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ORGANIZATION RESOURCES COUNSELORS, INC.]

ROCKEFELLER CENTER / 1270 AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS / NEW YORK, N.Y. 10020

Volume 4, No. 1, Nov. 1973

Unions For Professionals?

Yes, No, and Maybe

BUSINESS cutbacks, especially those that took place in the aerospace and defense industries a few years ago, focused attention on the employment and unemployment problems of professional scientists and engineers. Through press accounts and feedback from those employees themselves, employers have been made increasingly aware of the rising clamor and infighting within professional scientific and engineering associations. Traditionalists are seeking to maintain the associations as educational and standard-setting societies; activists are battling for the society to deal more directly with the professional's individual on-the-job needs. Reports continue to come in of nurses, teachers, stockbrokers, and other groups of professionals organizing for collective bargaining. In this day of rapid-fire communication a new story ricochets in every direction. For employers of scientists and engineers the dilemma is what to believe, what to expect, what to do about it. Or, should anything be done? Perhaps the unrest will run its course and subside.

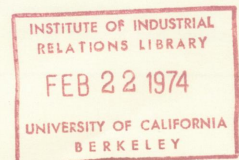
Past Unionization Efforts

Unionization among scientists and engineers is not new. As early as 1918 the American Federation of Labor chartered the International Federation of Draftsmen's Unions (later called the American Federation of Technical Engineers [AFTE] and recently renamed the International Federation of Professional and Technical Employees) to organize engineers for collective bargaining. The American Association of Engineers (no longer in existence) claims to have organized and directed the first major collective bargaining campaign for engineers in seeking U.S. Railway Wage Board approval of pay increases for technical railroad employees in 1919.

During the 1930's and 1940's there was a flurry of union organizing as professionals established unions to protect themselves against the "lumping" of the Wagner Act. While the law permitted units of employees which could demonstrate special identifiable interests to elect special representation, NLRB interpretation of the Act did not distinguish between professionals and other employees. As a result, in representation elections where the majority governed, the vastly outnumbered scientists and engineers found themselves vulnerable to blue-collar union representation, regardless of their own desires. The recourse for some professionals was to form their own independent unions to protect their interests.

Passage of the Taft-Hartley Amendment, which recognized professionals as a separate employee bargaining unit, diminished the threat of their being swallowed up by blue-collar unions. Under the new law scientists and engineers gained a separate voice in representation elections without having to organize their own formal representative group, therefore the impetus for union organization among them declined.

Although there are a few professional locals affiliated with blue-collar unions, professionals generally have not viewed unionization as the solution to their problems—even formation of independent professional unions. The tendency to identify with their profession and with management and its goals, and perhaps even overall satisfaction with their salary, work conditions, and employee-employer relationships have contributed to this lack of interest. Even when work problems have arisen, the realization that traditional blue-collar groups did not represent their special interests has deterred professionals from seeking representation.



New Influences

The economic downturn of a few years ago hurt professionals in the scientific and engineering areas, however. In the "sellers' market" they had enjoyed for more than a decade, few scientists had given second thought to job security—their opportunities seemed limitless. Since World War II the fields of science and engineering had been expanding rapidly, touching new industries and becoming a vital part of many of those industries. The Sputnik launch of 1957 spurred American awareness of the scientific advances being made, leading to renewed commitments to keep the United States in the scientific forefront and to an educational step-up in the science-related fields. To the larger-than-ever number of scientists and engineers in the profession and coming into it, government and industry offered high salaries and the promise of important, meaningful work.

When the nation's economy softened, the impact was dramatic. Research and development funds were slashed—especially in the aerospace and defense industries. Not only did newly graduated scientists and engineers face sharp curtailment in job openings, but also some employers were forced to lay off experienced professionals. Unemployment among engineers hit the highest point since the Depression. A survey in May, 1971, by the National Science Foundation indicated 3 percent of the nation's 1-million plus engineers were on the jobless rolls at that time. An additional 1.7 percent had taken non-engineering jobs but were still seeking jobs in their field. By early 1972, other sources pegged those rates at higher levels—35,000 unemployed (about 3.5 percent) and another 65,000 (or approximately 6.5 percent) working only part-time in their profession or working in nonengineering jobs. To a segment of the work force that for years had enjoyed an unemployment rate of 1 percent or less, the rise in unemployment was shocking.

One by-product of the layoffs was the discovery by professionals who had lost their jobs that pension credits were nonexistent for some of them. Although the pension vesting requirements of firms involved in the layoffs were

fairly standard across all industry, the pension issue was highlighted because of the number of high-level engineers and scientists all affected at about the same time. It seemed the professional's mobility, which derived from his interest in following the job from one defense contractor to another and from the stiff competition among companies for his talents, left him particularly vulnerable. Though vesting requirements were not designed to discriminate against the professional staff, but to reward long-term employment, the professional suddenly realized he had been unintentionally put in the position of choosing between greater work opportunity and greater pension protection.

Many professionals began to argue that the traditional view of pensions as a reward for long years of service with a single employer did not serve their needs, and perhaps not even the needs of a large segment of the American working population. Because instantaneous communication and swift transportation had greatly increased American mobility they felt the old concept of pensions had become obsolete. A cry for pension reform arose and their societies began to take a role. Immediate vesting was the goal—5-year vesting at the most.

Cutbacks in research and development funds also affected professionals who retained their employment. Following the paring down of the professional staff, and as an alternative to layoff, some scientists and engineers were placed in lower-level positions. Even though salaries usually were not cut, frustrations over the lack of challenge in the new assignments and worries about future opportunities quickly surfaced. Moreover, plans for pay increases, benefit program enrichment, and improvements in working conditions were crippled. Often already weak communication lines between management and professionals became weaker—sometimes they disappeared altogether if publication of the company magazine or newspaper was discontinued because of reductions in PR expenditures.

Changing Attitudes

The idea that unionization was unprofessional had already begun to lose validity. Entertainers, athletes, and pilots had organized into unions years before. Nurses, physicians, dentists, stockbrokers, diplomats, office workers, National Labor Relations Board attorneys, professors, and teachers had also begun to form collective bargaining groups. Unionization of teachers, in fact, had gone on at an astounding rate. If the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association merge, as indications are they will, teachers will comprise the second largest union in the United States, second only to the Teamsters.

In certain quarters, physicians, too, have expressed a surprising pro-union attitude. Both AFL-CIO unions and independent unions have experienced gains. Apparently, some doctors see union representation as offering additional political clout in dealing with local and federal

I.R. Concepts is published by Organization Resources Counselors, Inc., 1270 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10020.

The chief editor of I.R. Concepts is Sharwynne Blatterman. ORC staff members and others contribute.

Organization Resources Counselors, Inc., is a consulting firm offering professional assistance to management in dealing with the human resources of organizations. ORC's purpose is to aid clients in developing policies and practices that motivate employees to contribute more effectively to the profitability and success of the organization.

governments, administrators, and various other third parties which enter the doctor-patient relationship.

Campus activism of the late 60's and early 70's also continues to be a specter for industry. The young people who participated in those events are now entering the working world. Will their anti-establishment attitude carry over to anti-management feelings? Moreover, these new scientists and engineers have been taught since grade school by teachers who increasingly have sought union representation in dealing with their job frustrations. Some college professors, as well, have moved toward unionization. How the attitudes of teachers and professors will color the attitudes of the new scientists and engineers is uncertain, but employers are alert to any possible influence.

According to results of a recent survey of professional engineers in government, industry, and private practice, however, age was not a major factor in gauging union attitude, pro or con. Older engineers tended to be as attracted to collective bargaining as younger engineers. Professional orientation—defined as participation in professional society activities, publications, etc.—was not a major factor in determining attitude either. Neither was salary, as long as it was competitive, nor level of education. The key to whether or not engineers desired collective bargaining seemed to be job satisfaction.

Among those surveyed, the desirability of union rep-

resentation tended to vary with field of employment as well as supervisory level. Engineers in the aerospace industry, which was hardest hit by the forced layoffs and in which job satisfaction was diminished by the lack of job security, scored highest on the collective action scale. Consumer products engineers, on the other hand, scored lowest. Also, the higher the engineer was in the supervisory hierarchy, the less likely he was to be attracted to collective action. Apparently the recognition that accompanies promotion was an important determinant of job satisfaction.

Government engineers showed a particularly positive attitude toward unionization—74 percent of those who responded indicated they would favor collective bargaining under certain circumstances. Some spokesmen attribute their pro-union sentiment to a protective reaction by engineers against the increasing unionization of public employees—a reaction similar to that created by the Wagner Act in the 1930's and 40's. With other groups of government employees organizing, some engineers have begun to feel they too must organize to maintain a voice and offset the impersonal machinery of bureaucracy.

It is against this background of events and general unrest among professionals that employers are trying to evaluate their current policies and establish their posture for the future.

The Professional Employee, A Unique Breed

Until recent years professionals—those in medicine, law, and other fields, as well as those in science and engineering—have comprised a relatively small proportion of the working population. Because their knowledge was in a specialized field usually unfamiliar to general management people, they were viewed with a degree of awe. Not only did management think of them as a distinctly different type of employee, but professionals, as well, considered themselves unique. The attitude of each group probably reinforced that of the other. There developed a stereotype of the professional employee, an image that still persists in the minds of managers and professionals alike.

Traditionally, professionals have pursued a more personal, more mutually supportive relationship with their employers than other employees have sought. They have viewed themselves as deserving of special status and have expected employers to deal with them on an individual basis.

Although the number of professionals has grown rapidly in the past decade and many companies now have large professional staffs numbering in the thousands, the professional's desire to be treated as an individual still exists. In support of these expectations professionals point out

that they are set apart from the majority of the work force by:

- their tools, which are their knowledge and their creativity—in short, their minds, not their hands. As a result, professionals feel the same rules and restraints that are imposed on other workers are not necessary, or even valid for them.
- the long years of study that have gone into preparing them for their work. In view of this, they consider it the employer's responsibility to provide challenging, meaningful work opportunities.

Conventional Needs

The conventional needs widely associated with management personnel are shared by professionals. For their contributions professionals, like managers, desire recognition and reward—increased prestige, advancement within the company, and better pay. Also like managers, professionals expect to be recognized and rewarded on the basis of individual superiority of effort, knowledge, and intelligence, not with union style across-the-board pay increases.

In an ORC study of the motivations and needs of sci-

entists and engineers, it was found that the rewards motivating and satisfying the needs of some professionals may not have as strong an influence on others. Scientists tend to be more traditionally *professional*. As far as they are concerned, the opportunity to do meaningful scientific work, autonomy, and recognition are the basic motivational factors, with financial rewards having some importance. Engineers tend to be more swayed by higher pay, the opportunity to move ahead in the organization, the greater influence within the company that goes with advancement, and the social prestige that accompanies a successful organizational career.

Special Needs

Apart from their conventional needs, professionals are also subject to the special necessity of having to maintain their knowledge and expertise within fields that are continuously expanding. If their knowledge base erodes, their professional value diminishes. Professional association meetings, company seminars, and formal training offer professionals a means for staying on top of new developments in their field. And since each professional considers his talents valuable to the company, he expects the employer to recognize and increase that value by granting him paid time off so that he can keep up to date, particularly in comparison with new entrants who have been exposed in professional schools to the "latest."

Unique Factors

In addition to the desire of professionals to be treated as individuals, and their conventional as well as specialized needs, several unique factors affect the relationship between employer and professional.

Generally the two have widely dissimilar concepts of their roles. This difference was capsulized in a *Harvard Business Review* article (January-February, 1960) by Stephen B. Miles, Jr., and Thomas E. Vail, who also highlighted the mutual defensiveness of each group about the importance of the part it plays:

At present, in most organizations the men who are assigned managerial responsibility take it for granted that they are the executives and that all others work for them. But this tacit assumption is being challenged. In nearly all companies with important scientific and engineering pretensions (especially in the defense industries) the managers are faced with the humiliating fact that they are regarded, by their scientific personnel, as "housekeepers," whose main function is to lift from the shoulders of the scientist his worries about money, working conditions, personal relationships, provide him with the necessary facilities, material, and equipment; do all the necessary chores to keep the business in good condition . . . ; produce and sell the hardware resulting from the work of the scientist and engineer; and provide a climate in which they can do their most productive work.

Many of those activities that the scientist regards as housekeeping chores and as a means of providing an en-

vironment in which he can work effectively, the manager tends to regard as ends. But because of differences in point of view and in values, and owing to the increasing tendency for separate languages to develop for different walks of life, the scientist and manager today frequently find themselves at loggerheads. Each seeks to think of himself as the most important. But who is really the boss?

Divided loyalty, too, has plagued the employer-employee relationship. On one hand, professionals are company employees working for the betterment of the firm. On the other hand, each is an individual working to advance himself in the eyes of his professional peers and superiors. So professionals have rarely considered themselves strictly company men. Their willingness to seize new opportunities wherever they arose has earned them a reputation for being a highly competitive, exceptionally mobile part of the labor force. Firms have tended to feel their hold on professional employees was somewhat tenuous because of this.

For employers perhaps one of the most frustrating aspects of dealing with professionals is the difficulty of establishing quantifiable measures of their work. What can be held up to a yardstick, however, are the costs of a professional staff—salaries, as well as expenditures for equipment, work facilities, support staff, and long-term project commitments. In times of economic stress, what professionals consider their "due" an employer could easily view as unjustifiable, especially when a nebulous contribution is contrasted to the hard cold reality of a bottom line figure.

The rapid expansion of the science-related fields has had its effect on the relationship between employers and professional employees. Companies which built up massive departments of professionals during the past decade when applications of scientific and engineering advances were ballooning have found it increasingly difficult to respond to each professional on an individual basis. As a consequence, the professional's identification with management has been somewhat eroded, though not completely destroyed. Unions, in their attempts to sway professionals their way, consistently point out that weakening of the personal relationship. It is that breakdown of the personal relationship and the inability of companies to respond to each engineer and scientist as an individual that has motivated professionals to seek recognition as a distinct group of employees.

Professional Identification

The identification of scientists and engineers with their profession has remained as strong as ever. That, if nothing else, does single them out and is the reason scientists and engineers caught up in an employment and occupational crisis find their professional associations, rather than the unions, ready instruments through which to confront their employers.

The Professional Association's Role, Venerable Group or Vigorous Force?

Professional associations date back to the 1880's. The roots of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE), in fact, are traceable to 1884. With the technological expansion in the post-World War II period, such organizations ballooned. Today there are approximately 1,000 scientific and professional associations in existence.

Traditionally, associations have concentrated their efforts on helping to keep members current with developments in their fields and with raising the prestige of the profession by enthusiastic standard-setting. Their social function, a seldom mentioned aspect of the associations, has been important, too. It has been a strong influence in building the individual's identification with his profession. Speaking of the social aspects of associations, Louis M. Spadero, dean of Fordham University's Graduate School of Business, commented, "Societies made their members feel that they were involved with a vital business function and weren't just cogs in big, insensitive organizations. Members could mingle with leaders in their professions and with people who had similar interests. For most of them, societies represented church and school combined."

For many years associations operated quite comfortably in the traditional role of educator, standard-setter, and social forum. And in an era marked by a strong economy, rosy forecasts, and a scarcity of professional people, when companies were wooing scientists and engineers into employment, that role was adequate. But in the wake of what many professionals considered an unemployment crisis, in which scores of scientists and engineers believed they had been betrayed by government and industry, members turned to their associations for more direct help.

The associations found themselves in a sort of culture shock—caught in a clash between traditional aims and the immediate needs of members. When leadership balked at involvement in issues outside the traditional bounds, some professionals began to question the value of belonging to an organization that was not responsive to their needs. Some stopped participating altogether in the society's programs, but others pressed even harder to involve the associations in ameliorating the employment and unemployment problems of the membership. Within the associations militant factions and bitter infighting cropped up.

In response to the clamor raised by discontented members, most associations have begun to assume a more active role than they did in the past. The measures they have taken, however, have generally been within an only slightly expanded interpretation of their traditional role.

Placement programs set up to help scientists and engineers caught in the immediate unemployment crunch attained some degree of success. Industry seminars that associations organized to provide a discussion forum between

professionals and employers also proved valuable in varying degrees. A step-up in surveys gave both companies and association members to-the-minute wage and benefit reports. Societies have recently initiated a drive to publish precise information about who is doing what with wages and benefits, but most companies have been reluctant to disclose their identity. Of the 900 questionnaires distributed by the ACS in a recent benefits survey, less than 200 have been returned. Of those companies responding less than 50 gave the OK to publish their names with the data. Approximately 60 companies, in sharp contrast, responded that the questionnaire was too confidential and would not complete it.

Employment Guidelines

Placement programs, industry seminars and surveys were all immediate stopgap measures. A longer-range response of the associations to the pressure for more involvement was the establishment of employment guidelines. At the outset many associations established their own, and each stressed what it considered the most important aspects of the relationship between employer and professional employee. A kaleidoscopic picture resulted. Ultimately 16 societies, realizing their influence would be greater if they spoke with one voice, banded together to work out "unity" guidelines, specifying the responsibilities of both employer and employee in relation to:

- terms of employment
- physical working conditions
- salary and benefit programs
- performance reviews
- attendance at scientific meetings
- publication opportunities
- participation in political and community affairs
- freedom to change employers
- termination conditions, and
- handling of trade secrets and patents.

As in most compromises, the unity guidelines have not been completely satisfactory to all scientific and engineering associations. The ACS, which was represented on the guideline development committee, declined to endorse them, considering its own previously established guidelines to be stronger. Five other of the 16 societies that worked on developing the guidelines have yet to endorse them.

Twenty-two societies have endorsed the unity guidelines, however, and have actively sought endorsement from companies employing their members. Many leading employers, although they support the principles embraced by the guidelines and find their company practices are in general compliance with them, have been reluctant to endorse them formally. The response of associations has

been "OK, we won't push the issue now." But they are distributing copies to their membership and are planning to provide copies to scientists and engineers graduating in 1974.

The 22 engineering and scientific societies that have endorsed the unity employment guidelines to date are:

- *American Association of Cost Engineers
- *American Institute of Chemical Engineers
- *American Institute of Industrial Engineers
- American Institute of Professional Geologists
- American Nuclear Society
- American Society of Agricultural Engineers
- *American Society of Civil Engineers
- American Society of Engineering Education
- *American Society of Mechanical Engineers
- *American Society for Quality Control
- Data Processing Management Association
- *Engineers Council for Professional Development
- *Engineers Joint Council
- Engineering Societies of New England, Inc.
- *Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
- Institute of Traffic Engineers
- Instrument Society of America
- National Institute of Ceramic Engineers
- *National Society of Professional Engineers
- Society of Experimental Stress Analysis
- Society of Fire Prevention Engineers
- Society of Women Engineers

Those marked with an asterisk (*) were represented on the guideline development committee. Six of the 16 societies that were represented on the committee have not yet endorsed the unity guidelines. Those 6 are:

- American Chemical Society
- American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics
- American Institute of Chemists
- American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers
- American Society for Metals
- American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers

Employment Contracts

Another approach suggested by associations as a means of establishing and maintaining a satisfactory work relationship between companies and their professional staff is the employment contract. The model contracts drawn up by the American Chemical Society (ACS) and the American Institute of Chemists (AIC) are probably the most widely known.

Not surprisingly, a positive attitude toward a contractual relationship seems to be more prevalent among scientists and engineers than among companies which hire them. Last December the Delaware Section of the ACS published in the *Del-Chem Bulletin* the results of a survey of attitudes toward employment contracts. A written employer-employee contract was favored by 60.9 percent of all respondents. Among those respondents over age fifty and in management, 37 percent favored a contractual agreement.

For the individual and for the company, employment contracts present both pros and cons. Pros for the indi-

vidual include increased job security—protection during company merger or takeover and a buffer against economic downturn, a guaranteed severance allowance if layoff is absolutely necessary, perhaps a better wage and benefits package, a specified amount of paid time off for participation in scientific seminars and conferences, and a relationship with the employer as well as responsibilities that are explicitly stated. Perhaps the only minus for the scientist or engineer would be a decrease in mobility and bargaining power.

For the company, the positive effects of a contractual agreement might be greater identity with the company among the professional staff and a stronger moral pressure to be loyal. Also, since a contract would be concrete evidence that the scientist or engineer was being treated differently than other employees, it could stimulate a more positive attitude among the professional staff, help diminish feelings of unfair treatment, and reduce the attraction of a unionization drive. In addition, during high turnover periods a contractual relationship could be an important work force stabilizer.

On the minus side, an employment contract could make it difficult for a company to unload misfits in the organization. Since contracts would be established with each scientist or engineer on an individual basis, precedent-setting terms with one employee could lead to charges of favoritism by others. A contract would also be a static arrangement, not allowing for changes in the company's needs. Costs of arbitrating contract disputes would be a company expense. And instead of the concept of a team effort, a formal adversary relationship between employer and professional employee would be set up.

In considering the advantages and disadvantages of employment contracts, companies have generally agreed that for them the cons definitely outweigh the pros.

New Areas

In addition to expanding their activities in areas generally within the bounds of their traditional interests, associations have begun to move into new areas. Societies, which throughout their history have remained aloof to political involvement, have been working recently to expand their influence into that area. The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), and the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) are among a number of major national technical societies that have established Washington offices for more direct involvement in public affairs.

Pension reform is one area of urgent concern, and representatives of a number of associations testified jointly before the 92nd Congress on behalf of legislation for more favorable vesting requirements. Support was voiced, too, for development of the space shuttle, conversion to the metric system, and establishment of an Office of Technology Assessment.

Public service areas, such as health care, public safety,

Changing Role of Professional Societies

Critical Phase Analysis of Collective Action by Professionals*

I. Upgrading of status of the profession

- Association becomes concerned for the caliber and quantity of professionals in the field
- Association defines role of professional and differences from allied fields; beginning of job descriptions
- Association conducts salary surveys, benefits studies
- Association initiates program to raise levels of compensation to attract and retain better people
- Association publishes information to members; urges use with employers

II. Formalization of standards

- Surveys of compensation become more sophisticated; association obtains technical help to do work, either by hiring consultant or more staff
- Survey data on salaries, benefits are supplemented by economic research to develop appropriate levels of compensation beyond the "going rate" or competitive rate; i.e., comparisons made with other groups getting more dollars
- Philosophy concerning pay for educational degrees and time in field is developed
- Specific sets of responsibilities and duties are developed
- Qualifications are set for education and experience
- Association begins to assist members in their dealings with employers
- Association directs efforts outside; activities and literature show concern for public acceptance
- Association sends standards to employers directly, and to employers' associations

III. Control of entry qualifications

- Association sponsors program for "certification" or registration of professionals
- Public campaign is undertaken to attract entrants into field
- Efforts are made to influence curricula of professional schools
- Agitation starts for licensing by government authority
- Redistribution of duties to other workers is resisted

IV. Problems of the professional, in the company and in the profession

- Concern is expressed for personnel problems

of the professional—job security, career ladders, work schedules, etc.

- Problems in the management and supervision of the professional function are pointed up
- Committees of members are created, focusing on employee relations, department organization, work practices—study problems and develop recommendations
- Standards of professional behavior, codes of ethics are formalized
- Major studies of economic and employment conditions are made in areas where professionals are in short supply

V. Implementation of programs becomes a major function of the association

- Pressure by members for collective action builds up; splits may develop if association resists more active role; competing association may be formed
- New priorities are created; goals set; targets selected
- Resources are allocated for major programs, and staff departments are created to carry them out
- Model "individual contracts" are developed for use with employers
- Publicity, workshops for members, publications, lobbying efforts are stepped up

VI. Activist role

- Collective action by professionals as a group is encouraged
- Manuals are developed as a guide for local units; workshops are held to teach their use
- Policy position is adopted on strikes and work stoppages
- New younger members bring to association experience in confrontation tactics used on college campuses
- Minorities push for recognition in the field
- Collective action is adopted to resist intrusion of already established union

VII. Collective bargaining

- Association acts as representative of professionals; staff with labor union experience, not necessarily in the profession, is hired
- Assistance is given local units in organizing, in training leaders, and in collective bargaining
- Model collective bargaining agreements are developed
- Program of sustained political and legislative action is initiated

* Developed by ORC's Institutional Services staff

sanitation, pollution control, housing, transportation, public utilities, communication, and education have captured the attention of the societies, also. In 1972, the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE), on its own behalf and that of six other societies, conducted a Department of Labor-financed study to explore ways in which displaced aerospace and defense-oriented engineers could transfer their skills to other areas. Results showed approximately 6,000 to 7,000 job opportunities for unemployed engineers in the civilian-need fields in the immediate future and perhaps 25,000 civilian-oriented job possibilities in the next two to three years.

Associations have been quick on the uptake. Working through joint society groups they have moved to back legislation that would be beneficial to research and engineering employment in these areas.

Professional societies are also actively backing favorable legislation on the local level. Before the Ohio legislature

now is a bill sponsored by the state chapter of NSPE which would make the registration of engineers mandatory and thus cancel the industry exemption. At this point, however, passage of the bill looks unlikely.

An important lesson associations have learned is that if they want to exercise their influence to the greatest possible degree, they must organize financial support for favored political candidates. Though legal technicalities prevent associations themselves from participating in open fund-raising for candidates, there is nothing to prevent individual members from organizing visible support. And several societies have suggested that such efforts on a broad basis could benefit professional interests overall.

Thus, associations have come a long way from being solely educator, standard-setter, and common meeting ground. They continue to reject unionism and collective bargaining as desirable practices, but they have undergone a significant change—a metamorphosis from a venerable social group to a vigorous social force.

Blue-Collar Unions Court Professionals

In spite of the steps taken by associations to alleviate the work problems of their members, some within the professional community have continued to express dissatisfaction. From some of them has come a cry for unionization. To the big blue-collar unions, that cry has been a welcome invitation to renew and strengthen their organizing efforts.

In 1956, the number of white-collar workers surpassed that of manual workers as a proportion of the total labor force in the United States. And the fastest growing sector of white-collar employment has been in the professional and technical fields. By 1975, the number of professionals is expected to have increased 45 percent in ten years. That is in comparison with a 20 percent growth rate for the total labor force. In 1947, there were only 3.8-million Americans in professional occupations (all professions), or 6 percent of the work force. In 1966, professionals numbered 9-million, or 12 percent of all workers. It has been estimated that by 1975 their ranks will have grown to 13-million, or approximately 15 percent of the total work force.

It's obvious, then, that blue-collar unions have a vital interest in establishing strong bases within the professional community. Inclusion of white-collar people in their membership would strengthen the unions economically, would enhance their bargaining power, and would give labor a larger voice in the political arena.

Union's Case

The union pitch to professionals is:

- Professional associations can't solve the work problems of employees because employers, as well as employees, are members. Since the two groups tend to have mu-

tually exclusive interests, association policies can never satisfy both groups. Associations should remain the educators and standard-setters and let the unions handle the on-the-job needs of professionals.

- At present the employee is a supplicant in dealing with his employer—a role which is inconsistent with professionalism. Union negotiations would remove the inconsistency. In addition, because the union deals with the decision-makers in top management, the needs of professionals are more likely to be met; requests will not get bogged down in red tape and stymied by intermediate supervisory levels as they often do when the individual acts on his own.
- Professionalism and layoffs are inconsistent, and while the union can't prevent general layoffs in times of economic stress, it can ensure that layoffs are handled fairly.

Although unionization has been on the increase among members of various professions in recent years, professionals overall have been slow to join unions—especially the big blue-collar ones. Of the over 1-million engineers in the United States, only about 5 percent belong to the two dozen or so independent professional unions existing at various companies. Fewer than 1 percent of the nation's engineers are members of the large blue-collar groups.

Unions Step-Up Efforts

Despite all their efforts and despite all the headlines, unions have in reality made only a few inroads into the professional community. But gloomy statistics have not dampened union optimism or deterred efforts to court professional and other white-collar workers. In fact, un-

ions have made a concerted effort to increase their appeal to this group. Special programs have been established that are aimed specifically at the organizing challenge they present.

In late 1966 or early 1967, the AFL-CIO set up a Council of AFL-CIO Unions for Scientific, Professional and Cultural Employees—the SPACE program—composed of approximately 18 unions. Just recently the name was changed to Council of AFL-CIO Unions for Professional Employees, with the explanation that since scientific and cultural employees were professional, the old name was redundant. Also, the Council wanted to avoid further confusion with the national space program.

Functions of the Council include:

- preparation of literature explaining the place of the professional employee in the labor movement;
- research on problems common to professional and technical employees—problems such as licensing, work standards, voice in policy decisions, portable pensions and other fringe benefits, as well as the effects that the growing role of government in educational, cultural and other fields might have on unions and their members;
- conferences to further the interests of professional employees; and
- providing information on legislation, as well as joint action on legislation.

The Council also just recently announced that it is moving its offices into AFL-CIO headquarters and that its budget and staff are being expanded. Apparently no new activities are being planned, just a strengthening of present functions.

Several unions have established their own white-collar focus groups. The United Auto Workers (UAW) set up the Technical, Office and Professional program, or TOP, and at the 1972 convention voted to revise the union bylaws to allow professional organizations to retain their own names and much of their autonomy after UAW affiliation.

In August of this year, the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) announced it was establishing a Professional Employees Division to service the special needs of the approximately 200,000 unorganized scientific and research employees that fall within its jurisdiction. Dr. Frank C. Collins, who is on a leave of absence as professor of physical and environmental chemistry at Brooklyn Polytechnical Institute, will head the new division.

The union sees his professional status as a plus for the division. Every occupational group has its own jargon and Collins naturally speaks the language of professionals. In addition, his ability to empathize with their needs may be better than that of an "outsider." And he will undoubtedly be held up as proof positive that unionization and professionalism are indeed compatible. Also, as a college professor, his union activities may have important influence on the attitudes of young scientists and engineers.

The support for the new OCAW division voiced by

three Nobel prize winners, S. E. Luria, Harold C. Urey, and Linus Pauling, has probably been a significant boost to its prestige. They contend the division will provide greater job security for professionals and will enable them to assume greater moral responsibility for the applications of their work—responsibility they have not taken in the past for fear of losing their jobs.

With employment opportunities for scientists and engineers again on the rise and a "sellers' market" expected by 1980, it seems reasonable to expect professionals' interest in unionization to diminish. However, unions consider the present a prime time to intensify their activities. Their reckoning is that professionals who hesitated to "rock the boat" when jobs were scarce will be more willing to speak out when job opportunities are more plentiful.

A Look to the Future

During every economic crisis some members of the professional community have touted the merits of unionization and have proposed it as the solution to their problems. Unions, too, have made repeated efforts throughout their history to gain professional members. Some spokesmen, consequently, consider the unrest of the past few years part of a cycle. There are, however, some circumstances that make the situation today different than in the past.

- Since white-collar people now outnumber blue-collarites as a proportion of the U.S. labor force, unions need white-collar members to help keep them economically viable and politically strong. They will, therefore, be making a more concerted pitch than ever before. Professional employees are the top priority, too. Unions believe that if they can gain acceptance among professionals, other white-collar workers will fall into line.
- Members of various professions have begun to organize into collective bargaining groups and the idea that unionization and professionalism are incompatible has begun to lose validity.
- The number of scientists and engineers—and for that matter, professionals in general—has grown very rapidly within the past decade. The personal relationship professionals traditionally have sought with their employers has undoubtedly been eroded by the huge departments of professionals that some companies have amassed.
- Salary differentials have been increasingly compressed. Not only are high starting salaries for recent graduates rivaling the salaries of more senior professionals (which unions point to as evidence of inadequate recognition of experience and length of service), but also wages of blue-collar workers have begun to approach professional salary levels.

- While current studies show pro-union attitudes are just as prevalent among experienced scientists and engineers as among the young, some companies anticipate a rise in the tendency of young people to view unionization favorably. The feeling is that increased organization among teachers and professors may influence the attitudes of young people. With rising wage standards among blue-collar workers, more and more college students are coming from a blue-collar background. Whether this will contribute to building more positive attitudes toward unions among young people or will cause them to reject unions in an attempt to lessen ties with their blue-collar background remains a moot point, but some effect on young people's attitudes is likely.

Conclusion

What do these developments mean for the company? For one thing, it is difficult for an employer to be either totally friendly or totally hostile to the societies—even the most militant. Although younger professionals may be supporting their societies for activist reasons, many older professionals and top-level managers with a professional background continue to be active in the societies and perceive their traditional role as the proper one. In addition, hostility on an employer's part, besides breeding antagonism, would preclude the possibility of influencing the society's future directions and cut off an opportunity to keep up to date on new developments within it.

Second, many employers are not without blame regarding management-employee relations practices as they affect professionals within their own company. Many are not attuned to the needs and interests of the professionals as individuals, as employees, and as members of a profession. There are too many illustrations where company policies and practices are dominated by overwhelming concern with production workers' problems or with the situation of other employee groups which are more numerous, more vocal, or currently more militant.

Third, there is a general presumption that professionals will take care of themselves. But study after study conducted by ORC reveals that a professional who becomes a manager can be autocratic and noncommunicative, and can create a working environment that turns off other professionals within the organization.

Finally, recognition systems, including programs for pro-

fessional development, compensation advancement, and promotion, have not always been effective from the professional employee's viewpoint. He may feel, particularly in research and development situations, that he is outside the mainstream of the company's management process.

The threat of organization and collective action by professionals is a real one. Its implications surpass those surrounding unions of blue-collar or clerical employees. Professionals, when organized, could seek to control entry into their fields. They can more easily control work assignment and work pace. And they can effectively scuttle a supervisor or manager. (Note how organized teachers can control pay, class size, curriculum, selection of a principal, etc.) Thus, they can pose real threats to the management of any activity.

Already there is a shortage of scientists and engineers—caused as much by lower enrollments in academic programs as by the widening areas of need for their skills. But activism is not expected to subside. Instead, professionals are expected to use scarcity as a lever to gain the upper hand against employers in issues that concern them.

It is not surprising in the light of recent developments that shrewd managers and progressive companies are developing better linkages with professionals, maintaining careful surveillance of the management and communication processes affecting the professional, and seeking means of sharpening the recognition and rewards that professionals demand. These employers are scrutinizing compensation systems to overcome salary compression, refining manpower programs to ensure that redundancy is not the problem in the future that it has been in the past, and assuring that all management members keep sight of the fact that professionals are individuals. Some companies are even recognizing that relationships with professionals may have to be monitored by a special unit within the employee relations department.

While the test for management is a serious one, knowledge and tools are available to maintain positive relations between the professional and his employer. The question is whether the employer will fully recognize what his responsibility entails and will diligently discharge it. Failure on the part of some employers, or even indifference, will work to the detriment of all if, because of the company's neglect of the professionals' concerns, they and their societies, as well as unions, are led to pursue increasingly militant tactics.