

AMERICAN ENGINEER™

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H1-B Legislation Passes- Lessons Learned

"Babes in the Woods." That is how Bob Bellinger (EE Times) summarizes the engineering effort to defeat the recently passed H1-B visa bill. He is absolutely correct. Yet, despite our modest attempt to combat a well funded, high pressure political lobbying barrage by industry, we can all be proud that we voiced our opinion and, for many for the first time, entered the political arena.

At stake was the revision to H1-B limits on high-tech immigration. Although the numbers changed as legislation and the deals made their way from office to office, in the final form, the bill nearly doubles the cap for high skilled technical labor for the next three years while providing little in the way of protecting American engineers. Industry, led by ITAA (The Information Technology Association of America) claimed a nationwide shortage of qualified personnel was delaying their projects.

"There is no desperate software labor shortage, period,"

They reminded their friends on the hill that late projects equates to a lower bottom line, lower tax revenue and, eventually, a longer unemployment line. Home-grown engineers were suddenly rarer than "Made-In-America" transistor radios.

H1-B Revision - At a Glance

Increase annual visa cap on high-tech immigration from 65,000 currently to 115,000 for 1999 and 2000. For 2001, the immigration can reach 107,500 before reverting back to 65,000 for the following years.

Meanwhile, the hard working American engineers were wondering what all this talk of a shortage was about. Certainly the forces of supply and demand were not at work here. The salary scales had not budged, no-one's career was on the fast track to the executive office, the tile floors were not replaced by plush carpet. Many of us know engineers who moved out of engineering in the last round of lay-offs. They are working in sales, purchasing, painting houses or managing Radio Shacks - good, capable engineers. Then there is that vast pool of older (synonymous with 'over qualified') engineers, experienced, well seasoned, ready to hit the dirt running. According to Ronald Khol (Machine Design) "Despite corporate claims of shortages, software firms actually hire only 2% of the people who respond to employment ads. And the unemployment rate for programmers above age 50 is around 17%."

Central to countering the industry shortage claim, was the argument that there is an untapped supply of Red, White and Blue engineers that can be recruited; that increasing the immigration quota would depress the engineering salary scale and displace American workers.

This position is not anti-immigration. Go back far enough in each of our heritage and we are all immigrants. There are legal avenues for permanent immigration and we welcome those that seek citizenship. This H1-B revision is not pro-immigration; it is about one thing- money. Companies that back this legislation

want the foreign worker's expertise at bargain prices. "There is no desperate software labor shortage, period," pronounced Norman Matloff, a computer science professor at the University of California at Davis. "The only shortage here is indeed one of cheap labor," he added. The foreign engineers become victims of exploitation, while the career of engineering becomes even less appealing to today's students.

LESSONS LEARNED - CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

Reflections on the H-1B Loss

I am not sure how to assess the loss on the H-1b legislation. We did lose, there is no question about that, but the outcome was in doubt for an excruciatingly long time. We fought a hell of a fight. It was winnable.

We didn't win because we did not have the money to win. We didn't win because we did not have the communications resources to win. We didn't win because we didn't have the political experience to win. We didn't win because we didn't have a PAC. We didn't win because we didn't have a continuous presence in Washington. We didn't win because we did not have the media coverage to win. We didn't win because we did not have the coalitions to win.

We may not have won, but we did get many positives out of the fight. We were able to stretch the opposition nearly to their breaking point. We were able to force them to spend many millions of dollars and a huge amount of political capital to win.

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We learned that to argue with the facts makes up for a lot of PAC money. We learned that we were within 33 votes of winning in the House. We learned that there are some in Washington who place doing the right thing above politics and the next election. We learned there are some in Washington who stand up for the American worker and citizen.

Among the major players on the other side were the Information Technology Association of America, the American Electronics Association, the immigration lawyers, the Fortune 500, the foreign student associations, the Commerce Department, the Department of Education, the universities, the Republican leadership, the Administration, and the Chamber of Commerce to mention a few.

The first groups in the fray on the side of the working American was the American Engineering Association and FAIR. AEA was the only professional/technical organization, of whom I am aware, opposing the legislation for about the first half of the year.

IEEE came in late in the fray, but did an outstanding job once they made up their mind to get involved.

There are many lessons to be learned from this experience - only a few are listed above. Our task now is to make the best of what we have learned and be prepared for the next fight on this issue. Perhaps the most obvious lesson to be learned from this is they will be back.

We fought a hell of a fight. It was winnable. We will be there for the next one.

Bill Reed, President

LESSONS LEARNED- CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

A welcomed surprise was the effort of the IEEE -USA. Long known as an excellent technical society, this largest of all engineering organizations finally took a pro-career position. IEEE-USA cited new statistics showing that high-technology industries in 1998 have cut four times as many jobs nationally as last year, creating more layoffs than almost every other sector of the economy, according to Challenger, Gray and Christmas, an international out placement firm. The electronics, computer and telecommunications industries alone logged 143,000 layoffs and constituted three of the top five industries in total 1998 job-cut announcements. "Congress is fiddling with an H-1B visa hike while our high-tech workforce burns," stated IEEE-USA President-Elect Paul J. Kostek. "It's bizarre policy to give the industries laying off the most U.S. workers special access to an expanded foreign guest-worker program -- while millions of trained U.S. technical professionals toil outside their chosen fields."

Your American Engineering Association worked hard to communicate our position to the House and Senate. Our President Bill Reed, Robert Rivers, Norm Matloff, Ian Fletcher, Jim McDonald, John Brock, Dr. David C. Lewis and many others volunteered their time, expertise and energy on your behalf. The AEA is the only organization that represents the interest of all engineers- engineers of all technologies (Mechanical, electrical, chemical, etc.), engineers of all

specialties (automotive, aeronautical, control, etc.) and engineers of all processes (design, manufacturing, production, etc.).

As the House immigration subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Lamar Smith, R-Texas, debated over the bill, compromises, closed door deals, and promises were made. From Microsoft's Bill Gates on down, the information technology industry lobbied intensely. Bill Clinton, while publicly opposing the bill, kept his acceptance for it in his back pocket until he could grandstand his approval of it on the eve of his trip to Silicon Valley, the heart of H1-B land. The measure, which was incorporated into a \$520 billion federal appropriations bill, was signed by President Clinton Wednesday, October 21, 1998.

"I learned from this fight and other fights," Larry Fafarman writes, "that one must not be too complacent. I thought that we had a lot going for us: (1) The recent, unfortunate downturn in the technical job market; (2) The support of organized labor; (3) Some support from the Administration; (4) Big support from the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), which had traditionally complained about the problems presented by unskilled foreign workers while ignoring the problems presented by skilled foreign workers; and (5) Widespread criticism of the methodology used by the Dept. of Commerce's "shortage" report. I therefore thought that the H1-B bill did not have much of a chance. As you know, I was wrong."

"However," as Larry Fafarman continues, "we should recognize that we did accomplish quite a bit. Though the bill initially passed the Senate overwhelmingly, it ran into heavy opposition in the House. And by the time the compromise bill went back to the Senate, it had become such a hot potato that the Senators were afraid to vote on it directly, but instead sneakily attached it as a rider onto a budget bill."

According to AEA's Richard Tax, "We should strive for a manpower balance, a balance between supply and demand in the workforce. Importing more engineers and programmers into our engineering and technical workforce will perpetuate the manpower surplus and deprive our fellow Americans, old and young, including yesterday's immigrants of opportunities to work and enhance their skill levels."

Ron Graziano, Editor

What we learned:

- It is our Engineering Career and each of us must work to improve it to our satisfaction.
- We must work within the political system to remove obstacles toward improving our Engineering Career.
- Unify all the diverse engineering disciplines until we speak with one voice, with numbers that cannot be ignored.
- It does not matter how good your arguments are -- what matters is how many people contact the politicians.
- We need a strong presence in Washington to turn up the heat on political lobbying.
- Politicians are generally concerned with only two things, votes and financial contributions, and the purpose of the financial contributions is to help get more votes.
- We must quantify our argument in terms of dollars, tax revenue or votes.

AEA GOES TO WASHINGTON

by John Brock

Most Americans who have at least a passing interest in the matter are aware that American politics is heavily influenced by a certain creature known as the "Washington lobbyist." We read about them, we complain about them and the corrupting influence that they have on our government, but for the most part it never occurs to us that we could "be" them. It certainly never occurred to me! To the extent that I thought about it at all I think I just assumed that lobbying was a "career". I assumed

Most Congressmen have a limited number of issues that they are personally interested in and understand fairly well.

that lobbyists were all highly skilled full time professionals who were employed solely by high-powered corporations or big-money advocacy groups. The idea that "I" could go to Washington as a lobbyist on a short term volunteer basis and be taken seriously would have seemed -- if it had occurred to me at all -- about as reasonable as a casual suggestion that I take two weeks off and go perform on Broadway, or that I spend a few days doing research aboard the Space Shuttle. These were all activities that I could be interested in, that I could read about in the paper, but they all took place in worlds of their own that were quite separate from mine, and that I assumed an amateur was not likely ever to visit.

But it turns out I was mistaken (about lobbying anyway). Since 1995, when I became involved in the immigration reform movement, I have had four brief stints as a Washington lobbyist, most recently in early September, fighting against H1-B visa increases on behalf of the American Engineering Association. Each time I went to Washington I had no difficulty meeting with staffers from various Congressional offices, who listened to my concerns quite respectfully, and sometimes at great length. I remember being amazed that the first time I ever called a Congressional office I was able to make an appointment, and being even more amazed when I realized that in fact "most" of the people I called were willing to meet with me. But I soon realized that this was part of their job, and I began to understand a little bit about Washington and the way it worked.

.....not just the money!

For example, I learned why lobbyists have so much influence (it's not just the money!), and how in some cases an amateur lobbyist may be taken more seriously than a slick, well-financed professional. But the most startling thing I learned is that Congress itself (particularly the House) is in many ways a remarkably amateurish operation.

Congressmen are elected every two years. That's not a very long time, so much of their energy is always focused on reelection. Most Congressmen have a limited number of issues that they are personally interested in and understand fairly well. Beyond that they tend to defer to the polls, to the wishes of their party's leadership (which has considerable power to reward or punish), and, finally, to the advice of their staffers. The staff members I have met over the years have been uniformly bright and energetic people, but also highly overworked and underpaid. Each was responsible for understanding and advising the boss on a number of highly complicated issues, not just immigration. Most staffers take the job for the prestige, and to make

connections, so turnover is high as staffers use their experience to move on to better positions. The majority of the staffers I've met have been young, and quite a few had been on the job for only a few months. As I met with more and more staffers it became clear to me why lobbyists have so much influence in Washington -- why in many cases the lobbyists themselves actually write the laws. It's not just the promise of campaign contributions or soft money, although those things certainly count. It's that much of the time THE LOBBYISTS ARE THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO REALLY UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES.

.....nobody up on Capitol Hill speaking for us.

This is why it is so important that we have people of our own in Washington. Towards the end of this summer the AEA had become concerned that the high-tech industry was flooding Congress with lobbyists, while there was nobody up on Capitol Hill speaking for us. Since I had already had some experience the AEA asked me to be part of a small contingent of lobbyists that they were sending to Washington on short notice to try to fill the gap. The AEA was enormously helpful in arranging meetings in advance, and it provided us with informative and

THE LOBBYISTS ARE THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO REALLY UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES.

professional looking literature. Over a period of three days I had 21 meetings, lasting from between 10 minutes to nearly an hour. Some of the staffers I met with were well informed, and asked good questions. A few had already been convinced by the industry's arguments, or were free market ideologues who needed no convincing. Some others were firmly on our side. But a surprising number were barely aware of the issue, and were quite interested in hearing what I had to say. I was repeatedly asked very basic questions: How big are the increases? Aren't there protections against abuses? Or even: What's the bill number? Are they going to vote on it this session? Do you know when? It was cases like these where I felt I did the most good. It's impossible to know whether I changed any votes, but I am quite sure that many of the people I met, walked out of our meetings knowing considerably more about the issue than when they walked in.

.....something exhilarating

Every time I have gone to Washington I have come back feeling elated over the experience. There is something exhilarating about walking the grand halls of Congress, sitting down with people close to the seat of power, and ACTUALLY HAVING YOUR SAY!

You can't expect to turn everything around single-handedly, but you "can" make your voice heard.

Continued next page

If this is something you might like to take a shot at, here are some considerations: To set up a meeting you should call the Congressman's office and ask for the name of the staffer responsible for your issue, then call and try to speak to that staffer personally to set up the meeting. If you can go representing an organization – any organization – it will help you get into offices other than that of your own Congressman. You always have the most pull with your own Congressman; in fact a constituent, or especially a group of constituents, can often set up a meeting with the Congressman himself, not just a staffer. If you have first hand knowledge of the issue, emphasize it! Be specific – talk about issues and bills that are on the table right now, not about generalities. You can never be

- Call your Congressman's office.
- Speak to the staffer responsible for your issue.
- Set up the meeting.
- Go representing an organization.
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- WRITE YOUR CONGRESSMAN.

too well informed or too articulate, but don't worry about how you compare with the professional lobbyists. Staffers are well aware that many of the people they meet with are "guns for hire," so there is actually a certain advantage if you can come across as a committed civilian who has taken time off from real life in order to go to Washington and argue for a cause that you care about deeply. And if you can't go to Washington, you can still try to arrange a meeting at your Congressman's local office. And if you can't do that, then you can WRITE YOUR CONGRESSMAN. (I have been assured repeatedly that they "do" pay attention, even to mere letters, simply because so few people bother to write!)

"many of the people I met, walked out of our meetings knowing considerably more about the issue than when they walked in."

If I had to summarize the one big thing that I've learned it would be that Congress is 'not' an unapproachable citadel on a hill. You can't expect to turn everything around single-handedly, but you 'can' make your voice heard. I think that is something well worth doing!

John Brock is Co-chairman of TRIM - the Tri-State Immigration Moratorium, Inc., PO Box 1812, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025. Phone 212-439-8746. TRIM serves the New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut area.

Robert Rivers, a Fellow of the IEEE, past member of IEEE-USA's Workforce Committee, Chairman of the Manpower Committee of the American Engineering Association, and considered an expert in engineering manpower issues writes: "The H-1B visa expansion bill is a scam perpetrated upon Congress and US citizens." He continues with: "The lobbying

"Each H1-B import may stay and work for 6 years for a total of 2,022,000 man years of Americans being deprived of opportunities to earn a living and enhance their skill level."

program by the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) for expansion of H-1B visas is based on three false premises. Two ITAA sponsored "shortage" surveys that have been discredited by the GAO and the disclosure that working contract personnel were classified as job vacancies. The knowing use of previous Computer Science declines in numbers of new graduates and failure to mention markedly increasing enrollments was an exercise in obfuscation. The first ITAA survey was conducted by a journalist Stuart Anderson and the GAO discredited that survey. The second survey was conducted by a Virginia Tech graduate student with no past surveying experience. The GAO discredited that survey. The whole program was devised by ITAA, a pseudo professional group not of Information Technologists, but of Corporate America, to convince the press and Congress that the sky would fall if we didn't increase the H-1-B program. ITAA starting with their defective 190,000 job vacancies report and continued with their discredited 346,000 vacancy Virginia Tech survey.

"U.S. companies should train U. S. workers to perform jobs in some technical fields, even if it is faster and less expensive to fill the jobs with foreign professionals." Rivers' concludes: "Summarizing; we don't need the H-1Bs now, we don't need them in the long run, and we certainly don't need any without effective attestations to protect US workers. We need to give US citizens, our parents, our children, our friends and associates a shot at the good jobs." More information on how the rest of the Congress voted can be found on the WEB at www.numbersusa.com.

According to Richard Tax, "Each H1-B import may stay and work for 6 years for a total of 2,022,000 man years of Americans being deprived of opportunities to earn a living and enhance their skill level."

For supporting documentation please contact Robert A. Rivers, Chair, American Engineering Association, Manpower Committee.
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ITAA Lobbying Against U.S Engineers

AEA Receives \$5,000 Challenge

Based on our performance in the H-1b struggle and on our plan for the next year, AEA has received a donation in the amount of five thousand dollars with the stipulation that we raise one additional dollar in donations for each dollar from the anonymous donor. Dues will not count towards meeting our goal.

AEA has virtually exhausted our funds in the fight over the H-1b issue so the donation and challenge comes at a critical time. While we lost the H-1b fight, this time, the other side will be back for increased immigration in a year or two and we must be prepared. We must have your support to continue this struggle.

We are free to use the money for any purpose consistent with our charter. If we can meet this challenge and meet our goals, it will enhance our chances of raising more money later on.

Among our goals for 1999 are:

- Establish and maintain working relationships with as many other organizations as possible in areas of common interest.
- Establish a Congressional contact network with at least one person in each congressional district.
- Establish a much larger presence in Washington, D.C. for a much longer period of time. We had four people lobby for about three days this last time.
- Establish a communications network among our members to enable AEA to call, fax and write letters to congress in mass when appropriate.
- Establish and maintain a nationwide list of media contacts.
- Send our newsletter to all 535 members of congress. (Cost about \$1 per person per issue.)
- Improve and update our website on a regular basis.

Attaining our goals for 1999, as well as our day to day expenses, all require an expenditure of funds - funds we often do not have. When we don't have the funds, the task does not get done. It's that simple. We need your help in raising the funds to meet this very generous challenge. Contributors to the AEA Challenge will receive Honorable mention if they wish to be identified. Their e-mail address may also be included. Those who wish to remain anonymous will not be listed.

Mail your contributions to AEA Inc. PO Box 820473, Fort Worth, TX 76182-0473 and Indicate for "AEA Challenge" on your check.

AEA WEB Site Upgraded - Thanks to Joe

Bill Reed, President

The time has come to move on. AEA will soon have our own URL up and running on the web rather than being a sub directory of another site. We will still be www.aea.org but hopefully we will have a vastly upgraded site within a few weeks.

Joe Cossette owner of the Infoark web server has provided our website without cost since we came online some five years ago. Joe set the site up for AEA and often had to come to my rescue when I couldn't make the darn thing work. He has an enormous amount of patience to put up with such a novice as myself.

Joe came to us and offered both his server and expertise to get AEA on the web. Unfortunately we did not have anyone with the expertise to maintain the site in the manner in which it should be kept. I had neither knowledge nor experience in working on a website.

In addition to the things now on our site, we will have an online application form which will be e-mailed to Ft. Worth automatically as well as upgraded appearance and significantly more and better information. We hope to have online newsletters and perhaps some "members only" areas. You can expect many, many changes in the following weeks and months.

Send us your ideas on what the content of the site should be. We may not use them right away or we may not use them at all, but we do want to receive them. We hope to have one of the better sites on the world wide web within the next year. We want you, the member, to be a part of the website and participate as much as possible.

Lets all give Joe a huge THANK YOU JOE! We haven't said that nearly enough.

P.S. - If you need a website or related services, e-mail Joe at, webmaster@infoark.com. He will treat you right.

AEA To Establish Communications Network

During the H-1b fight, AEA learned how very important it is to communications quickly with our membership.

The situation changed from winning, to losing, to winning, to losing on a daily basis. Ultimately we were unable to communicate with enough people fast enough to counter industry's efforts and we lost.

I firmly believe that if we had the capability in place to reach all of our members within minutes we could have won this fight. To that end, we must have at least an e-mail network, with each member who has access to e-mail participate. We must be able to phone, fax, and e-mail our views to congress within a day to be able to have a chance against industry.

I firmly believe that if we had the capability in place to reach all of our members within minutes we could have won this (H1-B) fight.

We must be able to reach as many members of congress as possible, in person, in their home districts. This is extremely important. One call or visit to the home district office equals perhaps ten or more calls to their Washington offices.

Please send us the following information:

- Your E-mail address.
- Your Telephone phone and fax numbers.
- The names of your current Congressional Representative.

Remember to keep our records current. For the name of your Representative, call any congressional office listed in the "blue" pages of your phone book. There are, also many places on the internet where you can enter your zip code and find your Representative. All information is confidential and shared with no one outside of the organization.

Give-and-take

By Richard Wallace

[Reprinted from EE Times, A CMP Media Inc publication.]

As Silicon Valley executives continue to whine in Washington about the engineering-labor shortage, the lament seems disingenuous at best and calculated at worst. Many of those same executives are rabid "free market" ideologues who are otherwise quick to tell government, no matter how well-intentioned its initiatives, to butt out of industry matters.

Executives whose knees characteristically jerk in defense of the free-market economy are now telling Congress that the free-market system works when it comes to rewarding managers with multimillion-dollar compensation packages but not when it comes to filling engineering vacancies. To remedy the problem, the executives want the government to raise the annual ceiling on H-1B temporary visas, which let domestic semiconductor and electronics companies hire certain numbers of foreign engineers.

But there's a quonundrum here. In a free market, a shortage of engineers should mean that engineering salaries will rise rapidly. In reality, while Silicon Valley engineering salaries are respectable, elsewhere in the country they are unspectacular. That has led many an engineer to wonder, "If I'm so valuable, why aren't I paid more?"

The engineers' argument may carry the weight of common sense and free-market conventional wisdom, but it lacks political muscle. Silicon Valley executives have put on a full-court press to get their engineering-shortage message across to lawmakers. In all probability, the visa quotas will get upped from 65,000 to 90,000 soon. Before that handout goes into effect, however, we'd like to see some concessions made to the domestic engineering work force. If Congress decides to raise quotas, it should compel industry to demonstrate in a measurable way that employers have done everything they can to recruit, retrain and provide adequate incentives to engineers in the domestic work force before they apply for new visas to import engineering talent. Industry should also be encouraged to start engineering scholarship programs, and expand existing ones, to deepen the pool of potential engineering employees within the domestic population.

=====

...And Business for All.

By Richard F. Tax

"We believe a company consists of management, its workers, its shareholders, and customers. A key to the success of a company is that those four elements should equally enjoy the maximum benefit."

Konosuke Matsushita

This above quotation relates the philosophy of Mr. Konosuke Matsushita. He was the founder of Matsushita Electric Industrial Company, the company that manufactures products under the names of Panasonic, Technics and Quasar to name a few. The General Electric VCR in my home was made in Japan by the Matsushita Company.

Here is an example of one of the most successful design, development and manufacturing companies in the world

and the founder's philosophy dictates that management, its workers, shareholders and customers should all enjoy the maximum benefits. It's inspiring to be able to quote such a successful man who sets a fine example as a team and industry leader.

I have always thought of the corporate structure as an environment providing many individuals, having a variety of backgrounds and responsibilities, with the opportunity to work together for the productivity and benefit of all. Perhaps we should stress Matsushita's philosophy more often to make it function.

There appears to be a new corporate atmosphere in the U.S. that pits the CEOs, MBAs and top management against the engineers, programmers and workers that Matsushita mentions. Some people just want more for less and can never be satisfied. Is it survival, greed or just opportunity that encourages a businessman to raid a company or to pick one's pension pocket or lay people off just prior to vesting or treat co-workers poorly and without respect?

Meanwhile, the engineers, programmers and workers usually get better treatment when demand and utilization are high. During periods of high engineering manpower demand we cultivate better managers and companies since the poor managers lose engineers as their engineers seek the better companies, skill enhancement opportunities and an improved work environment. It isn't long before top management isolates and replaces the managers that can't keep their staff and improvements do result. During low demand periods we must work for shoddy managers and bean counters that exist only because we have a manpower surplus. Is it possible that engineering manpower supply and demand can also effect the corporate climate?

As engineers, our problems increase with High Tech recessions, lay-offs and low demand. In 1986 Congress told us cuts would be coming due to the military budget reduction. Down sizing and the completion of engineering intensive programs resulted in the displacement of many more engineers and deprived them of employment and, most important, opportunities to increase and broaden their engineering skills. This also has a detrimental effect on U.S. Engineering Capabilities.

Our House of Representatives plays a major roll in the Engineering Manpower Balance and with that roll the ability to influence the corporate climate, work environment and productivity. We should remember that the worker, technician, programmer and engineer should also enjoy the benefits with management, the shareholder and the customer. Perhaps industry leaders with Mr. Konosuke Matsushita's philosophy could improve the corporate climate. However, I believe we need wiser representatives in Congress who are concerned about engineering utilization and U.S. engineering capabilities to set the foundation for this corporate atmosphere to flourish.

The AEA and members of the engineering community will have to undertake the task of informing and educating our representatives so they may strive for a Manpower Balance and full utilization of our engineers and technical workforce. This is the first step in making Konosuke Matsushita's philosophy, once again, become a reality.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / APPOINTMENTS

AEA recently made several appointments which will be of interest to our membership. The announcements and appointments are as follows:

Robert Bruce has decided to "retire" as editor of the American Engineer to devote time to more personal matters. We are grateful to Bob for his years of service to AEA and his efforts on the publication of the American Engineer. Publishing the newsletter is no small effort and often frustrating. Bob's efforts are deeply appreciated.

Ron Graziano has assumed the role of Editor of the American Engineer. Ron is an experienced engineer and has many years of service to the engineering community. We appreciate Ron taking on this task and I know he will do an outstanding job.

Ian Fletcher has been appointed Director of Legislative Affairs for AEA. Ian is experienced in the political arena, having worked on several campaigns in the past. Ian is from New York and is a database programmer. He is one of the four who lobbied for AEA on the H-1b legislation. He will be contacting all 535 members of Congress in early December.

Doug Kiely is a Floridian who will be setting up and maintaining our website. Doug is a programmer with several years of website programming experience. He has many exciting ideas for the site and we look forward to seeing the results of his efforts.

PHONE HOT LINE ESTABLISHED

The Virginians for Immigration Control, a Washington, D.C./Virginia area immigration group is establishing a phone hot line in which interested parties within the Washington/Eastern Virginia area will be contacted by phone on various immigration issues at certain critical times when action is needed.

They have requested that we let our members know of this effort and anyone within the D.C. area who would be interested in participating should call Mr. James McDonald 703-241-9249. It is my understanding that you would only be contacted when there is pending legislation which needs support or opposition.

Reach Out

Reach out to the active volunteers who are making AEA and this publication possible. Tell them what you like or what you dislike. Provide them with question, answers and information.

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AEA and the Engineering Community needs your help.

READER'S VOICE

We encourage members of the profession to write to the *AMERICAN ENGINEER*. and to the volunteers that make AEA work. We need your encouragement, thoughts and support if we are to succeed. You can help by keeping in touch and encouraging others to join and support our efforts. With electronic communications, hardware, software and systems built and designed by members of the U.S. Engineering Community we can now be united.

Often, I think back to my youth in the '50s and how I first got interested in science and engineering. My parents said I was disassembling radios when I was six. They were of course never to be reassembled. What I nostalgically recollect most, however, was the TV science show "Mr. Wizard" and another one called "Let's take a Trip". The trip was often to a factory to see how things were made.

These shows shaped my early thinking about what I wanted to do when I grew up. Of course later, erector sets, ham radio, Heath Kits and the space race clinched it.

Only recently, have I realized that I was probably a victim of propaganda. You see, the sponsors of those shows were some of the largest employers of engineers. The propaganda is still flowing four decades later.

The following is my recent letter to the editor of a local newspaper:

As a professional working in engineering for nearly 30 years, I read with interest your article "Finding future engineers".

Having shown interest in science and engineering at an early age, I have fortunately found that a career in engineer can be a personally satisfying one. Yet I am disturbed at the theme of the article- to entice students into an engineering career.

Understand that technology schools and high tech corporations may be "selling" you on engineering, often because more students translates to more profits for the schools and more engineers mean lower pay need be paid by the corporations. Question their motives, when they paint such a rosy picture of engineering.

Engineering careers face the serious threats of age discrimination, low wages, and low status compared to other professions with similar education requirements and level of responsibility. Engineers are often the first to be laid-off when the economy cools and, when the demand returns, young (i.e., lower paid) workers or alien (i.e., lower paid) engineers are sought as replacements. Disillusioned seasoned engineers often move on to more rewarding fields outside engineering.

Please investigate all the facts before choosing a career. Engineering groups such as The American Engineering Association (Box 820473, Fort Worth, Texas 76182) may be a source for information.

Ron Graziano, Editor
PS. What do you think? Send your comments to Reader's Voice.

**"People can be divided into three groups:
those who make things happen, those who
watch things happen, and those who wonder
what happened"**

John W. Newbern

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