Engineers for Social Responsibility Encyclopedia Article

Engineers for Social Responsibility

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Engineers for Social Responsibility

The New Zealand engineering profession has a strong tradition of social responsibility, and many engineers have worked voluntarily on engineering projects in the Pacific Islands and in Southeast Asia. In keeping with this tradition, Engineers for Social Responsibility (ESR) was founded in 1983 and was the first such organization in the world. The driving force in its foundation was Gerald Coates, a Wellington-based electrical engineer. Its objectives are "to encourage and support social responsibility and a humane professional ethic in the uses of technology, to inform the engineering profession, general public and public policy makers about the impact of technology" (ESR). It is based in Auckland and has branches in Wellington and Christchurch, with a combined membership of around 200. Membership is open to all engineers and related professionals. Branches sponsor seminars and presentations that are open to the public.

ESR's focus has always been international: Initially it was concerned with nuclear and peace issues, and most of the papers at its first conference in Hastings in 1984 were on this topic. Its focus broadened after the end of the cold war to include a wide range of national and international issues, including an association with Water for Survival, an engineers' organization that provides technical advice and assistance for water supply and wastewater projects in poor countries.

ESR was initially criticized as a fringe organization, especially by the Institute of Professional Engineers New Zealand (IPENZ). But after a relatively short period, the temperate profile of ESR led to its general acceptance. Indeed, ESR has maintained a close association with IPENZ and become a model for similar organizations in other countries such as American Engineers for Social Responsibility (founded 1988) and Architects and Engineers for Social Responsibility in the United Kingdom (founded 1989, as a transformation of Engineers for Nuclear Disarmament, which began seven years earlier). ESR is also linked with the International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Responsibility (INES). Other related but not directly linked organizations include Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility and Physicians for Social Responsibility.

See Also

Engineering Ethics.

Bibliography

Coates, Gerald. (1983). "The Responsibility of Engineers." *New Zealand Engineering* 38(8): 23–24.

Internet Resource

Engineers for Social Responsibility (ESR). Available from http://www.esr.org.nz/.