TRENDS IN ENGINEERING EDUCATION

By Professor DUGALD C. JACKSON

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

1. INTRODUCTION

Alan Seeger started his most famous poem with the lines:

I have a rendezvous with death
At some disputed barricade,
When Spring comes back with rustling shade
And apple blossoms fill the air;
I have a rendezvous with death
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

We well may think of those words as we contemplate the state of engineering and its past and present relation to civilization. The rendezvous calling to us as engineers and teachers differs from Alan Seeger's.

That was a rendezvous with death, but not with failure. In our calling of engineering education, we have a choice of a rendezvous with sterility and failure, or a rendezvous with progress and achievement which are helpful to society and associated with service to our groups of students. We who are in engineering education, and also all who are engineers, have been and are being sharply criticized for the outcomes of our labors; but it is to be remembered that much which is talked and written about education in its various levels and orders, including engineering education, and much which is talked and written about engineering technology is shimmering mirage instead of true substance. The fact is before us and is a background for what I have to say, but I can not elaborate upon this here.