

Journal OF THE Association of Engineers

VOL. XXV.

APRIL—JUNE.

No. 2.

EDITORIAL

Such a large number of multi-purpose river development projects has been recommended and sanctioned simultaneously in different provinces that it is apprehended that if they are taken in hand, all other developments in railways, docks, posts and telegraphs, roads and buildings, aviation, shipping and other industries will have to be abandoned.

Most of the projects are modelled on the Tennessee Valley Authority of America—the richest country in the world which took ten years to discuss pros and cons of this project and took another ten years to decide whether to undertake two further projects. India has neither the money nor the material resources, nor the technical man-power of America and yet it has now 170 schemes, at least four of which are under execution.

Apart from the question of money—in Dollars, Sterlings and Rupees—the total estimated requirements of steel and cement alone for the projects under actual construction are 6,95,000,000 tons and 4,130,000,000 tons respectively which we cannot meet unless we import from foreign countries and which therefore will strain the country's economy to the utmost.

However important these projects may be, all the schemes cannot go ahead simultaneously. The priority of the schemes should therefore be determined and their progress should be adjusted to secure a balanced scheme of development and no other project should be undertaken until those in hand are completed and their benefits appraised.

Already the position of steel is unsatisfactory, if not precarious. The Fabricating firms of long standing and reputation are hard hit for scanty supply and high price, and they are already unable to compete with fabricated steelwork imported from foreign countries. A number of big orders for fabricated steelwork has found way in the foreign countries including Government contracts

such as the transmission towers of the Damodar Valley Corporation, whereas labour in this country trained after year's efforts is being thrown out of employment for want of work due to shortage of material. In face of this the action of Government of India in sanctioning increase in price of steel produced in this country on recommendation of the Tariff Board cannot be applauded. It is obvious that the Tariff Board in its anxiety to help the steel producing firms overlooked the impact of its recommendation on the steel fabricating firms and the other users of steel; and the Government of India blindly accepted their recommendation without taking into consideration its pros and cons. That the effect of this increase to already high price of local steel will be disastrous unless the local industries are simultaneously protected by custom duties on imported steel and steelwork goes without contradiction. Even if it is done it will not be much helpful to private big enterprises as Scindhia's shipbuilding industries, as they have already found that it costs them 33% less if they buy their ships in foreign countries instead of producing them in their own shipyard.

It is therefore necessary that the Tariff Board should reconsider its recommendation and instead of increase should try to find ways and means for reduction in price of local steel so that it can compete with imported steel. Increase in price causes inflation and inspite of its apparent immediate relief to the producers is bound to be harmful to the economy of the country as a whole.

Interest in Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering is on the increase. The West Bengal Government has set up a Committee to consider a scheme to establish courses of lectures in Marine Engineering and Naval Architecture at the Bengal Engineering College.

While we welcome such move we are of opinion that these schemes should be prepared by the Central Government in consideration of the need of the country as a whole and not in consideration of the requirements of individual provinces. This must be a central subject to be followed by the provinces in toto,

The economies of transport is a subject of great importance to all production departments. The paper on "Transport of Refuse by Motor Vehicles" included in this issue should therefore be of some interest.