

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Society of Motion Picture Engineers

Atlantic City, New Jersey

May 7th to 10th, 1923

Ladies and Gentlemen:

IT GIVES me great pleasure to welcome you all to another convention of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers. This is, without question, going to be the best convention we have ever held, and as many of you know, we have had some mighty fine ones.

The very fact that our Society had a healthy growth and very successful meetings during the hard times just passed invites the imagination to speculate on the great possibilities before us now that business is again prosperous. I feel that we are now in the midst of what will prove to be a most remarkable year in the Society's history. We have reached the point where we have gained respect and recognition in both the engineering and business world.

Two or three years ago, no one outside of our immediate membership knew anything about the Society of Motion Picture Engineers, much less cared anything about it.

To-day, successful business men are placing their membership in the Society of Motion Picture Engineers on their letterheads, and advertising the fact that they are members of this or that committee of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers. Why do they do that? Because the Society of Motion Picture Engineers has created for itself a very high standard of engineering practice in the motion picture field, and it is recognized that those men who are selected for the various committees are men of ability; authorities in their line.

During the past few months the American Engineering Standards Committee has come to me and asked if there was not something I could do to facilitate the work of our Standards Committee so that our standards might be recognized by the American Engineering Standards Committee, and made the official standards of the motion picture industry in America.

European motion picture societies have also been in touch with us, with a view to making standards for the whole world, so that machinery, parts, films, etc., would be interchangeable anywhere.

Negotiations have been started for the placing of some of the historical material collected by our Historical Committee in the Smithsonian Institute at Washington, D C.

We have had calls from public libraries and educational institutions for copies of our TRANSACTIONS. Some of the supply dealers feel there is need for their sale over the counter, as text books.

Our members on the Pacific Coast are very anxious to organize a Coast Section of the Society, in order that they may take a more active part in our work than is at present possible.

We have been able to draw to our meetings and have for our speakers some of the best known scientists in the country.

So I say, we are gaining recognition and respect.

With this, however, comes greater responsibility, especially for the committees in whose hands lies more than anywhere else the success or failure of our Society. I refer particularly to the Papers Committee, the Standards Committee, the Nomenclature Committee and the Publications Committee.

The success that we have so far attained has been, in a large measure, due to the type of material that the Papers Committee has selected for presentation at the conventions, and to the grade of men they have chosen for speakers. If this material had not been high class, new and constructive data of interest and value to the industry, we would not be in our present position at the top of the engineering end of the industry. It is by no means an easy task that the Papers Committee has. Much thought must be given to the selection of the class of material desired so as to make a well balanced program. It is not easy to get busy engineers at the head of their various professions to take the time to prepare and deliver papers, nor is it always easy to turn down diplomatically light weight papers and those offered for purely commercial advertising.

After the papers have been obtained, a really tremendous job confronts the Papers Committee in collecting, editing, and preparing for printing all the material and discussions. The greatest burden of this work falls on the chairman of the Papers Committee, and the work is done gratis on time ill-spared from his regular business. I think the Society is very fortunate in its present Papers Committee chairman, and I want to take this occasion to express to Mr. L. A. Jones the appreciation of the Board of Governors of the splendid constructive work he is doing for the Society.

I suppose really the ultimate purpose of most engineering societies is the advance of the art so that greater sales of the devices used therein will result. Yet, to obtain this end, an engineering body must steer clear of pure commercialism. Your Board of Governors gave very serious consideration to the holding of an exhibition of equipments used in the motion picture industry, in connection with this convention. After sounding out the membership on this proposition, it did not seem advisable to hold the exhibition.

We are, however, going to try something that has not been done before; i.e., the Papers Committee has planned to have a symposium on motion picture projectors for educational and home use. It was felt that here was a relatively little developed field of great possibilities. The thought was that if the different manufacturers could be brought together to discuss their problems and their requirements, considerable progress could be made towards standardization in the art. The various manufacturers have, therefore, been asked to present short technical descriptions of their outfits, accompanied by a demonstration, if desired. The success or failure of this plan and its

repetition in other branches of the industry depends largely on whether it is taken in the spirit given, i.e. as pertaining only to the engineering features of the machines. If the thing runs into a commercial sales argument, it will fail of its purpose. I would, therefore, ask you to bear this in mind when the symposium is presented.

This year we tried an experiment. We selected some of our Associate members for committee chairmen, and I am glad to say it worked, and worked well. The chairman of the Advertising Committee took hold of the work on short notice and secured more ads for us than we have ever had before. With a whole six months to work in for the next TRANSACTIONS, we are expecting great things of Joe Hornstein.

I know that the Arrangements Committee has had no small problem on its hands, and has been hard at work providing for your comfort and entertainment.

In the past we have met in cities where there were large manufacturing interests who contributed royally to our interest and entertainment. We do not have this advantage in Atlantic City. This has made the task of the Arrangements Committee doubly hard, and will, also, make some increase in the individual expense of this convention. However, I am sure we shall all feel it well worth while, and appreciate the hard work of J. C. Kroesen and his assistants.

The committee problem, as a whole, has been a very vexing one to your President. I cannot help but feel that there is much more that most of our committees could contribute to the success of the Society than they have been doing. The problem has been to get the men to devote the time to the work. I have made it my policy to select the most capable man in each line of work who would undertake the leadership of a committee, and then put the responsibility up to him as to what he should do and how it should be done. In many cases the result has been disappointing, i.e. little or no activity. I have, therefore, been turning over in my mind the question as to whether it would be better to have, as at present, twenty-five different standing committees, most of which are practically inactive, or to eliminate all but the few absolutely essential for the conduct of the Society's business, and appoint temporary special committees to handle various matters as the need arises from time to time.

It is essential that we have an Advertising Committee, as the money secured for ads in the TRANSACTIONS is needed to help defray printing expense. This committee might, to advantage, take over the duties of the Publicity Committee as well.

It is necessary to have an Arrangements Committee to attend to the many things pertaining to our conventions.

The Auditing Committee could be dispensed with by having a Certified Public Accountant go over our books once a year.

A Membership Committee is very important to assure the continued healthy growth of the organization.

I believe the Standards and Nomenclature Committees could, to advantage, be combined.

We must have a Papers Committee to secure and prepare material for our TRANSACTIONS. The work of this committee, how-

ever, is closely related to that of the Publications Committee, and it seems to me that the two could, advantageously, be joined.

The above mentioned committees now are the backbone of the Society, and, if strengthened by some of the real workers on the remaining committees (which I would propose dissolving), they could, in my opinion, carry on the Society's work with an even greater degree of success than in the past. I should be glad to have your comments on these suggestions any time between now and next Fall, when the terms of the present committees come to an end.

I should like to take this opportunity to express to the officers and Board of Governors of the Society my keen appreciation of their support and co-operation. There has been no small amount of valuable time and effort donated to the Society by these men, particularly by our Treasurer, Mr. W. B. Cook, and our Secretary, Mr. P. M. Abbott. I look forward to the time when our organization will be large enough, and financially able to have a permanent office, and support a paid Assistant Secretary to relieve these men of much of the detail work they now carry on. This will also give us much needed space in which to store the Society's records, TRANSACTIONS correspondence, cuts, and numerous other things which we have accumulated in the past seven years.

I cannot close without reference to the epoch making work of Daddy Jenkins, the founder and first President of our Society. It was my privilege a short time ago to witness the first transmission of pictures from one city to another by radio. The Government station at Anascotia, Md., sent them with equipment invented and built by Jenkins, and the *Evening Bulletin* in Philadelphia, Pa., received them on apparatus also invented and built by Jenkins. While these were "still" photos, and took a few minutes to send, Jenkins has all the elements necessary for instantaneous vision as far as present audible radio will travel.

Already a great joint engineering meeting of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers has been held in New York and Chicago, the New York audience listening to papers read in Chicago, and the Chicago men listening to the discussion of papers by the New York audience, and vice versa. Not only were those two audiences talking with each other as easily as if gathered together in one room, instead of being 900 miles apart, but hundreds of thousands of people all over the country also heard the papers and discussions. A year from now, I believe, Jenkins will make it possible for similar audiences to see each other as well as hear each other. From then on it is but a step to motion pictures of events as they are taking place, shown in our own homes.

Just what part the Society of Motion Picture Engineers will take in this most marvelous development is hard to say, but that we shall have a part, and a large one, I am sure.

L. C. PORTOR

Atlantic City, N. J.
May 7, 1923.