such a way as to substantially meet the objections of professional employees as a group.
3. Some success is being achieved in the unionization of technical employees, teachers and nurses and certain professionals employed by government.
4. Professor James W. Kuhn of Columbia University, at a recent meeting of the Industrial Relations Research Association stated that his research indicates that only a small minority of professional engineers see any need for joining unions and that so far engineering unions have failed.
5. If these groups are to be substantially "unionized" in the future, it may be accomplished by organizations not identified with the established labor movement and having little in common with orthodox unions as we know them today. The present status is one of organization in small bits and pieces into the established labor movement, with the bulk of the professional and technical employees affiliated with societies or not at all.