Your president, Merlin Smith, asked if I might like to use this space for a message. I am delighted to do so. As chairman of IEEE technical activities, I could try to discuss much current IEEE business: registration, crucial votes, dues and finance, IEEE positions, technical versus professional activities. However, I prefer to use this space for something you might not see discussed very often—the relation between the Computer Society and the rest of IEEE. I happen to believe that a healthy relationship is beneficial to us all, and that it requires for its maintenance conscious and continuing effort by both Computer Society and other Institute leadership. In my book healthy relationship implies among other things the ability of the Computer Society to appropriately influence the remainder of the Institute, to pervasively participate in Institute affairs, with each entity benefiting from the other.

Your leaders are representing you capably in the technical affairs of the Institute and on the Board of Directors. They do their homework, reason effectively, and argue ably. When necessary they take a hard stand on your behalf.

Occasionally I hear of a lament that the Computer Society does not have enough clout in the decision-making process of the IEEE Technical Activities Board, or of the Institute as a whole. TAB has about 60 voting members—30 society/group presidents, two council presidents, eight IEEE directors, with the remainder comprising assorted committee administrators and chairmen. The complaint is that among all these the Computer Society has only one Division 5 director who is elected by Computer Society members. But what about those 20 odd committee people? They come from those societies who offer to staff the positions and whose nominees perform. I would like to think it normal for the society with 1/6 of the total IEEE Group/Society membership to supply an ample list of candidates for staffing TAB. The Computer Society would suffer no shortage of clout then!

Beyond TAB itself is the Operating Committee of TAB, or "TAB OPCOM," consisting of the seven division directors (including one from the Computer Society), the standards director, and three committee administrators. TAB OPCOM relates to TAB in approximately the same way as your Executive Committee to the Board of Governors. On TAB OPCOM, if one of the administrators has a Computer Society background, you have more than your percentage of clout. And then, in addition, there are the endless lists of appointees to other IEEE boards and outside organizations with which IEEE cooperates. A goodly number of these might also be Computer Society members. Healthy clout comes with vigorous participation. The opportunity is yours.

Strange as it may seem, some IEEE planners and G/S leaders worry just a little about your size and growth. I don't believe this worry is justified at this time. Although Computer Society membership represents about one-sixth of all G/S memberships, I do not see you misusing your size. Rather I see you setting new standards of excellence, of activity on all fronts, of examples to be followed. Your publications and meetings are second to none. Given that you can influence the future of IEEE with your everyday involvement in Institute management, you should have no cause to rely on mere strength of numbers to win your way.

My appeal to you is to use your strength in your own enlightened self-interest within IEEE. To me "self-interest" means that your leaders will continue to search out your needs, know your varied technical and professional interests, represent your interests to TAB and the Board of Directors, and create and provide activities and publications especially for Computer Society members. "Enlightened" means to me that your leaders recognize and work to maximize the real benefit to Computer Society members by doing all these things in cooperation with the other IEEE societies, as well as with organizational elements such as the other boards and geographic divisions. ■

Eric Herz
IEEE Vice-President,
Technical Activities

COMPUTER