

**INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS**

- A. How valuable do the members consider the informal discussions at Society meetings? Can their value be increased? If these discussions are to be continued in their present format, should their title be changed in view of their increasing formality?
- B. Should the procedure be changed so that, unless the chairman determines otherwise, the discussion of a member not present will be summarized briefly or be turned over to the Secretary for the record without any presentation?

*New York Regional Meeting*

MR. WALTER SHUR stated that the increasing formality of the discussions has been an unavoidable consequence of the large membership present at any of our meetings, and that the Society should hasten the inevitable by completely formalizing the discussions held before the entire body. His proposal was to keep the present structure and character of the discussions, but have them submitted in advance to the Society for editorial review. The program would then be more balanced, have less duplication, and be kept at a high level of quality. Spontaneous discussion would be limited to a specified period after the formal discussion on each topic was completed.

Formal papers in the *Transactions* of recent years have tended to become more technical and original, and the informal discussions have increased in importance. Because of their growing value in exchanging information about company practice, attitudes, and opinions, their allotted time should be made as productive as possible.

With respect to section B, Mr. Shur felt that the value of the discussion and not the presence or absence of the author should be the criterion for determining whether or not it should be presented in full. His proposed program would take care of this automatically.

MR. HARRY M. SARASON pointed out that the worst enemy of informality is *time*. One remedy is to have a program which is not full, and reserve half an hour at the end of the meeting to discuss current problems on a fully informal basis, except that a few members should be primed to "keep the ball rolling" when discussion lags.

Mr. Sarason agreed with the limitation on absentee discussions but suggested that members be sent galley proofs or paperback periodicals of all discussions on topics of current interest, and not just condensations at a much later date.

MR. BENJAMIN T. HOLMES pointed out that an examination of the record shows that over 500 different individuals have taken part in

the informal discussions since the Society was founded 10 years ago. The participation is still quite widespread. The title of "Informal Discussion" is unimportant as far as changing it is concerned, but the content certainly has changed with time. It is now more an open forum.

Mr. Holmes recommended that those planning to participate in informal discussion register at the desk, so that the chairmen will have better control over the time allocation. The Society might also consider having such individuals sit on the platform during the discussion of the topic.

MR. ERNEST J. MOORHEAD thought that perhaps the informal discussions could be eliminated entirely, as regional clubs with their smaller memberships now provide the best facilities. He suggested that Society topics be presented more thoroughly by members who are qualified to do so, with such presentations being followed by question periods.

#### *Omaha Regional Meeting*

MR. CHARLES L. TROWBRIDGE stated that the informal discussion topics have long been the main part of the Society's program and have been most valuable to the membership. The informal discussion can be improved, however, by continuing the trend toward simultaneous sessions. This will produce smaller, more homogeneous discussion groups. It is important that good discussion questions be chosen. In addition, it would be helpful if the chairman could have a better idea of how many intended to speak on a topic. Perhaps registration of members who intend to speak would help the chairman control the timing. Individual speakers should be brief and to the point. Discussions might properly be limited to a maximum of ten minutes. Extemporaneous discussion should be encouraged, but it must be realized that most of the informal discussion is prepared, even written out, beforehand.

Regarding section B, while Mr. Trowbridge agreed that *in absentia* discussions tend to be less interesting and too long, he did not recommend any restrictions other than placing them after all of the personally delivered discussions.

MR. ORLO L. KARSTEN, JR. expressed interest in the development of some method of making available transcripts of the discussions soon after a meeting, perhaps in mimeographed form.

MR. ARTHUR PEDOE expressed his view that the informal discussions are the most valuable part of the *Transactions*. Mr. Pedoe suggested they be published in more detail.

MR. E. FORREST ESTES commented on the desirability of brief, concise discussions, and suggested that those preparing their remarks in advance, in writing, keep this particularly in mind.