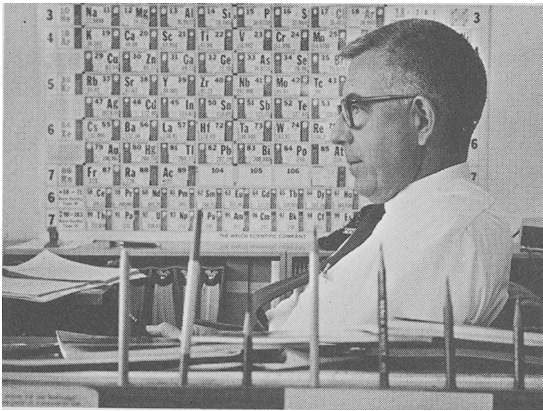




PROTECTING PROFESSIONALISM



Many school teachers belong to groups whose sole function is collective bargaining for higher pay and better working conditions. The continuing existence of such groups is evidence that the majority of teacher-members feel that the advantages of membership in such groups outweigh the disadvantages. One such disadvantage would seem to be a tarnishing of the public image of the teacher and, unfortunately, at a time when the teaching profession finally seemed to have been elevated in the public mind to the vitally important position that it truly is. We refer to the result of last September's wholesale "resignations" by the teachers.

The point here is not to upbraid another professional group such as the teachers. Without all of the facts, we cannot say that their cause was not a compelling one. Perhaps if the whole truth were known one might well wonder that last fall's strikes had not occurred sooner.

Nevertheless, the fact does remain that, at least in New York City, thousands of teachers did directly defy a law deliberately enacted to prevent such work stoppages by public servants. Nor was this the first time that public employees had successfully flouted the law. Yet somehow the implications seem more sinister when one realizes that in this case the defiance of the law was by the very people who are expected to instill a respect for the law in the pliable minds entrusted to their molding. One cannot help wonder if the United States has already begun to walk the primrose path to anarchy.

While quietly deploring so foreboding a situation last September, we were galvanized back into the present by a form letter. Obviously sent to many journals and apparently from an association of professional engineers, it was actually a suggestion from a union that we publish an article explaining the benefits to the scientist or engineer who joins it. The letter went on to express concern over the attempts of the AFL-CIO in trying to organize industrially employed professional personnel.

We hasten to note that we are anything but anti-union, having developed sincere appreciation and genuine respect for the (OCAW) union with which we have dealt for several years. Nevertheless, unions, by their nature, are for non-professional people; if truly professional people have to join what is truly a union, then some professional society failed in its responsibility.

Therefore, we call upon the American Nuclear Society to read the handwriting on the wall while the wall remains standing. The Society can and should take steps to ensure that its members do not feel compelled to join another organization to secure adequate recognition or compensation. A truly professional standing is important to each member.

What can the Society do? The first thing possible and perhaps the only thing necessary is to find out and disseminate the truth regarding the employment status of the members of the professions that it represents. Publication of an accurate thorough analysis of the relative economic standing of its members and a continuing effort to keep this analysis up to date may suffice to ensure that its members are justly compensated for the kind of work they perform. Moreover, if further action is needed, e.g., an effort to educate the public as to the contribution of the member professions to our culture, this analysis would be an invaluable base from which to proceed. Such a compilation should be done carefully so as to take into proper account intangible factors such as various types of fringe benefits and to make sure that the questions used in gathering the needed information are given the same interpretation in each organization that provides raw information or uses the tabulated results.

A kind of start has already been made (not by the ANS) in the form of the so-called "Los Alamos surveys" made each year. Also, other Societies, such as the American Chemical Society, tabulate and analyze the economic status of their members. However, the ACS efforts affect only a small segment of ANS members, and the Los Alamos surveys are shrouded with a quasi-secrecy that hides their very existence from many and confuses those who try to apply the data.

The American Nuclear Society, working either through its present Professional Status Committee or through a special committee not yet formed, should seek out and disseminate the truth regarding the economic status of the members of the professions it represents in order to forestall the day when professional engineers and scientists are persuaded that non-professional tactics are the only remaining hope for fair treatment.

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