

Inaugural Address by Shri Dharma Vira, Governor of West Bengal

Prof. Thacker, Col. Vijh, Shri Kothari and Friends—

The Chairman of the Reception Committee has just now outlined the problem that have prompted you to call this first conference of engineers. This is a welcome change from what has so far been a glorious isolation of objectives to a constructive integration of endeavour. If that purpose can be served, I should think, you would have achieved a great deal. I am, therefore, extremely happy to have been invited to be present here. Of course, I am aware that I cannot contribute very much towards what Col Vijh anticipates from us by way of lending weight, grace or encouragement towards the constructive thought. For this you have two eminent engineers here, Prof Thacker and General Harkirat Singh. and the entire fraternity of engineers to join in the deliberations. My affinity to engineering and engineers runs in the family and all through my career I have had a lot to do with engineers in some form or the other.

As an administrator I have often been rather impatient with the engineers. By training they treat statistics and conventions as commands. They seem to forget that applied to every day life there are many unpredictable factors varying from atomic energy to birth control, which can change the pattern of our needs after a specified time and nullify all previous predictions. It is the human factor they often seem to ignore, particularly the intelligent reaction of a large section of the people to such predictions themselves, if the problems were intelligently spelt out. We have not been trying to bring in fresh ideas and possibilities with the result that many projects betray lack of imagination, which continue to strangle flexibility and sound development. If the new technical facilities are utilised and old human values are still respected, there would be a better blending of technology and tradition and the results would be happier than we have seen so far. We also seem to forget that more dependable are not the computer-fed or text book-extracted decisions but sound human imagination. There is no way to eliminate the man, nor will it be desirable. You have mentioned a number of problems. These have been presented before. I would very much hope that this distinguished gathering will be able to give us the remedies, at least some of them. But one thing we must not forget. We have problems facing the entire country, the manufacturer and the worker, the farmer and the consumer, the wholesaler and the retailer. Some problems are of global dimensions. No problem can be

solved in isolation. No solution would become generally acceptable which would create more problems in its wake. No system would be successful unless it included motives beyond that of individuals and groups. We are glad this morning's session will have Prof Thacker to preside over the deliberations. He is an old friend. He has experience of setting up many teaching institutions and research centres ; he is himself a teacher and engineer of eminence ; and, then he has been so closely associated with the Planning Commission. Prof Thacker, therefore, is the most suitable to guide the discussions and offer sound advice.

I should not stand any longer between you and your formal business but declare the conference open.



Governor delivering Inaugural address.