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WHAT THEY SAY — ABOUT TECHNOCRACY

A number of faculty members of the College of Engineering have been asked to briefly answer the following question: "What is your opinion of TECHNOCRACY." Their opinions of this much discussed topic follow.

DEAN E. A. HITCHCOCK

Technocracy, a new "ism" or "ist," seems to have struck a responsive chord in the minds of many of our American people. And yet we read that the theory is not new; that it had its origin about twelve years ago. While there may be some small truths in the principles set up, safe conclusions can not be drawn without having the whole picture. The engineer can not accept theories of a controversial character, he must know facts. Exaggerations and extravagant claims are not in his approved program.

PROF. A. S. WATTS

Chrm. Dept. of Ceramic Engineering

While the development of automatic machinery is undoubtedly displacing a considerable number of the unskilled laborers in the manufacture of brick, there is little evidence that such developments will materially affect the amount of skilled labor employed. Certainly the number of technically trained men required to operate a plant will not be reduced and probably will be increased, because experience has shown that ceramic operations are influenced by so many factors that it would be impossible to automatically adjust a mechanical device to guarantee a uniform product.

The increasingly severe inspection and the higher standards of uniformity and quality which are confronting the ceramic manufacturer will undoubtedly increase the demand for men of the highest technical and mechanical training.

DR. JAMES R. WITHROW

Chrm. Dept. of Chemical Engineering

On the basis of the common habit of talking in the press about things we know little or nothing about, I feel quite qualified.

I have never read any of the articles by the Technocrats themselves. I have heard Howard Scott make a few conversational remarks covering not more than five minutes. It happens he used a series of Chemical En-

gineering illustrations of his points. It happens also that everyone of his illustrations was probably erroneous. This therefore offers a good opportunity to remark that both education and experience should indicate that this is not final basis whatsoever for condemnation of his ideas.

This group is sometimes called engineers though from the very first it was evident that they were more likely scientific or at least going about the matter in a scientific rather than engineering manner, which is quite all right as far as it goes. The project appeared to be one reaching for publicity perhaps for the sake of possible resulting consulting work with bankers and others who are naturally interested in a broader point of view than was once the case. Certainly if anything suggests the possibility of elimination of debts or the elimination of taxation business rallies at once, to such a thought. Characteristically the press focused public interest upon the person of the leader as well as the project. This inevitably resulted in retaliatory attacks upon leaders which serve merely to lose the thread of ideas.

We understand from the discussion that Mr. Scott believes Capitalism is about to collapse, unemployment due to technological development must increase. Whole counties in Ohio and elsewhere are distressed by the prospect of twenty millions of people unemployed within two years.

The technocrats appear safe themselves from one accusation by finding no salvation ahead in either Capitalism, Socialism, Communism, or Fascism. They look for salvation from engineers replacing politicians. This is part of the ancient University fallacy that the scientific method was discovered in our time and that hitherto man was unscientific in his thinking and naturally therefore outside the University, or at least outside science and engineering is chaotic or futile in thinking. The world has gone about its affairs letting the Universities feel this was so if they pleased. There can of course be no doubt that we must continually increase our stress upon scientific and engineering thought applied to economics and social life.

It is to be regretted that Columbia University found itself without sufficient back bone to stand the inevitable attack upon the technocrats. They should have been allowed to investigate and commit themselves. It is the ancient privilege of Scholarship (?) to attack ideas which we did not think up ourselves. We always remember that others have thought the same things, forgetting however, that progress is made by prophets arising from time to time, who articulate what we all know but just did not quite express.

There is much good in what technocracy appears to
(Please turn to next page)

have said and appears to be doing. There will be inevitable mistakes and some of them seem to have been proven. The great mistake upon which no emphasis seems to have been placed by its critics is the usual omission of the imponderables. Mr. Scott was quite wrong when he claimed that all revolutions in human thinking were connected with energy, as he was quite wrong when I heard him state in answer to Professor North of our Sociology Department that neither Martin Luther or Jesus Christ contributed anything to revolutionizing of human thought as far as world development was concerned.

Human nature can be changed. It is not likely however, that it can be changed by replacing politicians by engineers. That is not what engineers profess to do. If we exalt selfishness to power, it makes no difference whether we call them engineers, technocrats or politicians. Greed will seize the reins and the ancient exploitations of the weak by the strong will continue. We may seem scientific when we eliminate from our vocabulary, conscience, obligation, responsibility and duty but when we do, we must pay the cost. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. What we need today is a grasp of the fact that there is a fundamental distinction between right and wrong. The needed change in human nature cannot come from engineering or by any new political or economical system such as Communism or the like.

PROF. J. C. PRIOR
Dept. of Civil Engineering

Recent attempts to abrogate fundamental laws by legislative action have not been conspicuously successful. When one contemplates the sad experience Cuba has had with sugar, Brazil with coffee, Chili with nitrate, England with rubber and United States with wheat, one's thoughts turn to the law of equal action and reaction, or more specifically, the law of supply and demand. Technically trained men, armed with a thorough knowledge of fundamental laws, have made machines for producing both necessities and luxuries that seem to have outstripped in efficiency the social and governmental machine. It would appear that these same engineers should be able to make constructive contributions to the latter machine. That these contributions will be made through the avenue called Technocracy to me seems very doubtful.

PROF. E. E. DREESE
Chrm. Dept. of Electrical Engineering

Technocracy as a word and as an idea has swept the country like wild fire. I believe that the professional engineer distinguishes between two meanings for this same word, one popular and the other professional.

The popular meaning has become associated in the public mind with the Energy Survey of North America conducted by Howard Scott and his associates at Columbia

University. Due to difficulties, misunderstandings, and misstatements, the public mind is pretty much confused as to the exact meaning and implications of 'Technocracy' as publicized.

Professionally the engineer's concept of Technocracy is not particularly new nor startling. It is generally recognized by engineers, and others, that our civilization is an industrial and highly mechanized civilization, turning out a product such as never could be turned out except by the application of great amounts of power. The social and political effects of this application of power are immense. It is the engineer's point of view that our civilization is so highly mechanized, our very life and culture are so dependent upon the intelligent use of the machines, the standard of living so intimately tied up with the proper functioning of the instrumentalities of production, that the government itself should apply well-known engineering methods and techniques to insure the proper functioning of civilization as it now exists. It seems only reasonable to the engineer that a politico-economic system fundamentally scientific and technological should be managed and organized according to the same fundamental science and technology that brought it into existence.

PROF. C. A. NORMAN
Dept. of Mechanical Engineering

To explain one's attitude on as controversial a subject as Technocracy in a hundred words is a dangerous undertaking and may lead to misunderstanding.

Let me say, however, that it would be regrettable if Technocracy would be identified entirely with some of the personalities and some of the statements which have recently appeared rather sensationally before the American public.

The fact is that engineers can not do for humanity and for this nation what they would be readily able to do if their instructions were simply to go ahead and produce and distribute with the best methods, the best organization and the best machinery known to them, all the comforts and commodities that we might legitimately enjoy. Engineers are prevented from doing this not by any lack of resources, machine capacity, labor power and technical skill, but by being tied to an economic set-up which prevents them from doing what they might do.

It is no wonder that they chafe under this restraint and humanity should be thankful to them if they are casting about desperately to find a way for overcoming it.

PROF. H. E. NOLD
Chrm. Dept. of Mine Engineering

There is no doubt that a man equipped with modern machines can accomplish many times as much useful work in a given time as he can with his bare hands or with tools actuated by manual power. We as engineers have

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Technocracy

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had a great deal to do with the mechanization of industry, and as engineers we are proud of the part we have had in this work.

We must admit, however, that increased mechanization and the development of automatic machinery means fewer man hours of labor per unit of production. This process, if continued indefinitely, would lead to industry equipped with all automatic machinery and no wage earners. This would be a dangerous situation under our present social, economic and governmental set-up. Somewhere along this line of development the danger point arises.

These facts as I see it have led to the development of so-called Technocracy. The information that Technocrats are accumulating I am sure will be of great value in helping us to readjust ourselves to new conditions. As expressed by one writer recently, "Technocracy is not all bunk by any means, but it does need a lot of de-bunking."

It is probable that soon the magazines and newspapers will relegate Technocracy to small headlines. The sooner this day comes, the better. Technocracy itself may be worth while, but most of the noise about it is pure bunk.

Sixty student and faculty members of the Student Branch of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers recently heard an interesting talk on "Recent Development in Korea," by Mr. Chai, a graduate student from Korea. Mr. Chai stressed the engineering developments in his native land and touched lightly upon the questions of religion, politics, and social development in Korea. At a recent business meeting Leon K. Grove was installed as president to succeed Wm. H. Tomb, former president, who did not return to school this year. Mr. Grove is the former vice president of the organization.

An interesting talk by G. K. Foster featured the regular meeting of the "Prospectors' Club" on November 14th. Mr. Foster told of his experiences in Russia when he was investigating mines for the Soviet government.

Homer Akins bumped a Chevrolet with his little Austin not long ago. No damage was done, but the Austin's still bouncing.

Dick Light wonders why everyone else except himself sleeps through Chemistry lecture; and while we're on that subject, you might ask Jimmie Kohr how he enjoys *his* naps.

Does anyone know where Lew Lingham spends all his time? He's been to math class so rarely this quarter that Bamforth doesn't know his face yet. Maybe he just hates to get up in the middle of the night to make that eight-o'clock.

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