

Presidential Address

By Sri A. K. Sen, B.Sc. (Glas.), M.A.E., M.I.E. (President.)

A year has gone round since my last Presidential Address. It will be remembered, I then invited pointed attention of yourselves as also of the authorities concerned to the fact that the major problem before the engineers and their professional bodies in this country was resting on the Government of India's approach to the question of granting due status to the engineering personnel with or without University Degrees or Diplomas vis-a-vis their professional institutions at the first instance and, secondly, to the policy for incentive management of indigenous talents, indigenous research and indigenous methods.

Although little positive sign that way has been seen so far in the Governmental approach to the questions involved, the institution of the Indian Parliamentary and Scientific Committee in the Lok Sabha on August 27, 1961 must be taken as a significant event indeed in the life story of Indian science and technology following the adoption of the National Scientific Policy Resolution in March, 1958, which, as Prime Minister Nehru in course of his inaugural address said, is intended to be a liaison between the Members of Parliament and the 'scientific mind' of India so that the problems confronting Indian scientists and technologists be better understood and resolved by the Legislature; unless Members of Parliament, as he continued to say, who decide on the country's scientific and technological programmes also were in constant touch with scientists and technologists they could not be expected to help achieving the optimum in the country's planning efforts.

Equally encouraging were the utterance of the Union Minister Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Chairman of this Committee, who outlining the main idea behind the formation of the Committee pointed out that the Committee would strive to keep the Members of Parliament in touch not only with what was happening in the world of science and technology but also with the various scientific associations and organisations functioning in the country. On the other hand, the Committee would also keep the scientists and technologists informed of the proceedings of the Parliament relating to matters of scientific and technological interest.

It will perhaps be instructive to note here that over two-third of our country's massive Third Five Year Plan outlay involves industrial activities which require scientific and engineering personnel and technical know-how besides plant and machinery and all that. The problem of creation and utilisation of indigenous personnel, maintaining as also retaining them gainfully in service, therefore, has assumed high importance.

There is no gain-saying the fact that our professional institutions in the country are still to be strong enough as to claim the status of fully representative body politic of the engineering and technical personnel but it is to be recognised that generally these bodies who for years have been curving their ways amidst much difficulties and handicaps of which the absence of Governmental recognition is the most telling one, do work and can very well be worked upon as an important instrument and potent agency in both providing and stimulating the human muscles for the national projects that are being executed or contemplated. From the platform of our Association, I appeal to the Government of India to look into this vital question with all speciousness, to act up to the spirit of the National Scientific Policy Resolution as also of the lately-formed Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, which very much requires Government's taking into confidence the different national professional bodies of engineers and technicians while deciding the matter affecting the interests of such personnel, whether employment or education or training and particularly, status.

The Prime Minister while inaugurating the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee called upon the scientists and technologists to create a 'scientific temper' in the country. In the same vein went his eloquence before the recent Afro-Asian Economic conference (New Delhi, December, 1961) drawing, inter-alia, the attention of all to the 'technological gap' that existed between the advanced countries of the West and the under-developed countries in the Afro-Asian regions, which gap, despite efforts so far made by the respective nations in these regions to raise their own industrial and technological standards, far from being narrowed down was evidenced to be widening.

Now, let us look into this very important question of how to narrow down the technological gap in which our country India stands with the advanced countries as such. Eventually, all our endeavours that way will depend on the resources of the country. By resources I mean not only material or mechanical but also human and, here, the more important, I should say, is the human factor for, firstly, there should be a fervour in the country to develop what our Prime Minister has called 'scientific temper' and the masses should be more scientific and technological minded and, secondly, there should be an increasing diversion of the occupational groups to scientific and technological professions. In all these fields, the professional bodies of engineers and technologists as also of our scientific workers have a great role to play. Let us hope that our National Government and the people who administer policies for it will be enlightened by the experience of the advanced countries like United Kingdom and the United States—and why not the U.S.S.R.?—where the learned and professional bodies have been instrumental in providing

the so palpably live human muscles for industrial and technological build-up and would take up the question of granting due recognition and status to the different professional bodies of the country's working engineers and scientific workers so that all these still neglected but indeed potential forces may get a free and full play and enhance the endeavours of the nation to upgrade its economic and industrial standards, to narrow the technological gap in terms of world standards which the country grievously suffers from.