

Presidential Address

By
Dr. B. N. Dey

Gentlemen.

I thank you for electing me your President. I do not know if your choice has been a wise one in view of the fact that my preoccupation with the City Corporation work, particularly that connected with the various Committees, leaves me little time to devote to the Association. However, I will try my best to discharge the duties devolving on a President.

The Secretary's report shows the stability of the Association, which has grown steadily in face of many vicissitudes.

The progress made in the past and during last year should encourage us to enlarge our activities and mould the Association in such a manner as to compel recognition at home and abroad. To this end we have made a good beginning this year. I refer to the first paper of the year read before the Association by no less a person than Dr. Howe of Glasgow University, for which event thanks are due to the Secretary. I hope the Secretary will follow up the good beginning and arrange for more of such original dissertations during the year. The value of such papers and lectures will establish the high standard and usefulness of our Association.

It is customary to refer to the current Engineering progress going on in the country. The two chronic Calcutta problems—viz., the provision of a new Drainage Outfall due to the death of the Bidyadhari and the provision of a new Bridge to replace the old Howrah Bridge—have at last been somehow solved. Both the projects are in course of rapid execution, to make up for lost time. A mammoth dredger is fast excavating the 120'ft.—wide and 16 miles long Storm water Channel of my Kulti Outfall Scheme, the rate of progress being a mile a month. The drainage problem of Calcutta during monsoon has become so acute lately that heroic efforts are necessary to give relief to Calcutta during this year's monsoon. A link channel is being rapidly excavated by manual labour to connect the existing outfall channels with the newly dredged channel. It would be a record achievement in the speedy solution of a difficult engineering problem if the Corporation Engineers succeed in their efforts.

We have been accustomed to marvel at large Engineering projects in India, carried out at enormous expense. Nearly all these projects

come under Civil Engineering, mostly big bridge or ambitious barrage schemes. I will not refer to them. I would draw your attention to the power development schemes that have recently been going on in India. The pioneer works in this respect are the Hydro-Electric Schemes of Bombay, the Punjab and Southern India. The recent Ganges Grid Schemes besides being a major engineering project of novel conception is the fore-runner of the system of power production and distribution under public control. The Government of the United Provinces are to be congratulated in giving a lead to such nationalisation policy. Other provinces are following suit. But unfortunately in Bengal the recent action of the Government has throttled the first step towards nationalisation of Electricity proposed by the Calcutta Corporation, viz. the municipalisation of supply of electricity to Calcutta. The Government of Bengal, however, have made the statement that they intend adopting a comprehensive Electricity Scheme for the whole of the province under public control. In the absence of any particulars of such scheme, it is difficult to derive any hope of material benefits from a mere mention of a vague policy. Nor do we know in how many years such a scheme may be expected to operate and bear fruit. By their refusal to allow the Calcutta Corporation to take over the Calcutta Electric Undertaking this year when the ownership of the citizens falls due, the Government have postponed public control of Electricity for the Calcutta area for another ten years. For, under the provisions of the Indian Electricity Act, if the right of public ownership of the Calcutta Electric License is not exercised in 1938, the same can only be exercised again in 1948.

The rest of India, however, are rapidly taking up concrete schemes of cheap Electricity production under public control. Cheap power is the first desideratum for industry and agriculture of a country. No where it is more vital than in a poor country like India. Among other things it will create a field for employment for Engineers, not only Electrical Engineers but Mechanical and Civil Engineers also. It will enable the people to raise their standard of living and consequently better purchasing power. As a result, national activities will grow up and the services of the Engineer more and more requisitioned.
