SELECTED REFERENCES
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SECTION
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

NO. 69* PRINCETON, N.J. MAY, 1956

PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS
AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

I. General Discussions

Civil Engineering (33 W. 39th St., New York 18), November, 1953.
"Returns from questionnaire on employment conditions, 1953, summarized." pp. 75-76. 50 cents.

Results of a survey of the membership of the American Society of Civil Engineers in regard to collective bargaining. Of the 17,203 replies, 24% believed that collective bargaining is, or would be, advantageous; and 23% preferred representation by professional bargaining groups rather than by craft or labor unions. Feelings about unionization seemed correlated with age, experience, and supervisory status. The major reason for rejecting collective bargaining was a belief in the incompatibility of collective bargaining with "professional status."


Proceeding from the hypothesis that salaried professionals, due to their peculiar background and status, have produced a form of trade unionism significantly different from traditional trade unions, Goldstein examines the relationships between the following: "(1) salaried professionals and management; (2) salaried professionals and the union; (3) the professional union and management; and (4) the professional union and the labor movement."


Presents profile charts of attitudes of engineers and scientists in industry. These employees are characterized by chronic dissatisfaction and frustration arising from a fundamental conflict between their expectations and values and the opportunities which they have to realize their ambitions.

* Supplements Selected References No. 2, March 1945.
** Items from this list should be ordered directly from the publisher. Addresses are given in connection with each reference.

Presents the employment problems of professional workers and the attempted solutions through recourse to unionism and to bargaining activities, both union and non-union. Also discusses the attitude of the National Labor Relations Board toward professional employees and outlines a managerial personnel policy appropriate to the particular needs of professionals.

**II. The Position of the Professional Societies**


This report traces the basic developments of the professional status of engineers as they have gained in importance to industry. Pertinent provisions of the Wagner Act, Taft-Hartley Act, and NLRA and court decisions are examined. The causes of engineer dissatisfaction and the ethical aspects of engineer unionization are also discussed. A program of action congenial to the NSPE is suggested.


Mr. Shoch, Vice President of the Northeastern region of the NSPE, presents arguments why engineers must choose between the principles of professionalism and the philosophy behind the collective bargaining concept. Also discussed are the aims of the ESA as compared to those of the NSPE, the congressional testimony of each, and the position and problems of engineer "sounding board" groups.


Testimony and statement representative of several national engineering societies (containing 100,000 members) outlining their position in regard to collective bargaining. Professional employees, who have a community of interest, should be guaranteed the right to form and administer their own bargaining unit; should not be forced to affiliate with a bargaining group including non-professionals; should not be
forced to join any labor organization as a condition of their employment. These requests led to incorporation of the “professional provisions” (sections 2(12) and 9(b) (1)) in the Labor-Management Relations Act. In subsequent testimony, the professional engineering societies have consistently urged retention of these provisions.

III. THE UNION POSITION


President Amann announces the objectives of the Engineers and Scientists of America. It is believed that working conditions can best be improved through collective bargaining. ESA will carry on research programs, surveys, and studies to encourage member units to bargain effectively on a plane in keeping with their professional and social standing.


“Far from being ‘degrading,’ union membership has directly enhanced the standing of engineers in our society. . . .” Unionism, says Mr. Meany, better serves the economic interests of the engineer than do the professional societies. By raising standards of pay, assuring greater job security, and protecting the engineer against arbitrary discharge, the union has provided substantially higher standards for the average engineer.


Mr. Miller counters some of the arguments by Mr. Shoch against engineer unionization (see above). Engineers should consider that it is becoming increasingly difficult for the individual to control his economic life; that professional societies are probably inept and reticent at representing the economic needs of the employees; and that membership in a union need not conflict with genuine professionalism nor with the interests of the public.


Mr. Stephens, President of the American Federation of Technical Engineers, AFL-CIO, expresses the union position. With the advent of mass production the engineer has become an actual part of the work force. Since, therefore, professional status is identical with that of any skilled craftsman, Stephens advises full-fledged unionization.

Due to the increase in size of the engineering profession, the individual engineer has lost in status. Consequently, he has turned to group action. Mr. Taft, Vice President of the ESA, enumerates the aims and accomplishments of the independent engineering unions. Salary increases on a percentage basis, fringe benefits, time off to attend technical meetings, and proper utilization and recognition of the more experienced engineers are some of the issues.

**IV. Management Experience with Professional Unions**


Relates RCA’s experience with its unionized design and development engineers. Mr. Mertz states: "In RCA management we perceive our Association of Professional Engineering Personnel as part of an emerging national phenomenon. . . . The major problem for management is to learn how to live with it."


The author, Vice President in charge of Industrial Relations at Minneapolis-Honeywell, examines the question of ethical practice in the engineering profession as it relates to collective bargaining. His experience in engineer collective bargaining convinces him that an engineering union or any organization that engages in collective bargaining must inevitably adopt the typical tactics, practices, and characteristics of the trade union. On the other hand, he believes that there is a fundamental conflict between the practices inherent in collective bargaining and the unregimented atmosphere that must prevail in a professional engineering organization.


Companies should make a special effort to provide professional recognition, some independent research opportunities, and intelligent supervision for engineers, since faulty personnel practices will encourage engineer unionization. Should such organization occur, a new set of working conditions which may seriously affect labor relations, management, and even the individual employee will result.