As a part of our Golden Jubilee Year programme the Council of the Institution decided to review the whole of the Institution's activities to see what changes were needed in order to give the maximum possible service to the membership. To gather evidence for the Council, Mr. A. E. Clifford, an old member of the Institution, a member of the Council, and a past office bearer in a number of Regions and Sections undertook to conduct a survey. His Report has now been published and I wrote a personal note to each member of the Institution about this earlier in the year.

I have been gratified by the response to my letter and am indebted to those members who have taken the trouble to write to me. A number of very useful suggestions have emerged and some valuable, constructive criticisms. All are being carefully studied by a Special Working Party which Council has set up, and of which Mr. Clifford is a member.

A major lesson that I learned is that our communications within the Institution need to be improved. Special attention will, therefore, be given to communications.

The Papers & Publications Committee has been off the mark very quickly. The new presentation of the Journal has met with much favourable comment.

I should like to dwell on two particular matters which have excited considerable interest: one is the CEI, and the other is the Region and Section structure of the Institution.

Council of Engineering Institutions
The CEI is an administrative body only, whereas our Institution fulfils the dual rôle of being a qualifying body and a learned society. In the context of qualification, the CEI's rôle is to prescribe a minimum standard of qualification necessary for registration as a Chartered Engineer. The minimum qualifications are prescribed in the CEI's Bye-laws and they mainly refer to the academic standard. The CEI's Bye-laws require Chartered Engineers to have practical training and subsequent experience, but the extent of this is left mainly to the Institutions.

Having brought about a uniform minimum standard for entry into its 15 constituent institutions in the United Kingdom, the CEI has been engaged recently in obtaining recognition throughout Europe of CEI qualifications preparatory to the closer working which we will have with Europe when Britain enters the Common Market. There is no European equivalent of the CEI, but the Treaty of Rome prescribes the minimum standard for international recognition. It will take some time before every university, firm, or individual in the Community becomes familiar with our qualifications, but this is the CEI's aim and the framework has already been established.

The CEI Overseas Relations Committee is now turning its attention to a similar problem in the British Commonwealth. Strangely enough, in many countries in the British Commonwealth, CEI is not recognised, although membership of certain of our Institutions is. In several of these countries one cannot practise as an engineer and call oneself an engineer in government, in education, or as a consultant, unless one is a member of the appropriate Institute of Engineers of that country. Entry into that Institute for people qualified in Great Britain is through membership of some Institutions. Not all of the 15 CEI Institutions are recognised! CEI is hoping to obtain recognition for all Chartered Engineers.

CEI also forms the communicating body between the engineering profession and government and has recently been involved in discussions over the Industrial Relations Bill and has kept a particular eye on the position of the professional engineer. It has given consideration to the possibility of recommending members to join particular Unions. This problem is not an easy one to resolve because already some members of Chartered Institutions are in membership of Trade Unions peculiar to their own activity, for example, NALGO, Civil Service Unions, and others. Some Institutions, including the Institution of Production Engineers, are precluded from taking an active part in Trade Unionism because of the terms of their Royal Charter. Furthermore, we enjoy charitable status because we undertake that none of our activities shall be for the direct financial benefit of our membership. We value this charitable status for a variety of reasons.

CEI is also at the present time giving attention to the establishment of a uniform code of professional conduct. Our Institution has such a code but several Institutions have no such code, and others have codes which differ.
from ours. The object is to obtain one which applies to all. This refers to our behaviour to one another and our behaviour to the community at large. The Institution of Production Engineers code is:

“No member shall be entitled to any privileges other than those which these Bye-laws attach to the specific grade of membership of the Institution to which he belongs.

“A member shall order his conduct so as to uphold the dignity, standing and reputation of the profession.

“A member in his responsibility to his employer and to the profession shall have full regard to the public interest.

“A member shall discharge his duties to his employer with integrity.

“A member shall not maliciously or recklessly injure or attempt to injure, whether directly or indirectly the professional reputation of another engineer”.

Nearly four years ago, the CEI was invited to adjudicate on and make the “MacRobert Award”. This is, in effect, a “Nobel Prize” for engineers and is a recognition of the standing of the CEI to have been invited to adjudicate in this way. It also acts as a means of communication and recommendation for the Royal Society “Mullard Award”. I repeat that the CEI is not a learned society. Its purpose is not to organise lectures, seminars, etc., nor to publish a journal on learned subjects. It is, therefore, quite wrong of Members to expect that the CEI should organise such activities up and down the country. This does not preclude it from acting as a co-ordinator for several constituent Institutions to organise joint meetings, and this has been done on a number of occasions, but Members who think that the CEI is not active because they do not hear of a CEI lecture programme misunderstand its purpose. It does, in fact, organise one prestige lecture per year, known as “The Graham Clark Lecture”. The theme of this is “the place of engineering in relation to Society as a whole”; the principal object is to make better known the essential functions of the professional engineer in modern society, in particular his rôle in the evolution of national policy.

Regional structure of the Institution

Now let me turn to our organisational pattern. The Regional structure of the Institution was designed 20 years ago primarily to facilitate communication between Council and the various Committees at the centre with the 12 Regions and 38 Sections in the UK. It was intended that this would improve communication from the membership to Council and from the Council to membership. The Institution had grown so that it was impracticable to have a representative of every Section upon Council. By introducing Regions it has become possible for the Regional Chairmen automatically to have a place on Council. The Regional Chairmen, then, can pass information from Council to the Section Chairman. They, in turn can pass information to their own Section Committees, and the Section Committees can disseminate the knowledge by conversation or by meetings with the ordinary membership. Likewise, the ordinary membership can feed its comments and criticisms and requests up through Section Committees to Section Chairmen, from Section Chairmen to Regional Chairmen, and from Regional Chairmen to Council. Communication involves not only the passage of information up and down, but also the discussion leading to decisions.

This, however, does not appear to be working satisfactorily in all cases. Firstly, all the Regional Chairmen do not attend all Council Meetings regularly, and, secondly, all the Section Chairmen do not attend Regional Committee Meetings regularly. Next, all Section Committee men do not always attend Section Committee Meetings, and contact with the membership at large is only obtained with those who attend Section functions, whether they be business or social occasions.

All Regional Chairmen are members of Council in their own right. So that whether or not they are able to attend Council Meetings, they receive the Council Papers and the Minutes. If democratic organisation is to be effective, direct participation in the meetings is desirable so that each member can take part in the dialogue and thus understand and contribute to the formulation of policy. It is also our practice after each Council Meeting to send copies of the Council Papers and the Minutes of the previous meeting to all Section Chairmen and Honorary Secretaries, so that they, themselves, can have a direct knowledge of what is happening at the centre.

I believe more has to be done to strengthen these lines of communication. Firstly, I think that more use should be made of the Journal for passing information from the Council Meetings direct to the membership. Secondly, I think that Regional Chairmen should be enabled to send a deputy to Council Meetings, and, likewise, I think that Section Chairmen should be enabled to send a deputy to Regional Committee Meetings, although already the Section Secretary is able to attend. It is understandable that Regional Chairmen and, for that matter, Section Chairmen cannot always attend the meetings that they would wish to attend. The ability to send a deputy would overcome this problem.

As the Institution grows and gains in strength, the need to keep its programme of activities under continuous review becomes more important. The Institution’s Council is very much alive to this need. The foregoing report is an interim one arising immediately from my correspondence with members concerning Mr. Clifford’s survey. I hope to make further reports to the membership during the course of my term as President.