

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

### Fall Meeting

#### Society of Motion Picture Engineers

*Ottawa, Canada, 1923*

*Fellow Members of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers and Guests:*

**I**T GIVES me great pleasure to welcome you all to another Annual Convention. The Fall meetings of the Society have always been the most important and the most interesting, coming as they do at the close of the vacation period, when everybody is full of energy and enthusiasm for the Winter's work,—they are a fitting opening for another season.

As your President for the past two years, I have given very close study to the Society's problems. This study has led me to the conviction that for the best service to the Society, no one man should hold any office for more than two consecutive years. With your permission I should, therefore, like to review briefly the past two years' progress on the part of the Society, and offer some suggestions based on my experience which, I hope, may prove of value and assistance to the new officers whom you will elect at this meeting.

Our Papers Committee probably looks upon the Fall Meeting more as a closing than an opening to its work. A convention of this sort does not "just happen"! It takes long, careful preparation and hard work, especially on the part of the Papers and Arrangements Committees, to make it a success. No sooner is the Spring meeting over than the Papers Committee sets to work lining up a program for the Fall meeting. This work is carried on at the same time the task, for it is truly a task, of getting the papers, discussions and committee reports of the Spring meeting in shape for publication is under way, so that I assure you the past Summer has been no vacation from Society work for L. A. Jones, Chairman of our Papers Committee, and his assistants,—nor for J. C. Kroesen, Chairman of our Publications Committee and his associates.

In discussing with these men the reason for the late publication of the Spring Transactions, it appears that the delay was again caused largely by the time taken for authors and discussers to correct their proofs, changes requested, etc. Personally, I should be in favor of making an iron-bound rule that only papers turned in previous to the convention be published, and that no subsequent changes be al-

lowed. I should also be in favor of publishing discussions after one week's time had been allowed for correction, and without any further change. It seems to me that the errors or omissions that would be thus occasioned would be less serious than this long delay in getting out the Transactions.

That the Chairman of our Arrangements Committee, Mr. R. S. Peck, and his assistants have not been loafing will be increasingly evident as this convention progresses. I wish to take this opportunity to thank them and all others who have been cooperating for the success of our Society.

In reviewing the work of the Society for the past two years, I have been led to the conclusion that those have been epochal years in our history. I really believe we have rounded out and made solid the foundation of an organization that will continue to grow and be an increasing factor in the motion picture industry. During the past two years we have adopted the first set of standards and a list of nomenclature for the whole industry. These are in the process of being made American standards by the American Engineering Standards Committee.

We have in the past 24 months increased our membership 31 per cent. (Just at present this figure has been slightly reduced by the recent dropping of a number of members for non-payment of dues. This, I believe, is advantageous. I would rather see a small organization of real live leaders in the industry than a large Society carrying along a lot of dead wood.) There are some in our Associate membership class, who I believe are qualified for Active membership. I believe they should be induced to apply for the higher grade.

During the past two years we have received some wonderful papers, presenting to the industry data and original research work that was nowhere else available, and some of which would not have been done except for our Society. Our Transactions are growing bigger and better with each issue. They constitute the finest library of technical data pertaining to the motion picture industry in existence to-day.

We are forming a section of the Society on the Pacific Coast. This I believe to be the forerunner of several Sections in various parts of the country. The time will, undoubtedly, come when it will be desirable for these various Sections to hold their local meetings several times a year, and then all to gather together annually for one big convention.

We have recently initiated the practice of holding joint meetings with other organizations in the motion picture industry. The meeting held this Summer with the Motion Picture Directors Association was, I hope, a forerunner of many more joint meetings with this and other motion picture interests.

In response to increasing inquiries about the S. M. P. E. we have just prepared four pamphlets which, together, tell the story well. The first is an article outlining the organization and workings of the Society, together with a list of our standards and nomenclature. The

second is a reprint of the index of our Transactions up to the present meeting, showing clearly the wide range of subjects covered by our papers. The third is a reprint of our membership list, showing what concerns and individuals compose the Society, and fourth, a sheet giving our constitution and by-laws, together with a membership application blank. A set of these papers has been or will soon be mailed to each member of the Society, and it is hoped that each application blank will be returned filled out by a new applicant. The larger our membership, the more useful and influential will the Society become to its members and to the industry as a whole.

Additional copies of these papers can be obtained from the Secretary as desired.

Arrangements have been made with the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D. C., to take over some of the historical material that the Society has collected to date, thus preserving it permanently for the future.

During the past six years I have been studying closely the membership of our Society and the various types of conventions we have held. At some meetings, notably the Montreal one, we devoted our program strictly to business. At other meetings more time has been given to recreation. In some cases play has been provided for us as a body, and in others we have simply had time off, as it were, to seek recreation as individuals or in small groups. One thing seems very evident to me, and that is that the old adage "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" can be applied equally well to the S. M. P. E. It is my judgment that a great deal of the benefit of our meetings is obtained from personal contact with those in attendance. It is only when you make friends with a man that he will really open his heart—tell you of his work and his plans. One does not make friends simply by listening to technical papers. So it seems to me the growing tendency to devote more time at our conventions to play is very good. I hope that some means may be worked out to provide play of a type in which the Society as a whole can participate. I should like to see, for example, an afternoon devoted to a ball-game, and perhaps a mobsome golf match, or a putting contest, etc. It would not be amiss to have various kinds of tournaments run through the convention days, with souvenir prizes provided for the winners.

Rather than have full day sessions, I believe it would be advantageous to stick to business from 9 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. each day, and play during the afternoon. With such a schedule I should be in favor of holding two evening sessions; one of a semi-popular nature combined with the banquet. Very good examples of this type of session were given at our Rochester and Atlantic City meetings. The other evening could be a strictly full technical session.

It also seems to me desirable to spend one afternoon visiting some notable manufacturing plant, not necessarily producing only motion picture products, but anything of allied interest. Our trip through the Dayton Cash Register plant was a good example of such a visit.

On the Papers program, in addition to having a well-balanced program covering the various branches of the industry, it seems to me a good idea to have at least one paper that is not strictly technical, and perhaps not even dealing directly with any one branch of motion picture work. Such a paper was the address of Mr. Henry D. Hubbard of the Bureau of Standards, given at the Washington meeting.

Regarding our meeting places. The practice of meeting in various cities is good, and should, I believe, by all means be continued. I do feel, however, that our present method of deciding by popular vote at one convention where the next is to be held, should be changed. Our conventions have grown to a size where it is not always desirable to flop down on some unsuspecting city, where perhaps we have only one or two members, and say to them "It is up to you to show us a good time." I would recommend that at each convention a committee be appointed to study the question of the next convention place. This committee could receive suggestions at the meeting; take the next month studying facilities, attractions, rates, etc.; then in consultation with the Board of Governors, the next meeting place could be selected and the membership advised by letter. It would seem to me desirable to hold one of our meetings in Los Angeles, shortly after our new Coast Section gets well under way.

The Committee problems continue to be very vexing to your President. In my Atlantic City address I suggested the elimination of all standing committees except those absolutely essential to the conduct of the Society's affairs. After six months more consideration of this question, I still feel that this would be advisable. With a few exceptions it has been almost impossible to get any action out of our committees. There is much that they could do. I believe they *could* contribute to our Society a part almost equal to that of the papers presented at our conventions, but either through lack of time or interest, or both, that has not been the case. Practically all of the excellent data that has been given by the active committees could have been presented as papers so that the elimination of those committees need not shut off the members' activities. There are a few men who are really carrying on the bulk of the Society's work. They do, personally, 99 per cent of all the committee work that is done. The selection of men who have the knowledge and the ability to serve on committees receives the most careful study on the part of your President in consultation with the Board of Governors. The choice of chairmen for these committees is no easy matter. There is the natural desire to take the small group of men who are workers and give them all the chairmanships. Obviously, that would not be fair, either to those few men or to the rest of the Society. Membership on the Society's committees is an honor, and is so recognized by some of the men in advertising the fact on their stationery, and in other ways in their business.

It does not seem to me fair, either to the committee chairmen, and in their case to the Society, for the individual members to accept appointment on a committee and then lie down on the job and do

nothing. So again I would recommend reducing and combining the present standing committees to the following:

- (1) Standards and Nomenclature
- (2) Papers and Publications
- (3) Membership
- (4) Arrangements
- (5) Advertising and Publicity

With this line-up the groups of men who have proven themselves active workers for the Society could all be utilized on these committees and, I believe, with the essential committees composed of such a personnel, a still greater success would be brought to our Society than any it has achieved so far.

Our organization has grown to the point where there are certain needs that should be met. Perhaps the most important of these is office and storage space, and the time may not be far distant when we shall need a stenographer acting in the capacity of assistant secretary. Much of our material, such as Transactions, cuts, stationery, correspondence, etc. etc. is scattered around in different members' offices. Some of it inevitably becomes lost and some damaged through transportation from one place to another.

I believe that wider distribution should be made of our Transactions. They should be placed in every large library and every educational institution in the country.

We are badly in need of further standardization. To-day there is no such thing as standard film density, standard screen illumination, standard actinic of artificial illumination in the studio. The industry has no means of comparing accurately and in reproducible units of measurement the definition of pictures projected by various lenses. Nobody knows how rapidly a motion picture screen decreases in brilliancy of reflected picture due to the accumulation of dust and dirt, and from other causes. Surely there is some point where it should be cleaned, and some point where it would be more economical to replace the screen than to supply the additional illumination necessary to bring the picture back to its original brilliancy. Our Standards Committee might expand its functions a little and do some research work for the industry along those lines, or possibly it would be desirable to have a separate Research Committee.

We have a wealth of information available in our Transactions, yet what is the Society doing as a body to promote education? At one time we seriously discussed running a correspondence school course in an effort to raise the standard of projection. Our members and others are spending large sums of money to produce the most wonderful pictures, but what is being done to better their projection after they are produced? Some of our members have been making strenuous efforts along that line for several years, and their work seems to me worthy of more support by the Society than it has received to date. It would seem to me that we might cooperate with some of the colleges, getting their laboratories and men to do research work under the Society's guidance. Surely we could offer subjects and

assistance for thesis research that would be both interesting to the student and valuable to the industry.

In conclusion I wish to express my appreciation of the whole-hearted support I have received from the Board of Governors and from the Committee Chairmen. It has been a pleasure to work with you. I also appreciate the confidence and trust the membership, as a whole, has placed in me by honoring me with the Presidency during the past two years.

To the incoming President, whomever you may elect, let me assure my hearty support and desire to assist in any way that I can.

It is with no small regret that I lay down the reins of leadership of this splendid organization. It has been a pleasure and an inspiration to me, and I hope that I may find some way to continue active in the Society's affairs.

L. C. PORTER

Ottawa, Canada.  
Oct. 1, 1923.