

Presidential Address

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Friends,

I consider it a great honour to have been elected President of our Association—a chair which has stood adorned by quite talented trail-blazers of our profession in this country. My embarrassment therefore at the honour you have done to me is not little.

On the occasion I also very much like to recall the time when our Association was founded. The first world War then just ended. The foundations of techno-industrial economy of India to-day were just being laid. Engineers and Technologists were still few; technical schools and colleges could be counted readily. Even the Tariff Board had great difficulty in defining the then engineering industry of the country.

But that India was to be afforded power to surge forth in a full-fledged techno-industrial economy was the general feeling in all corners of the country. In right recognition of this great national need, as you will please recall the leaders of the country's national liberation movement set up the National Planning Committee sometime in 1933-34 with the object of drawing draft plans for future national reconstruction.

It was not until the Second World War that under the consequent demand and impact on the political and economic conditions in India even the alien rulers had to think over going on with tentative plans for development of the human and material resources of the country in the post-war period.

Then India became a free land in 1947, and though much weakened by the division of the country, the new nation looked up to a great future to dawn on the country soon—a future when, as it could be correctly expected, an atmosphere would prevail for free play of indigenous talents, indigenous methods and indigenous materials.

Such in brief happens to be the historical climate in the country amidst which our Association has carved its course. It is a proud recollection for everybody of us that our Association happens to be one of the few fore-runners of learned and professional institutions of engineers and technicians in this country.

It is indeed a very happy sign that our ideas and spirits have spread widely. The country now has a number of sister organisations. But, I must say that all these bodies have still to do a great deal of spade-work to inculcate the spirit of professional associationism of collective wisdom and combined existence among the country's larger cadre of engineers and technologists. They should learn to take pride in identifying themselves with one or other national professional society of their respective choice. Some sort of a campaign of professional brotherhood for and among the country's technical personnel is to be initiated.

I should say, of course, the success of such a campaign depends principally on two things—firstly, how far such bodies of our kind are capable of ministering to their members and secondly how the Government of the country looks up to recognising the endeavour of these bodies. I am sorry to point out here that on both these scores we are far too low and poor and this even to-day. I wish and shall verily hope that the Government of the country would come forward with a positive policy of encouragement and support to the learned and professional societies for the country's growing technical personnel.

Talking about the question of recognition of the status of professional societies, I remember the University Grants Commissions recommendation at one time that the institutional membership examinations as conducted by such bodies should no longer be considered as a competent qualification for recruitment to Public Service which, it was emphasised, should be kept limited only to University or regular academic-level qualifications of a candidate. I wonder how the authorities of the country have taken up this recommendation but, I am afraid, such a policy for recruitment to Public Service is fraught with the inherent danger of hitting our professional institutions below the belt.

All these questions naturally lead to the all-important problem of availability of status for the country's larger cadre of technical population who might not afford themselves acquiring such status in Governmental eye by attending Universities or such academies. Under the prevailing circumstances in the country such people will continue to man the country's growing industries and technological activities in other fields—though not the direct Government departments. It is now high time, therefore, that our National Government should strike out a bold line of policy of granting status to such so-called "under-qualified" working engineers and to technicians and this through recognising the membership of the national professional societies.

Now, I come to the very vital question of promotion of indigenous talent in our fields in the country. Fourteen year of Independence have gone round, two decades of planned development of the country are

