

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY Mr. PABITRA DAS, President

**Delivered at the IIW India 46th Annual General Meeting
in Kolkata on 29th September, 2012**

To the Distinguished dignitaries on the dias, to my colleagues in the outgoing and the incoming council, to all executives and staff members of the institute and to all my fellow members of our great institute,

Friends, with profound gratitude and great humility, I accept my nomination by the IIW India council for the presidency of the Indian Institute of Welding.

At the outset, let me express my thanks to all the honorable members of the council and also to all of my friends in our institute who have congratulated me for being nominated as the President.

As I stand before you today, it has been a journey of 36 year for me since I joined the institute as a member and I still remember the delight when I received the letter from the institute notifying my admission. At that time, I was with "Indian Oxygen Limited" and my seniors included likes of - L. M. Pasricha, J. A. Mulliyil, V. R. Subramaniam, S. V. Sambamurthy, A. K. Basu and N. Mukherjee – all dedicated soldiers of the institute.

All of them were also great motivators and inspirators for me to work for the institute. Indian Oxygen Limited was almost synonymous with the Indian Institute of Welding and the company supported IIW India almost like its sister concern. I soon started attending all the technical meetings, seminars etc. and also presented papers in these gatherings. Thus it was a happy beginning for me in the Institute.

Since then, the institute has come a long way to the Hall of Fame – where it is today. This has been possible by the selfless dedication to the cause of welding and to our institute by my illustrious predecessors and today, as I

stand before you here and also as customary, I would take this opportunity of recalling their invaluable contribution to the cause of the institute.

Mr. Ravi was the President when our institute came out with flying colours as the organizer of the greatest and the most important welding event of the world, the Annual Assembly and the associated international conference. Not only that, the exhibition that we organized also the biggest ever welding expo held in India.

Before Mr. Ravi, Mr. C. C. Girotra was in the chair and in his short tenure of one year he made a mark with innovative ideas. He was the one who coined the slogan "Welding for Nation Building" very appropriate and timely one for us today.

Mr. A. K. Mukherjee, whom we can surely call as a living legend having served the institute in various capacities for a long time, was the President before that and even today at an very elderly age he is an example of love for the institute.

We had Mr. K. M. Panthaki as his predecessor and he would be ever remembered for successfully holding the institute together at a very difficult time for the institute.

Padmasree Dr. Baldev Raj a distinguished scientist who preceded Mr. Panthaki made not only the institute but the entire nation proud by becoming the first ever President of The International Institute of Welding.

I can go on and on but I would cut short at this stage by paying tribute to all the 17 persons who occupied the top seat of the institute before that and all of them made a mark through their contribution.

Gentlemen, today our institute is acclaimed as a leading professional institute in our country as well as all over the world and we must not forget the hard work done by all the council members, office bearers, the executives and all other employees of the institute. However, I would be failing in my duty if I omit the mention of Mr. Parimal Biswas who has been running the show for the institute for a decade now in the capacity of Hony. Secretary General, and a person who through his energetic and untiring dedication has played a leading role in bringing up the institute to this level.

Friends, the task before us today are enormous and it may not be an exaggeration to say that today, not only the entire country, but the world welding community is also looking at us. Since most of us are already aware of the present activities of our institute, I would speak about what I consider as the major areas of focus and thrust.

Let us examine the national scenario first.

As per the Demographic Profile of India based on the last year's census, nearly 65% of India's population of 120 Crores is in the age group of 15-64. This makes us the second largest base of employable population, next only to China.

Currently, 15 million individuals enter workforce every year, of which only 3% undergo vocational training. Imagine if we can come up with products/solutions to train the majority of the under-skilled population, a lot of contribution can be made to the overall development of the country.

A growing economy like India requires a large and skilled workforce. However, the lack of quality trainers and training institutes has created roadblocks to growth. Thus, Skills shortage is evident in every sector of the economy and welding is no exception. Skill development has therefore become a national agenda in India and is getting a major policy thrust. The Honorable Prime Minister of India has set an ambitious target of creating a

500 million globally employable workforce by 2022.

Unfortunately, no reliable database is available about the number of welding personnel in our country and this is mainly because a large number of welders are engaged in the unorganized sector about which very little information is available. Various Government agencies have identified that over the next five years approximately at least 2-3 Lakh trained welders would be required. In fact, some time back, the prime minister's office had summoned us and wanted to know if we were in a position to train 1 lakh welders in the course of the next 5 years.

This is undoubtedly a great challenge for us, but the ground reality is that there is a shortage of quality trainers and training institutes for welding in our country and the ITI's are not able to meet the need of welders in industry both in number and in quality. As all of you know, our institute is not basically a training provider but we are to play the very important role of being the most significant "knowledge partner" for the existing as well as upcoming welding training institutes all over the country. Our institute however, rightly realized about 3-4 years back, the need to have a large number of welding training institutes having a good curriculum and assessment system, with emphasis on employability as per needs of the industry. We had therefore launched the "National Welding training and certification scheme" (NWTCS) and we have today 25 "Approved training Institutes (ATI's)" under this scheme. To meet the growing requirement of trained welders, we now need to expand the concept and bring under our umbrella many more such institutes. One of the major needs to be successful is of course to train more trainers and for that we may perhaps have to set up a few training institutes of our own which should be designed as "Centres of Excellence".

Simultaneously, in our role as the major knowledge partner in the "Skill Development Initiatives" where Welding is the vertical, we have to associate ourselves

in a big way with the institutions like CII, NSDL, DGET, QCI etc. to create a linkage with the industry and help them to meet their needs of welders from the ATI's in our fold. We would thus have a major role to play in accrediting many more institutes under the NWTCS scheme, providing curriculum support, assessment and certification of welders being trained in these institutes.

At the same time our institute is expanding its activities of certification and more and more personnel are being certified by us under the MSME MES scheme.

Another major area where we need to pay attention is certification of companies as the "ANBCC" of the International Institute of Welding. As you are aware, our ANBCC is already fully accredited by the International Institute of Welding for certifying companies as per ISO 3834. We have already certified a few companies under this scheme and more orders are in hand. There is a growing awareness about achieving total quality in fabrication and we expect more activity in this area. As this certification calls for the personnel engaged in fabrication welding to be qualified under ANB, e.g. IWE, IWT, IWP, IWS etc. there would be a consequential increase in demand for such qualifications. We are also observing an increasing trend of personnel certification under various national and international standards.

All these imply that we would be requiring a large number of competent and qualified personnel to be associated with us in these activities.

I would now come to the subject of growing importance of our institute to the international welding fraternity. Our institute has earned great accolades for successfully organizing the 64th Annual Assembly of the International Institute of Welding in Chennai last year. It is also a great honour for the institute that our past President Dr. Baldev Raj is today the President of the International Institute of Welding. Our representatives are regularly attending various meetings of the IIW and IAB and we have been regularly sending delegates in the International assemblies over the past few years. Based

on our credential as successful organizers of a series of international events of IIW, we have once again been chosen to organize IC 2014, The International Welding Congress in the Pragati Maidan New Delhi in February 2014.

The international welding exhibitions organized by the institute over the years under the banner of "Weld India" have been a great success, so much so that more than one international exhibition organizers have offered to join us as a partner. You will be happy to know that the council has recently decided that we will associate ourselves with some foreign partner in this area with effect from Weld India 2014. This is a significant development and would help us to rope in the fabrication and other related sectors to participate in our exhibition, thus widening the scope of our exhibition and paving the way of creating a closer B2B interaction.

I hasten to add that our participation in various technical commissions is almost non-existent and this is an area all of us should be paying attention to. Our country is vast and I believe, there is no dearth of qualified and competent persons engaged in research, education, training and fabrication related to the scope of various technical commissions of the International Institute of Welding. The new council must accord priority attention in this area and actively work to encourage more and more participation in technical commissions.

Gentlemen, to meet these major challenges posed to our institute, we also have to look internally and consolidate our organization. Our vision plan therefore envisages building up our institute as a truly professional one. To do this, we have to employ more and more paid professionals not only in the headquarter but also in the branches. It is however a fact that the institute is not in a position to pay compensation as per the market rates. But we can note with satisfaction that our experiment of engaging retired professionals have given us rich dividends and it is indeed heartening to note that they have been rendering services in true spirit for the sake of

a national cause with a very nominal pay. We should therefore continue this practice.

Simultaneously, we have to utilize our financial resources in a more effective and productive manner in days to come. It is observed that many of our branches have a large corpus in the form of fixed deposits. First of all, it must be known that branches are the backbone of the institute and without their active involvement the institute, we can not just implement the ambitious plan from the head quarter. So we should once for all shed the "we – they" feeling and think that we are a single happy family. Next, it must be realized that with the big scope of involving the institute in training, assessment and certification activities, we can earn many times more than we earn in fixed deposits. I therefore strongly advocate that the branches should utilize their financial resources, take immediate action to have an office space equipped with necessary office equipments, engage necessary staff and professionals to implement the ambitious educational, training and certification programmes of the institute. Our motto should be "spend to grow and serve the nation".

It is also imperative that our institute establishes and maintain immediate contact with the Government agencies, industry associations and big corporates to draw support from them in fulfilment of our vision and we have already started the process. While as the President, I accept that I have a leading role to play, I request our honourable vice presidents of the four regions to do the same in their respective areas and also co-ordinate with the respective branches in their region.

This will indeed transform our institute to a vibrant entity and fulfil the objectives of our vision plan.

Last but not the least, our institute needs to induct and involve young professionals in managing the operations in the head office and in the branches, as the majority of us managing the institute's activities are very senior citizens. We must look into this area with seriousness.

I would like to conclude by once again thanking all of you for choosing me as the President and also requesting for the whole hearted support of our honourable members and all our stakeholders for the success of our new council.

Jai Hind!