

A paper in the Paper Series on Engineering and Society

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STEPS TOWARD EFFECTIVE SOCIAL ACTION

1. BE INFORMED: See Figure 1, below, as an example of how an engineer could, through personal contacts, reading, and association with technical, educational, professional, and political groups, become informed as a base for effective political action.
2. MAINTAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF A BROAD SPECTRUM OF POLITICAL VIEWS.
3. FIND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS to work with on important social issues.

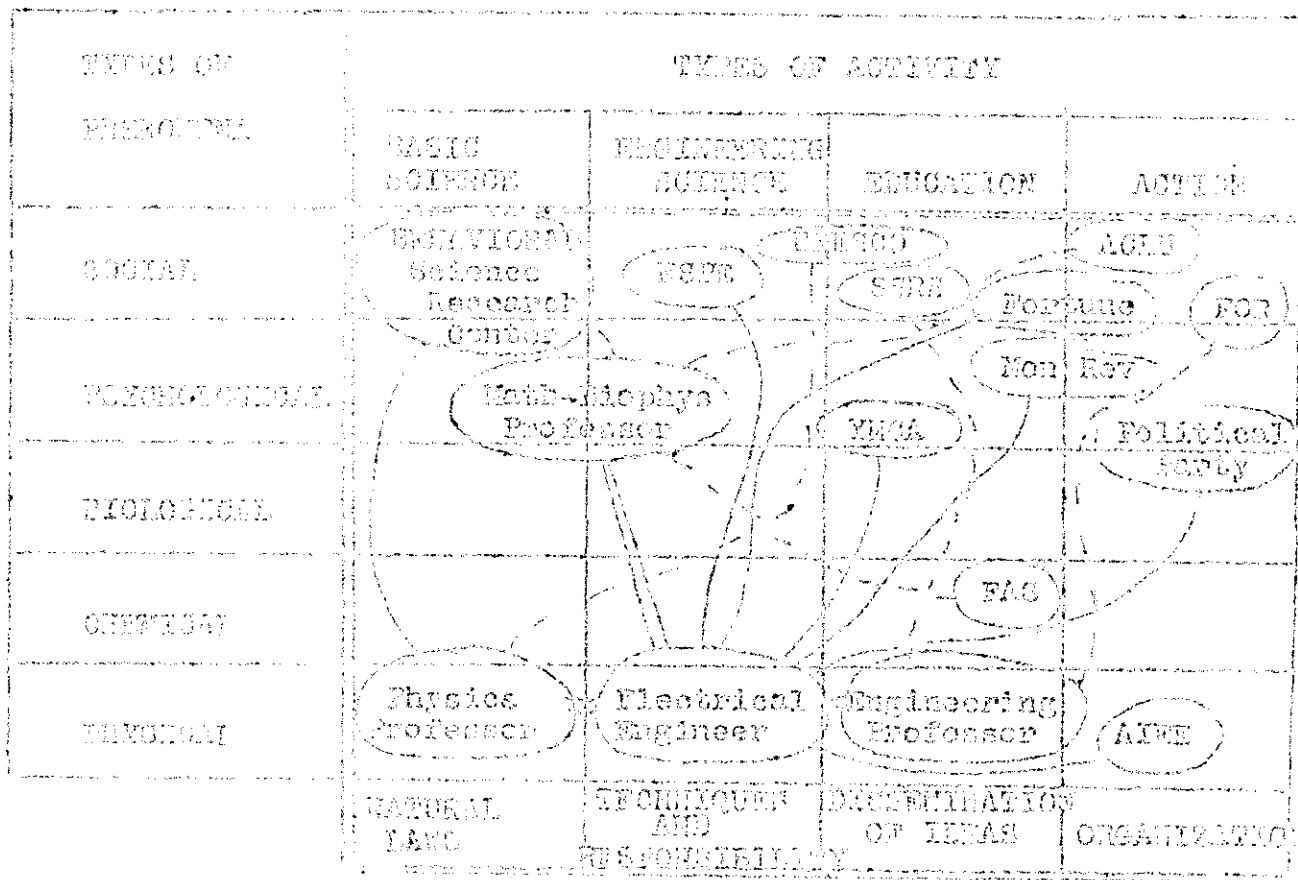


Figure 1. Example of Checking Chart Used to Show Coverage of the Area of Social Responsibility

1. Explanation of Checking Chart of Figure 1.

My thesis is that any new discovery in science or invention in engineering has far-reaching implications throughout all human activity. Further, I claim that the ordinary engineer, who does not have much spare time on account of his basic engineering work and his family responsibilities, can find short cuts to understanding the social implications of his work through devices such as the checking chart of Figure 1. I have faith that the engineer can fulfill his social responsibility to help make the results of his work be utilized in tune with mankind's highest aspirations.

To fulfill his social responsibility, the engineer must understand that it is a responsibility he shares with many people both inside and outside his profession. He may not need to devote a tremendous amount of time and energy to the social implications of his work. The key to success lies in developing a fruitful perspective of the relationship of his work to the society in which he lives. The checking chart of Figure 1 is suggested as an aid to each engineer in developing his own perspective. The ordinary engineer need not expect his activity to encompass the range of Steinmetz. He may have a group of friends and correspondents who cover different areas of the checking chart, or he may maintain contact with different organizations which cover different areas of the chart. A sample chart is shown in Figure 1, which illustrates the case of an electrical engineer who has established a network of communication channels which enable him to discharge his social responsibility with a minimum of effort. In this example of an hypothetical engineer, he does not by himself cover the whole area, but has friends who cover parts of the area and share with him their understanding of the problems of our complex industrial civilization.

In this example shown, in Figure 1, our electrical engineer belongs to his technical society: American Institute of Electrical Engineers and his professional society: National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) or an affiliated state society. In addition to the normal newspapers and magazines he reads two magazines having opposing viewpoints: Fortune, representing the viewpoint of business management, and the Monthly Review, representing an independent socialist viewpoint. Our idealized "ordinary" engineer might also contribute financially to the Student Y.M.C.A. program or some equivalent group of his particular religious faith so that some engineering students having advisors of the "philosophy - there's nothing-in-it school" might find some communication channels available for contact with the history of mankind's cultural achievements and aspirations. He might subscribe to a news bulletin of the Democratic or Republican Party to gain a sense of what kind of issues the practical politicians are prepared to discuss.

Our electrical engineer could rely upon a physics professor friend who follows the activities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and follows some of the projects at a neighboring behavioural science research center to tell him about special developments in these areas dealing with the application in society of new engineering products. Our engineer might also know a professor of mathematical biophysics who also maintained contact with the behavioural sciences and was a source of information on civil liberties and radiation fallout problems through his

membership in the World Council for Democracy (1956) and the Federation of American Scientists (FAS).

Our electrical engineer in industry might maintain contact with an engineering professor whose conscience causes him to take a pacifist stand. From this friend our engineer could occasionally get information about how organizations such as the Society for Social Responsibility in Science (SSRS) and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) are tackling the problems of our society.

2. Maintain an Understanding of a Broad Spectrum of Political Views.

The Spartan Y at San Jose State College used to maintain an exhibit of political literature covering the whole spectrum of views from the extreme left through center to the extreme right. By use of this exhibit students could compare all the known political views. In the absence of any library or organization maintaining such an exhibit, it is the responsibility of each individual to develop his own collection of literature from the major political parties, including the extremes of the Communist Party and the John Birch Society, so that he will truly have access to the full spectrum of ideas, so he can form his own evaluations.

Unfortunately, the Spartan Y was terminated last year. The following quotation from its last brochure and the tree on the right are indicative of its achievements: "The Pioneering Spirit". As We Tackle New Projects, like new leaves sprouting on a tree. Past Major Projects Are Usually Taken Over By the College Or Other Institutions as is illustrated by our 'Tree of Service on the right."

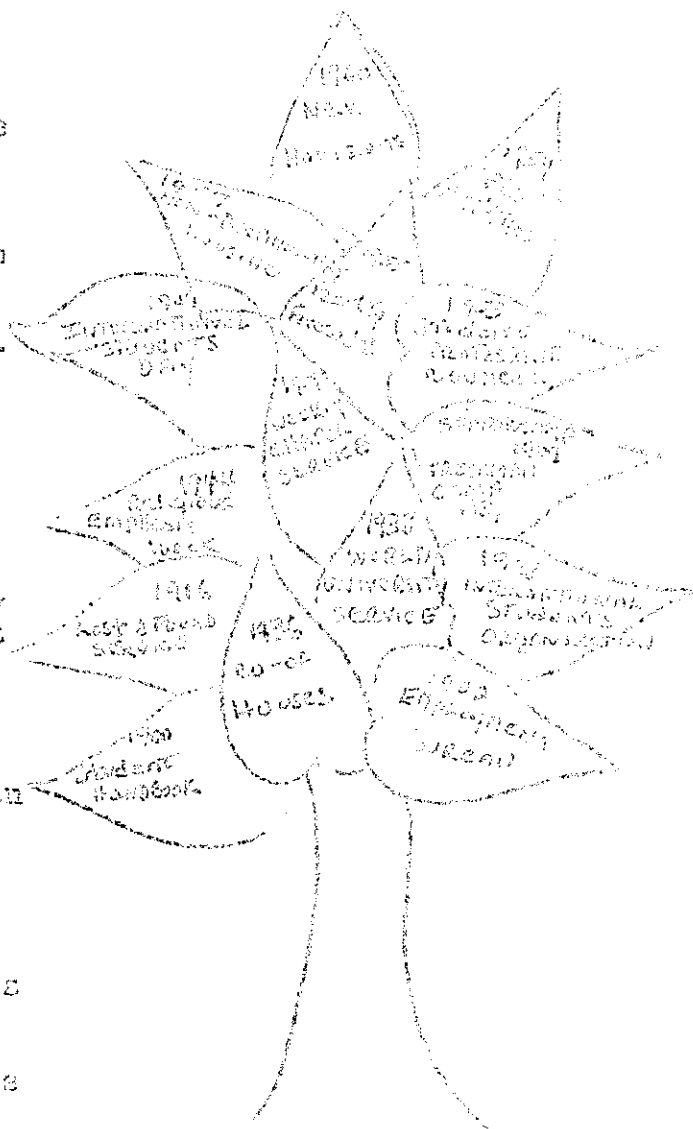
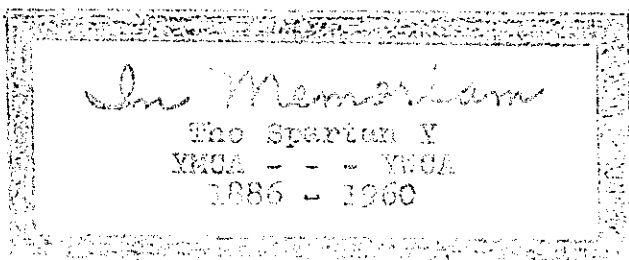


Figure 2. Spartan Y Tree of Service.



B. Find Local Organizations to Work With on Important Social Issues.

If you live in Santa Clara County, California, you can use the following directory:

"Directory of Organizations Dedicated to the Dignity of Man, Santa Clara County, 1961," published by the American Friends Service Committee (Santa Clara County) and the First Unitarian Church, San Jose, California. (1961 Directory of Social Justice Organizations in Santa Clara County.) Mimeographed, 22 pp.

The table of contents of the above is listed below:

Acts for Peace
American Association for the United Nations
American Civil Liberties Union
American Friends Service Committee
Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith
California Conference for the Abolition of the Death Penalty
Catholic Inter-Racial Council of Santa Clara County
Congress of Racial Equality
Community Service Organization
Filipino Club of Santa Clara Valley
Friends Committee on Legislation
Garden City Women's Club
Human Relations Commission of the City of San Jose
Wegant Ministry
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
National Association for the Study of Negro Life and History
Palo Alto Committee for Open Housing
Palo Alto Fair Play Council
San Jose Committee for Better Education
Santa Clara County Council for Civic Unity
Santa Clara County Citizens Council on Agricultural Problems
Santa Clara County Jail Auxiliary
Valley Committee on Open Housing
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

When problems of the special areas of the various groups above fit together, requiring more general political action, one may have to work with one of the major political parties such as:

Democratic Party of Santa Clara County, 481 North First St., San Jose

Republican Party Central Committee of Santa Clara County, 371-D Park Ave., San Jose

Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation (no listing in 1961 San Jose Telephone Book), National Office: SP-SDF, Room 516, 303 Park Avenue South, New York 10, N.Y. Nearest office of Young People's Socialist League is 2431 Dwight Way, Berkeley, California.