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## THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

Presidential Address of James P. Archibald

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### Introduction

It has been customary every few years for the President's Address to dwell on the affairs of the Society, the last such message being that of Past President Harry L. Kinsel, in 1968.

It is appropriate therefore in 1973 to review with you the present state of the union of your society. I do this not just because of the time lapse since 1968, but more importantly because the society is facing perhaps the greatest challenge in its history — and that is the challenge of change.

When I speak of the challenge of change I speak of the proposed merging of the Boston Society of Civil Engineers and the Massachusetts Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

To thoroughly explore this subject with you I would like to review the circumstances leading to the present proposal for merging, weigh with you some of the pros and cons of such a merger and finally explain what has been done by both societies up to the present moment and what is planned in the coming months.

First let us talk about the circumstances leading to the present proposal. In order to place these circumstances in their proper perspective it might be well to review some of the history of the two societies as well as their relationships.

### Background

BSCE-ASCE relationships go back to the very first days of both societies. In fact, when ASCE was founded in New York City in 1852, one of the twelve men present at the first meeting was James Laurie, who had been active in founding BSCE. At this meeting, James Laurie presented a draft of a constitution he had prepared. This constitution, which was used for many years by ASCE, was very similar to the original constitution of BSCE — so it is interesting that the government of both societies had a similar base at a very early age.

It also may come as a surprise to some that the history of BSCE was in limbo

for a period of over ten years. The original society suspended its activities in 1861, donated its library to the Boston Athenaeum, and appointed Messrs. Asburner and Higginson to take over the property of the Society.

In 1871, however, a group of twenty-six people (people because we cannot formally call them engineers as we define engineers today) sought to form an engineering organization which was originally to be called the Boston Society of Engineers. At its second meeting, Desmond FitzGerald, a name familiar to us all, made a motion that the name be changed to Boston Society of Civil Engineers. Thus we owe a lot to Mr. FitzGerald for preserving the historical link to 1848 which makes our society the oldest engineering society in the United States. Desmond FitzGerald incidentally was the first President of the rejuvenated organization.

Two years later in June 1873 the executive committee of the society, as it was then called, sought to incorporate the society so that it could legally hold property and have exclusive rights to its name. But to the dismay of the executive committee, it learned that a society bearing the same name had been incorporated in 1851 and still had a corporate existence even though it was not active. However, where there is a will there is a way, and this was the strategy used. Steps were taken immediately to merge these two organizations thus preserving the name BSCE. The entire membership of the newly formed BSCE, historically referred to as the Jr. BSCE, was elected to membership in the older defunct, but incorporated, society. This was accomplished by the issuing of a warrant by Justice of the Peace George Morrill authorizing five of the original members to call a legal meeting of the corporation at which time the election of the Jr. BSCE members to membership in the older society was held and thus the continuity of our legal existence was preserved. These early historical notes might give us some insight in evaluating present day circumstances. I might also note that a more detailed documentation of the early days of our society can be found in the presidential address of John B. Babcock in 1936 entitled "The Boston Society of Civil Engineers and Its Founder Members" which perhaps should be required reading for all society members.

Moving on to a more contemporary time we find in 1921 the formation of the Northeastern Section of the ASCE, later to become the Massachusetts Section. At a meeting called for the purpose of considering its organization, a committee was appointed to see if the proposed section might be affiliated with the Boston Society of Civil Engineers. This committee consisted of three members of ASCE only and three members who were also members of BSCE. The committee after careful study issued a report entitled "A Report of the Affiliation of the proposed Northeastern Section of ASCE with the BSCE". The report unanimously recommended affiliation and gave detailed recommendations for the accomplishment of the affiliation. This was approved by the Northeastern Section. On November 16, 1921 on the motion of Mr. Metcalf, the BSCE voted that the establishment of the Northeastern Section of ASCE as an affiliated section of BSCE be approved and that the preparation of suitable

working arrangements, having due regard for the interests of the Boston Society of Civil Engineers, be referred to a committee of the Board of Government. Thus the affiliation was an accomplished fact. The "due regard for the interest of BSCE" is a noteworthy phrase — one which again might give us insight.

In 1922, however, came the birth of the Affiliated Technical Societies of New England, later to be called Engineering Societies of New England or ESNE. The existence of this group made the relationship between the Northeastern Section of ASCE and BSCE seemingly unnecessary and by mutual consent the affiliation was terminated.

Since that time various attempts have been made for closer co-operation between the two societies. In 1957 at a joint meeting there was a panel discussion "Why Two Civil Engineering Societies for Boston?". In 1961 a committee report was made to the Board of Government recommending that a careful study of the matter of consolidation be made to include the comparative value of consolidation vs friendly competition and co-operation, necessary changes in the by-laws of both societies, continuation of the Boston Society as a separate entity, annual dues, disposition of the permanent funds of the BSCE, membership requirements and legal complications, if any. As we shall see, these same areas of study have surfaced again in the present deliberations.

### Study

Let us review the recent history of inter-relationships. In 1968 Harry L. Kinsel in his presidential address noted his concern over the consideration being given to the institution of technical divisions within the Massachusetts Section of ASCE and over conflicts in meeting schedules. He recommended closer co-operation in these areas and suggested more joint committees for the two organizations, including the program committees. His successor, incoming President Harl Aldrich, appointed a committee on BSCE-ASCE Relations with a similar committee appointed by Mass. Section President Saul Namyet. In 1970 these committees acting jointly made a report giving recommendations for a short range program for greater co-operation and a long range program. The short range program for greater co-operation and a long range program. The the long range. These short range recommendations included joint meetings, a joint newsletter and joint quarters. The long range recommendations were for studies to be made for ultimate consolidation of the societies. Interestingly, this report also noted that 21 of the 35 BSCE Technical Section officers were also members of ASCE.

These relationships committees then continued their studies of the long range program. In early 1971, again acting jointly, they issued a report entitled "A Proposal for a Final Resolution of ASCE-BSCE Relationships". In this report specific step by step recommendations were made towards the consolidation of the societies. Included was the canvassing of the membership of both societies to gain an expression of feeling of the memberships in regard to consolidation. The

governing bodies of both organizations voted to accept the plan for consolidation in principle and to canvass its memberships to confirm the intent to make this change. This report was published and a poll taken in the June-August issue of the FORUM. The results of the poll showed that the membership of both societies favored consolidation by significant ratios, the combined ratio being approximately nine to one.

Following the poll the joint committees on BSCE-ASCE relationships made a final report in which it recommended dissolution of the two committees and the establishment of one merger committee to carry out the planning for consolidation. This report was voted favorably upon by both societies.

Since 1971 the merger committee has been in almost continuous session with meetings every month to resolve the many situations facing both societies should a merger be consummated.

### Resolution of Problems

Let us take a look at some of these situations or should I say problems, and at how they are being resolved. There are many of course, but let us consider those having significance to the Boston Society of Civil Engineers. They are the membership requirements of BSCE vs ASCE, necessary changes in the constitution and by-laws, the heritage of BSCE, the permanent funds of BSCE, legal complications, and dues for BSCE members.

What about the heritage of BSCE? This is extremely sensitive to many of our members and understandably so. Having looked back at the infancy of BSCE we know that it was a predominate issue even then. However, as before, where there is a will there is a way. The proposed merger in my opinion in no way jeopardizes our historical significance. The Boston Society of Civil Engineers would *not* become extinct. Its corporate status would remain the same. The only change is the name from Boston Society of Civil Engineers to Boston Society of Civil Engineers Section of ASCE. This can be done almost by just notifying the Commonwealth of Massachusetts of the name change — a familiar scene in today's corporate world. In essence BSCE remains a legal entity.

Next let us consider changes in the constitution and by-laws. This is necessary and without going into detail let me just say that the proposed new constitution and by-laws is patterned after our present documents and is in no manner jeopardizing any pre-existing role or function of the Society. If the plans for merging progress, each member of both societies will receive a copy of the proposed constitution and by-laws for his individual study.

What about the funds of the society? Various funds have been vested in BSCE for specific purposes and specific methods have been recorded for achieving these purposes. These include the Freeman Fund, the Turner Fund, the Desmond FitzGerald Fund and so on. These funds and their functioning would remain as originally intended. Just as BSCE retains its legal entity under the laws of the Commonwealth, so do the funds retain their original integrity.

The membership requirements for both societies presented a major obstacle for the possibility of merging. National ASCE has rather rigid and tight rules and classifications for membership, while BSCE membership requirements were related to classification of people interested in Civil Engineering rather than their documented backgrounds and qualifications.

What was to happen to these people who perhaps did not meet the requirements of ASCE — perhaps a technical rather than a professional person? What about the present BSCE members who did not want to be a member of National ASCE? What about a person who under present circumstances would be eligible for membership in BSCE but not ASCE?

It was here that the spirit of compromise and co-operation prevailed. After careful consideration and deliberation National ASCE stated the following:

1. Any present member of BSCE can remain a member of the BSCE Section of ASCE without becoming a member of National ASCE.
2. The proposed BSCE Section of ASCE can continue to elect members to its section as affiliates who would not ordinarily meet the requirements of National ASCE.

These negotiated stipulations, I believe, overcame the major stumbling block towards consolidation and were a major concession on the part of National ASCE.

Finally, we come to the costs of running a combined society and their effect on the finances and dues structure of each organization. One train of thinking allows that with the merger of the two societies the combined membership could be increased by some 30 percent. It is proposed that enrollment fees remain the same, that is, a ten dollar fee for a new member and a five dollar fee for associates and juniors. Incidentally, the enrollment fee back in 1848 was twenty dollars for a new member — so your society has been in phase III of our economic system for a long time. The new proposed dues structure calls for a fifteen dollar annual dues for a member who is also a member of National ASCE, which is a reduction from the present twenty dollars, and fee of ten dollars for a non-resident. For a non-National ASCE member the dues would remain the same at twenty dollars a year. The reason for the discrimination between ASCE National and non-ASCE National members is that National ASCE supports its local sections by a contribution of three dollars per National member who belongs to a local section. Thus we see that for those of us in BSCE who are not related to ASCE and do not want to become so, there would be no change in our dues. For those of us who belong to both societies there would be a savings in dues from the combined cost of twenty-five dollars to fifteen, but of course we would continue to pay National dues.

What about legal complications? As stated earlier, these have been reduced to a minimum by the retention of the corporate entity of BSCE. Only the name is changed, and a very small change at that. Legal counsel, retained and financed by both societies has given a positive report on this aspect.

### Merger

Now one may say all this is very interesting but so what? Who needs it? We have gotten along in one way or another for the past 125 years. Why change now?

To answer this let me refer again to the title of my talk — the challenge of change. Dare we try to change? Dare we try to make our society better? What if we are wrong?

Let me answer that last question with another question. What if we are right? What effects will this merger have on our society? We have examined some of the problems but what of the positive aspects.

In reading past presidents' addresses I find the current problems facing BSCE are really chronic problems. A few references to previous state of the union messages might serve to illustrate.

In 1910 the membership of the society was seven hundred twenty-three and first reached the one thousand mark in 1928. Even so then President Frank H. Marston in 1928 stated "It cannot be said that the society is reaching all of the engineers in the metropolitan area that it should". Today in 1973 our membership is not much larger than it was forty-five years ago in 1928. If past President Marston were present here today he might well ask what have we done in these past forty five years. Our membership has been static regardless of the increase in the number of engineers and everything else in this country of ours.

Leonard Metcalf, President in 1920 questioned: "Often when a handful of men were present to hear a paper prepared with care and labor by some fellow member I have asked myself what is responsible for the failure of the men to turn out in larger numbers? Where are the younger men?" One of his answers and as he states the most important of all — and again I quote "the multiplicity of demands on our available time." This in 1920. In 1955 President Miles Clair stated "There now exists intense competition not only for membership but for the attention of engineers."

Harrison P. Eddy, Jr. in 1950 stated the rather startling fact that the society was in an era of deficit spending for 37 years, since 1913, in which our operating expenses exceeded our income in every year except 1916.

These quotations reveal some of the problems that still face the society today, that is costs, meeting attendance, membership and involvement of the younger engineer. Like many chronic illnesses, these problems have been treated periodically with doses of aspirin such as membership drives, dues increases and public relations efforts. However, as with a dose of aspirin, the discomfort is temporarily relieved, but the illness remains.

Can the merging of the two societies help solve these problems? Let us speculate that:

1. Through the merging of the two groups there would be a significant increase in the united membership. This would hopefully alleviate costs and increase meeting attendance.

2. It is estimated that there are approximately four hundred joint BSCE-ASCE members and, as noted, many of the key positions in both societies are held by people having dual memberships. Forming one organization will enable these key people to do a better job with less demand on their valuable time and less dilution and duplication of their effort.

3. An additional consideration is the greater need for involvement of the engineer in the community, civic and political world — a long recognized failing of the average engineer. Would not a single civil engineering organization do a better job in the civic arena?

4. The younger engineer, economically hindered, would not have to make a choice. This choice is usually to the detriment of BSCE because this younger engineer is on the move and knows there is no local section of BSCE in Cleveland, Ohio where he might soon relocate. The Associate Member Forum program of ASCE would also be very helpful in attracting these younger members into one unified society.

5. By tacit agreement, the technical aspects of engineering have been the property of BSCE while the professional aspects that of ASCE. Should not an engineer have access to and benefit from the activities in both these areas without having to join two organizations or choose between them? Certainly the competition for meeting attendance would be eliminated.

### Present Plans

Now where are we today? — Today is the moment of truth.

As I stated earlier the Merger Committee has been meeting almost continuously since its formation in 1971. This committee with talented representation from both societies was given authority by the governing bodies of BSCE and the Massachusetts Section of ASCE to carry out the necessary planning and procedures for consolidation. From the activity of this committee there has emerged a new constitution and by-laws for the merged society. After many deliberations and revisions, these documents have been approved by both governing bodies and have also been accepted by National ASCE with final approval by National ASCE anticipated next month. Patterned after the present BSCE constitution and by-laws it includes the membership provisions for the BSCE membership that were discussed earlier, as well as the dues structure. The Merger Committee has also obtained legal counsel that has guided the committee on a steady course in regard to the corporate name of BSCE as well as the funds of our society.

On May one of this year the FORUM will publish a special issue devoted to the merger, giving all the facts as well as the pros and cons. Incidentally, the deadline for any material is April 1. Anyone interested in contributing a viewpoint on this subject should contact Bert Berger, Editor, of Fay, Spofford & Thorndike before the April 1st deadline.

On May 10 a joint meeting for both memberships will be held so that all

aspects of the proposed merger can be presented in order that the membership can have an opportunity for questions and discussion. Concurrently in May a vote will be taken of the membership of both societies to approve an agreement to merge as well as to approve the proposed constitution and by-laws of the merged society. If approval is received from the membership of both societies it is planned that the merger will take place one year from now in April 1974. During this coming year the governing bodies of both organizations, while still acting independently concerning the affairs of each society, would meet jointly in the interests of a smooth transition period until the merger is accomplished.

I have tried to present in a limited time a synopsis of the background leading to the present status of BSCE-ASCE relationships. As you can see there has been much discussion and activity concerning the inter-relationships of the two societies for a long period of time. Now for the first time in the history of both organizations the members, each acting independently, will make a decision on the question of merging or not merging. Each member with his vote will have the opportunity to be part of that decision.

The title of my talk today is "THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE".

Gentlemen, the challenge is yours.