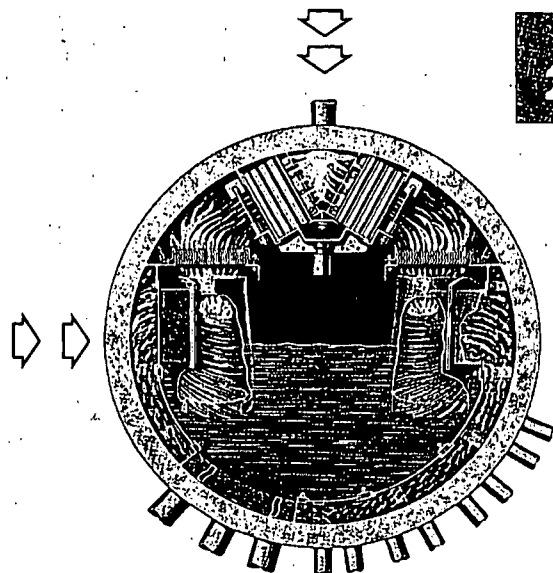


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Power

Battle of the Experts

THIS STORY STARTS with *POWER's* publication, last March, of certain radically new thermodynamic theories advanced by Neil Bailey, Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, N. Y. Bailey challenged accepted theories on both theoretical and experimental grounds. He said that their logic is wrong and they do not agree with experiment.

As was to be expected, the *POWER* article excited wide interest among power engineers, but especially among the professional experts in thermodynamics—those in industry and those in educational institutions.

Since Professor Bailey's paper was admittedly over the heads of most practical power engineers, they stood by to watch the show with little comment. On the other hand, the professional thermodynamicists, almost to a man, were in disagreement with Professor Bailey.

To air the conflicting views, a well-attended forum was held at RPI in April. Professor Bailey again presented his theories, which were, in the main, opposed by the discussers. To sum up without any technicalities, it can be said that this meeting at Troy started and ended in almost complete disagreement between Professor Bailey on the one hand and the body of the profession on the other.

By publishing several discussion letters in August, *POWER* provided a continuing forum for the debate. Yet, still, there was almost complete disagreement.

Finally came the climax—a paper and discussion at the annual meeting of the ASME on December 3. Several hundred highly interested observers and participants crowded the room. The battle of the thermo experts started at 9 am and terminated (perhaps chiefly from exhaustion and hunger) at 2 pm. Once again it was Professor Bailey against the field. Bailey restated his views and virtually every discussor disagreed.

So there the battle rests today. The editors of *POWER*, and presumably most power engineers, must leave the final verdict to history.

It is unfortunate that some feelings have been badly bruised in this "operation thermo," yet there is a bright side. The events cited show that it is still possible, at least in America, for a professional man of standing to get a full hearing for radically new concepts. In this case Professor Bailey had three platforms. This, too, is significant.

Some have suggested that the first announcement of new theories should never be made except through the professional society of the specialty under discussion. Rigid application of any such policy would, we feel, be most unfortunate—a dangerous step away from freedom of expression in this country. If the time ever comes when scientific expression must proceed through a single channel, those who control that channel will have the power of death over new ideas. That must never happen here.

ADS OUT

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