Position statements from 1980 IEEE presidential candidates

Burkhard H. Schneider
Detroit Edison Company

I am very happy for this opportunity to address the Computer Society. Your society can best be characterized by its growth and vitality. No other society within the IEEE has experienced such an expansion in new technical journals, conferences, tutorials, and most of all membership. This expansion is good for the members, the society, and the Institute.

Much of the strength of the IEEE lies in its diversity of activities and in its diversity of membership. In order to provide a suitable growth environment within the Institute, competent management is required to serve the needs of all the societies. I have served the IEEE for 30 years as a section chairman; as a region director; as a member of three major boards—TAB, RAB, USAB; and as secretary-treasurer. My background begins at the grass roots level of the IEEE, and I have worked to initiate and implement...

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The growth of the Computer Society. The Computer Society is IEEE’s largest society, approaching 40,000 members and growing at an astonishing 20 percent annually. It is therefore reasonable to give it special consideration. But first we must understand what are the special needs and interests of its members.

When I first joined the Computer Society about 15 years ago, I did so as a user whose curiosity had been aroused. If I had not already been a member of IEEE, it would not have been so easy to join. Conversely, any member of the Computer Society (if he is also a member of IEEE) can conveniently join other IEEE societies, perhaps for only a year or two, as his career patterns change.

This interdependence, this continual ebb and flow of technical interests within IEEE, demands a flexible response from IEEE. I would like to see our largest society get more actively involved in the top councils of the Institute, and help solve such problems. The society has grown so fast that a deliberate effort must be made to correct this lack of involvement caused by rapid growth.

IEEE and the Computer Society. IEEE’s paramount concern must be with its overall technical excellence. I would endeavor to maintain that technical excellence, and encourage the dissemination of more practical information. As author, editor, conference chairman, society president, division director, I appreciate the extent of the problem.

IEEE cannot ignore the bread-and-butter issues either— incomes, jobs, pensions, etc. An analysis of the 1978 IEEE US Member Opinion Survey shows that the US IEEE population is remarkably homogeneous, and that the Computer Society is quite representative. For example, 35.0% of all IEEE respondents wanted professional activities expanded, 36.6% to stay as is, and 16.5% reduced or eliminated (with 11.9% not sure); the corresponding numbers for the Com-

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Leo Young is a staff consultant in the Electronics Technology Division of the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, DC. He earned his doctorate in electrical engineering from the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, where he held the B. G. Lamme Scholarship. He also received honors degrees in physics and in mathematics from Cambridge University, England. Before joining the Naval Research Laboratory in 1973, he was staff scientist and program manager at Stanford Research Institute (1960-73), where he pioneered in computer aided design of microwave filters; his designs are widely used in industry. He has lectured at universities in the United States, Europe, and Israel. He has published more than 100 papers, 20 patents, and 14 books, won the IEEE Microwave Society's highest award, the Distinguished Service Award, in 1979. He helped start IEEE professional activities, has worked hard for more rational pensions, and received the USAF citation of honor in 1978.

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programs at all levels of the Institute. Since the IEEE is an extremely complex $25 million a year operation, leadership skills and management expertise are essential requirements for the presidency.

I have repeatedly emphasized the democratic nature of the IEEE. Despite attacks on the Nominations and Appointments Committee (which by the way neither nominates nor appoints), the fact is that the IEEE is one of the most democratic societies of its kind. There is very little evidence that direct election of the N&A Committee members would improve the selection process for IEEE officers.

In order to maintain the active roles of the Computer Society and other technical societies within the IEEE, we must understand the special problems of those groups. We must determine if society representation on the Board of Directors and various IEEE committees is truly fair. If it is not, steps will be taken which could lead to additional representation on the Board of Directors and the Nominations and Appointments Committee. However, it should not be overlooked that 20 percent of the directors are currently Computer Society members.

The Computer Society should continue to encourage more individuals to fill high-ranking positions within the IEEE. This tends to support the Institute and enhance the positions of the Computer Society as well.

Computer Society members are just as concerned with professional activities as other IEEE members. I am on record as favoring the direct election by the membership of the vice-president of professional activities. However, it must be remembered that only by keeping our technical programs strong can we speak with vigor and authority in the professional activities area.

Because jobs in the electrical engineering field are increasingly mobile, i.e., the digital electronics industry, I plan to initiate a new effort in the portable pension area. My other professional activities goals include the development of programs which address the possibilities of a future changing job market for our members, a continuation of the fight against age discrimination, and a new approach to patent legislation. Furthermore, I plan to establish listening sessions as a formal procedure to hear alternative and contrary points of view. These sessions might last as long as a full day and would make the president directly available to any concerned group of members.

At a time when strong leadership of the IEEE is critical, it is discouraging to me that only about one-third of the membership takes the trouble to vote. An organization is most successful when the membership is interested and participates in its activities. I encourage you to vote in the September election.

Burkhard H. Schneider's engineering career began at Detroit Edison in 1949, upon receiving the BEE degree from Cornell University. Initial work in analog computer design led to extensive experience in power system planning and engineering. As assistant vice-president for planning and research, he was responsible for all corporate power system planning activities, R&D, high-technology problem solving, and environmental policies. In April 1979, he became vice-president of division operations. He has published technical papers, both in AIEE and trade journals, and has done graduate work at Wayne State University and Columbia University. He is a Registered Professional Engineer in Michigan. Mr. Schneider is a senior member of IEEE. His 30 years of service include the Board of Directors, 1975-76; secretary-treasurer, 1975-76; director, Region 4, 1977-78; Technical Activities Board, 1973; and the United States Activities Board, 1977-78.

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puter Society were 36.4%, 35.4%, 18.8% (11.8% not sure), which are remarkably representative of IEEE as a whole.

As chairman of the Pensions Task Force for years, chairman of the Individual Benefits and Services Committee, Chairman of USAC (now USAB), etc., I have often had to lead the way in professional activities.

But that is not all. IEEE must interact constructively with governmental bodies, and provide the best possible technical inputs to our political decision makers. As an active contributor to IEEE's Technology Policy Conferences for several years, as spokesman for IEEE on technology and pension issues in and out of Congress, I feel we have only just begun.

The main issue is leadership. The main issue this year is leadership. I know the IEEE Board of Directors well, and regard most of its members individually as friends. But collectively the board and I have a serious difference of opinion. I could not have come to you in good conscience had I not first worked diligently with the board and its committees, for example, in trying to enlist board support for sensible reforms before (not after) they became petitions.

Thus the bad news is that the board this year was still handicapped by an outmoded nomination process (to be amended by petition).

The good news is that the members have a clear choice this year between two very different candidates. One candidate has specialized in non-technical positions (treasurer, controller, finance, real estate), whereas I have come up through the technical and professional ranks. I do not want to run IEEE like another business!

If I am elected, I shall endeavor to maintain IEEE's technical excellence, encourage our publications to disseminate more practical information, work to enhance engineering as a profession, speak up whenever engineering careers are threatened, interact constructively with governmental bodies, support legislation beneficial to the engineer, and last but not least, make ours a more responsive, a more democratic Institute—for members of the Computer Society and every other society too.

Vote for experience and leadership in technical and professional affairs!