The Creation of IEEE Canada – Part 2
Personal Recollections by Robert T.H. (Bob) Alden

IEEE Canada is a Canadian entity with two parent organizations, IEEE Inc. incorporated in the United States with a worldwide mandate in electrical, electronics and computer engineering, and the Engineering Institute of Canada with a mandate across all branches of engineering. This situation has formally existed since 1995 and is a marked change from the situation in 1969 as described by Gordon Slemon. How did this happen? This is one involved engineer's personal viewpoint.

My involvement with engineering organizations began in a small way in 1958 as a student member of both the AIEE (American Institute of Electrical and Engineers) and the IRE (Institute of Radio Engineers), and increased in 1971 when I was drafted as my employer's representative on the local IEEE section executive committee. One of my first assignments was to run a technical training program which I mistakenly thought was to

Acronyms used for Organization and Publication Names	
AIEE	American Institute of Electrical Engineers
EIC	Engineering Institute of Canada
CEEJ	Canadian Electrical Engineering Journal
CJECE	Canadian Journal of Electrical and Computer Engineering
CSEE	Canadian Society for Electrical Engineering
CSECE	Canadian Society for Electrical and Computer Engineering
IEEE	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
IRE	Institute of Radio Engineers

educate my fellow IEEE members. After proposing a naive program which would likely loose money, I was very directly instructed that my objective was to produce a training program for non-members that local industry would want to support so that the program surplus would enable the section to fund the newsletter and other member benefit activities. I learned quickly and my revised plan met with executive committee approval and did the job!. The next year, I was "promoted" to section vice-chair and had the opportunity to attend my first region committee meeting representing my section chair who was unable to attend.

This Canadian Region (7) IEEE meeting of all section chairs and other volunteers was held in New York City at the IEEE headquarters in the United Engineering Centre (opposite the United Nations building) and run by very nice Americans who were the IEEE headquarters staff. While these folks were very welcoming and competent, they were not particularly interested in Canadian activities other than we were number 7 out of 10 regions and the focus seemed to be on the first six (the U.S. regions). There seemed to be a lot of U.S. politics and viewpoints, including discussions about the creation of a United States Activities Board. While the meeting location and staff approach indicated a very centralized IEEE operation, I came to realize that the IEEE was changing, due to a number of dedicated volunteers.

Two Canadians, Bob Tanner (who served as Region Director in 1968 and 1969 then as IEEE Secretary in 1970, Vice President in 1971, and President in 1972); along with Bill Thompson (who succeeded Bob as Regional Director for 1970 and 1971) were pivotal in creating the environment for the future IEEE Canada. Bob Tanner was the principal author of the first IEEE long range planning report. It spelled out an evolution for IEEE regions to become self governing. Bob provided the concept and Bill provided the mechanism. Bill Thompson obtained special funding for the startup of an office in Region 7 - this was one of two such experiments, the other was in Los Angeles in Region 6. Bill hired George Armitage as the manager who set up the office at 7061 Yonge Street in Thornhill, Ontario (just north of the Toronto/North York boundary) where it existed for twenty two years.

These developments were, in my view, the basis for the Canadian entity we know today. George hired a secretary to be in the office and began a process of visiting sections and giving technical training courses - the content for these courses was in white three-ring binders with the name "IEEE Canada" on the cover - together with a blue IEEE logo on the left and a red maple leaf on the right. This was the first time that I saw the "IEEE Canada" concept in existence. It was also the time that other Canadians were attempting to rationalize the desire for the Engineering Institute of Canada to develop a meaningful component in Electrical and Electronics Engineering. Gordon Slemon has accurately documented the frustrations of first the absence of any electrical engineering society in Canada (due to the success of the AIEE and IRE activity in Canada since the very beginning of the electrical and electronics industries) and then the creation of a Canadian Society within EIC which had lots of nationality but little membership.

During the 70' and early 80's I was active as an IEEE volunteer, moving from section to region interests, and then to my technical society, learning about the various ways and idiosyncrasies of IEEE governance. I participated in the Region 7 - CSEE working group (from the perspective of believing that Region 7 must become the Canadian society) and observed the startup of the CSEE in 1976 along with its Journal which was initially subsidized by NRC. In the early 80's I was out of regional activities and active on the administrative committee (now the governing board) of the IEEE Power Engineering Society. I became known as the "transnational conscience" of the PES at those quarterly administrative meetings. More so in those days than now, the PES continued to act as though the AIEE has never merged with the much more

international IRE, using language and procedures that presumed that every significant action was being conducted in the United States.

In 1986 I was surprised to be asked by Wally Read to become a candidate for regional director, and even more surprised when I won the election. As the director-elect in 1987, I was fortunate to have Gordon English as my current director - he gave me a lot of freedom and responsibility, and being based in Vancouver often assigned me tasks in the eastern part of our region. This was a year in which I thought about how to make Region 7 into IEEE Canada. Since I followed my two year term as regional director with a two year term as IEEE vice-president for regional activities, I was able to complete or assist on some of the actions I started as director.

In 1988 I had the opportunity to meet with Cam Blachford who's role as CSEE president coincided with mine as region director. I was an historic meeting between two stubborn volunteers with two different points of view - likely one of the best examples of the rivalry that Gordon Slemon so accurately describes. We both left that meeting determined to promote our separate agendas, but we also were very much aware of the weaknesses inherent in the two organizations.

I believe that Cam decided to stop competing for sections and their activities since CSEE did not seem able to increase its membership significantly above its initial core EIC member count, and focus on the Journal and a mechanism for covering the cost. Fortunately for CSEE, Vijay Bhargava decided to create the Canadian Conference on Electrical Engineering and run it in his unique way so that it generated the annual surplus needed to subsidize the Journal.

It was clear to me that if Region 7 was to evolve into a truly Canadian organization we needed more than an office which acted as a buffer between Canadian members and the American IEEE staff. I decided to formally use the name IEEE Canada and create a magazine, the IEEE Canadian Review, designed and published in Canada as a member benefit. The name "IEEE Canada" was proposed as an alternate name for "IEEE Region 7", passed at the annual regional meeting, and subsequently and successfully submitted to the IEEE Regional Activities Board and the IEEE Executive Committee for their approval. I created both business cards and letterhead with the new name and logo and used them in future correspondence with IEEE boards and staff. Shortly afterwards, the IEEE USA letterhead appeared. At that point, I knew that our new name would stay.

I had known Richard Marceau as an enthusiastic IEEE volunteer in the Montréal section, primarily involved with producing technical publications for conferences being sponsored by Montréal Conferénces Inc. (MCI). I enlisted his support and he became the first editor of the fledgling magazine, the IEEE Canadian Review. Our first issue was published in September of 1988 with a special grant from IEEC Inc. This was the Toronto-based corporation that organized a trade show and conference under various names - initially the "IRE Canadian Electronics Conference" in 1955, and later "Electronicom". This regional conference ran in alternate years to the MCI's Montec.

About this time, and with the demise of these regional conferences in Toronto, Montreal and across the United States, I broached the concept of evolving IEEC Inc. (with its 30+ year history of supporting IEEE activities in Canada) into the IEEE Canadian Foundation. The original name proposed was IEEE Canada Foundation but that was rejected by the government approval body. The legal process culminated in Revenue Canada granting a charitable foundation status in 1994. Over a two-year period starting in 2002, discussions between the directors of MCI and the IEEE Canadian Foundation culminated with the joining of resources (MCI contributed funds and experienced bilingual volunteers) that enabled the IEEE Canadian Foundation to offer bilingual services.

As the outgoing director, it was my responsibility to nominate candidates for regional director elect. Vijay Bhargava was one of my nominees and the winner in the subsequent election. While we had often apparently been in opposition, he for CSEE, me for IEEE, he was clearly a volunteer leader of very high quality. Tony Eastham had succeeded me as director, and together they set the stage for a renewed look at formally combining the two societies.

CSEE had been renamed in 1990 to CSECE (as had the journal from CEEJ to CJECE). The stage was now set. Both organizations had non-competing assets: CSECE was the constituent society of EIC and had a journal and a conference; the IEEE entity was region 7 of IEEE with 20 sections, 60 student branches, 14,000 members, a magazine, a developing foundation, and legal title to the name IEEE Canada (and an acceptance of that name within IEEE). When Tony was the regional director, John Plant was the CSECE president and a former Central Canada Council chair, so they began the discussions that Vijay Bhargava and Ray Findlay concluded. In 1995 we all won with a unique Canadian solution to the need to develop a single appropriate organization for electrical and computer engineering professionals in Canada.