THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL

V. H. Brix, Battle, Sussex, (U. K.)

Although involved for some thirty years in the industrial and sociological problems which typify the life of a professional engineer, the author is lead to concur with many colleagues in the field that the current managerial and sociological literature is only of limited descriptive or predictive value. Attempts to portray actors as economic, "rational" or social men meet with little success.

Discussions and seminars had been held from time to time to which engineers and psychologists contributed. The appearence of Norbert Wiener's "Human Use of Human Beings" provided a great stimulus for renewed debate. Over recent years a new model is evolving, namely, that of man as a controller, and the implications of this concept in "systems" thinking.

Not only industrial strife, with its immediate bearing on the engineering profession, but problems such as technical innovation, creativity, change, even extending to political struggles and inter-species strife, all these behaviour patterns take on a new significance when viewed as problems of information and control.

Basically, our model consists of man the controller, who has an overriding propensity to continually extend the field of his effectors so as to bring environment under control. Human hierarchies proliferate with artefacts, machines, animals, and, indeed, absorb, or at least threaten to assimilate, their own kind, human beings, as effectors, agents or subordinates. Some conclusions are drawn.