**Letters**

**Impotent**

Sir—To date I have followed quite a satisfying career in engineering over a period of 10 years. Coming from 'working class' origins my training began, typically, with a craft apprenticeship at a local toolmaker followed by periods spent in the most vital departments of the organisation. The academic side proved equally satisfying, albeit long, difficult and tiresome at times. With the financial assistance of my parents, employer and local authority I progressed from a basic Ordinary National Certificate course through to a Higher National Diploma course and culminating in the conferring of the Degree of Master of Science.

Patronising though it sounds, I was proud indeed to have whatever qualities I may possess recognised by the Institution of Production Engineers, when my membership was accepted earlier this year.

To get to the point, however, I was interested in the comments of Mr R How (see Letters, March issue) in 'Frustration of young engineers' and sympathise with him, for I find myself in similar circumstances since graduating two years ago. I also read the reference to Mr A Broadhurst (see Letters, May issue) in 'Stick in the mud, but still solvent!' and in all sincerity respect his views. Indeed I cannot argue with his statements: a swift-to-fall, strike-free, solvent company presents an enviable laurel on which to place your assets. Whether that situation was due entirely to old technologies and old philosophies I cannot say.

It is disturbing to think that as an 'academic' you are lectured to on the potency of mathematics, for example, as a tool to be wielded in all engineering disciplines, only to be declared impotent on your return to industry. I realise that is a sweeping (and perhaps rash) statement, but the point I am trying to put across is that confidence is an extremely fragile state of energy in these days of conservation if ever I have known.

C T Greenwood (Member)
191 Coddard Avenue
Kettering
Northamptonshire

**Fatuous bodies**

Sir—I must apologise to Mr Cook (ref his letter published in the April issue) for any implication in my leading article which impugned the industriousness of members of this institution who could be described as civil servants. I was aware of the Queen's Award to Industry to the Royal Ordnance Factories for exports of defence equipment and I would consider that the manufacture of the equipment necessary to national defence is probably the most important function that it is possible to perform.

However, I venture to suggest that if the manufacture of defence equipment were carried out in a private industry it would be even more out of the ordinary for the fact that so many members of the Institution are civil servants is in itself an indictment of our industrial structure.

I was in no way criticising these people as individuals; those members are not only form a small percentage of those members regularly enjoy, whilst they earn too much to benefit from the bonuses of a welfare state. They cannot afford their membership, the fact that so many members of the Institution are civil servants is in itself an indictment of our industrial structure.

For example, the percentage of income tax spent on its collection is four times as high in Britain as in the United States. Since the majority of these costs are for labour, three-quarters of our Inland Revenue staff, how ever hardworking, are carrying out a useless function.

Value for money

Sir—Whilst supporting Council in the moves they are making to put our institution on a more stable financial footing, I am concerned about the implications an increased subscription may have upon a certain sector of the membership. I refer, of course, to those production engineers who are in the lower and middle income brackets.

Many of these members are not only at the beginning of their industrial careers, but also have to carry the financial burden that domesticity demands of a young married couple today. They do not earn enough to afford the luxuries that some of our senior members regularly enjoy, whilst they earn too much to benefit from the bonuses of a welfare state. They cannot afford their membership, yet risk jeopardising their career prospects should they resign.

I admit that they may only form a small percentage of our membership, but they are members, and as such, worthy of the same consideration as afforded those better-endowed production directors, works managers, who are academics who influence the policy of the Institution.

We must have now the highest annual subscription of all member institutions of the CEI. As such, we must now make sure we command a position of strength by giving value for money, not only to those for whom an increased subscription is a mere drop in a bucket, but also to those members who are struggling sacrificially to keep this institution alive. Unless, of course, we wish to turn our institution into an exclusive club!

P R Ruffle (Member)
90 Manor Road
Todderington
Bedfordshire LU5 6AJ

Sir—As a member of the Institution I welcome the initiative taken in asking the members to face up to the financial responsibilities which currently beset the IProdE.

Most production engineers can ill afford unnecessary expenditure and this is certainly true in my case. However, of the three institutes I belong to, the IProdE is certainly the most relevant, and is urgently needed as a focus for professionalism in manufacturing.

Perhaps asking for extra cash will sort out some of the less-committed individuals. This is surely not a bad effect. If the dream of social recognition, status, professional unity, and hence remuneration, is ever to be achieved, it will have to be a hard, hard decision-making and full commitment made by individual members of our profession.

Many chartered engineers must have been, as I have, dismayed at the clearly pathetic stumbling of CEI. However, we must surely look to the future and preserve and support those aspects of our 'poor man's professionalism' until the fundamental necessity of a manufacturing elite in this industrial nation is eventually recognised. There is, from my standpoint, absolutely no alternative to the IProdE as the nucleus for developments in manufacturing professionalism.

Therefore, I am sure there will be many who, along with me, will accept this opportunity to express our loyalty and continuing support for the IProdE and its aspirations.

K Rathwill (Member)
Dept of Mechanical Engineering
UMIST
PO Box 88
Manchester M60 1QD

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**Designatory letters**

Sir—In the Production Engineer dated April 1977, I note that the designatory letters TEng AMIProdE are used in the article on page 29. Would you please let me know if these are, in fact, the correct designatory letters now to be used by Associate Members.

R G Coulson (Associate Member)
46 Milldale Road
Kettering
Northamptonshire

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