FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Sir – I was delighted to read Mr Payne’s contribution to the name change debate in the March journal. The proposed changes are an important aspect of the future development of our Institution. It is therefore extremely important that the views of our younger members are brought to the attention of our Corporate members who will be voting on those changes. All the extensive soundings taken of the views of Student, Graduate, Associate Members and Associates show unanimous support for the name change.

His letter did however highlight two misconceptions. Firstly the intention on to Manufacturing Courses is not falling but has been increasing (a 21% increase in 1987, a 16% increase in 1988, 10% increase in 1989 based on previous year’s figures).

Secondly, the response from educational establishments arose from the £25 million of government and industry funding which was provided in 1988 to increase the output of graduates and postgraduates in manufacturing systems engineering. This funding was the government’s response to the recommendations of an Engineering Council Steering Group (whose membership included my predecessor and subsequently myself and Dr John Parmaby, who was then President elect of this Institution). The money was used to fund places on both new and existing courses.

MECH MERGE; – LET’S TRY AGAIN

Sir – Concerning the merger and name change, I must write to echo almost wholly the comments by your correspondent John P Oliver in the March edition. I also am a Member of both the IProdE and IMechE and understand in detail the overlap between the technical ranges of both Institutions. We should try again to merge those two Institutions, and the name of the combined body should be the Institution of Mechanical Engineers.

I can see no technical reason for a merger with the IEE, although clearly the interaction between the Mechanical and Electrical/Electronic technologies will continue to grow.

We will not reach a critical mass to fully influence society as to our correct status, I suspect, until all branches of Engineering are united in one British Institution of Engineers.

As for changing the name, I see it as a marginal, expensive, and largely academic improvement.

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STRENGTH IN DEPTH

Sir – If British Industry is to mount a sustained challenge to become the best in the world, then ‘strength in depth’ must be applied to overall recruitment. By ‘strength in depth’ I don’t mean a workforce of purely graduates, rather a mix whereby a defined career strategy is outlined for new recruits.

The Manufacturing Matters article (February 1990) entitled ‘The Future Starts Here’, provides an excellent starting point. The engineering industry must become more attractive, not only to school and university leavers, but also to mature people, especially those with the will to succeed.

However, when the ideal candidates are found, the difficult part begins. These people must be kept happy in their work for the company to reap the rewards from their skills.

For instance, it is pointless recruiting highly qualified engineers to perform basic technical duties, tasks which could be performed equally as well by an apprentice-trainee craftsman, for instance.

By all means groom the new recruit, but a definite career path should be outlined for the future, providing of course that the individual meets the required standard. The same procedure should also apply to the recruitment of apprentices. Why recruit an apprentice with a best school exam results if his future lies as a craftsman – surely a more practical school leaver will be better suited in such an instance?

This is why the ‘strength in depth’ concept must be applied now. From the apprentice to the technician, and the designer to the manager, career paths should be mapped out to suit the individual’s needs.

This type of recruitment will enable the employees to realise his level, and therefore set his own ambition targets. The incentive far all concerned is obvious. This kind of recruitment structure seems to be lacking in modern engineering company strategy. The open-ended method of recruiting seems more popular in this country, culminating in many disillusioned engineers who are staying in the industry purely for the financial gains.

Kevin Walters
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Bonas Machine Company
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A YES AND NO MAN WRITES

Sir – With reference to page 3 of the March issue, may I recommend:

1) Vote to retain the present name.

Over 99% of the faculties in Universities and Technical Colleges, worldwide in our field, use the name ‘Production’.

If we change our name, most of the students in these institutions will have no further interest in us.

1) The change in name is not some new glossy image which will rejuvenate us. It will exterminate us.

2) Vote No to joining the IEE.

The IEE is weak on the production side. It needs us, but it won’t change its name, so we will become Electrical Engineers. This is nonsense. I am not an Electrical Engineer. I am a Production Engineer.

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THE DIFFERENCE A DAY MAKES

Sir – I was very interested to read two viewpoints of the single European Market of 1992 in the March issue of your Journal.

Page 49 correctly stated that the SEM starts on 1st January, 1993, but how hilarious, Dr P H Lowe on Page 14, thinks the market starts on 1st January 1992 – less than two years away!

I would have thought your editorial checking would have removed such howlers. In your defence, other magazines are also making a similar mistake.

D M Haughan
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