

line news. As such, even a snob in Calcutta has started feeling like you all, that something must be done for the rural counterpart of our country not only due to his altruistic feelings for the rural areas but more in his own interest.

It is my feeling that the subject matter that you have chosen for discussion in the three Technical Sessions are more concerning rural problems. The third Session on Road and Highway Construction of course concerns both the towns and the villages. Whether in the towns and or cities, the word road or highway has got a wider meaning. It perhaps means all type of 'ways' including 'superways' and 'subways'. Road in a city means not only a carriageway for vehicular traffic, it is also the carriageway for sewerlines, waterlines, gas ducts, telephone wires, power cables, tubes and what not? Moreover, when, like metropolis of Calcutta, all suburban roads lead to the city proper it makes the problem more complex.

By electrification of the villages, the economics of the rural India will definitely improve. By sinking deep tubewells and energising those through the network of power transmission, India will naturally stride forward in solving malnutrition problems of our country-

men. Moreover when the rate of development of commerce and industry in any country depends on the mobility of power, improvement of road communications is of paramount importance in any developing society.

You have come here from various parts of India. You all know how millions of helpless people from over the border have taken shelter in this state and are counting the days of their victory against the military autocracy now prevailing in their motherland. Many brilliant engineers and architects, I learn, have laid their lives in Bangla Desh for the cause of their independence. The entire Bangla Desh is now in ruins. But engineers can do miracles. After the vast ruins of the last two world wars, the engineers of the world demonstrated how quick they can rebuild a country. The mutual discussions and exchange of ideas through this type of technical seminars help the engineering community, a lot in achieving their programme of re-development and construction.

I hope, the deliberations of this Conference will prove beneficial to our country as a whole and the people.

I declare this Technical Session open.

Welcome Address

By

N. N. Chakravarty.

I really consider it an honour that I have been afforded the opportunity to accord my hearty welcome to you in the Seminar on Rural Electrification, the need for which has been recognised from the very beginning of the planned development of India.

Even though it was felt that a massive rural electrification programme could lead to development in the rural areas and relieve unemployment in the countryside, it was only after the successive failure of crops and growing economic disparities between the

urban & rural areas, the necessities of accelerating the pace of rural electrification was keenly felt. It has now been recognised that electric power to the rural people is one of the best means of increasing productivity of human labour inside the farm and in the workshops. It is a key factor in stepping up the agricultural production and development of industries.

Since 1966, the emphasis of rural electrification has been shifted from providing domestic lighting in villages to energisation of agricultural pump sets—a strategy for increasing agricultural production with the resultant effect that an era of green revolution has been ushered in different parts of the country and we expect to achieve the goal of self sufficiency in food.

Even though the rural electrification is progressing with rapid stride, only about 18% of the villages in the country have been electrified which makes it imperative that increased tempo on rural electrification should be maintained at all cost particularly in West Bengal where the percentage of rural electrification works out to 7% against a record of 100% in Haryana. Thanks to the rural Electrification Corporation Limited, the problem of financial stringency that presented a severe bottleneck to the State Electricity Boards in the acceleration of rural electrification can now be effectively tackled due to bounteous loan assistance offered by them and for floating of debentures by the State Electricity Boards to augment their financial resources for rural electrification.

To encourage rural folk to go in for electric power I feel suitable incentives should be provided for, consistent with the economics of the villages. The tariff for supply of power to the rural areas should be made as low as possible. Where the minimum consumption guarantees are high at present, this should be reduced to a reasonable figure. To achieve economy in the rural electrification a special Technical Standard Committee under the rural Electrification Corporation Ltd has been formed for simplifying and standardising materials, equipment and construction practices. It is relevant in this context that some of Indian Electricity Rules have been relaxed by several State Governments for affording economy in the rural electrification.

On achieving economy in materials and construction methods and overcoming financial bottlenecks with the help of Rural Electrification Corporation Ltd., I am optimistic that the State Electricity Boards will steer clear in the teeth of obstacles to grow from strength towards electrifying more villages and energising agricultural pumps and thus creating more employment potentials in rural areas and making self sufficiency in food.

I leave my best wishes for the Seminar which I feel sure will afford an interesting forum on new technical advances on rural electrification which will be brought into light during the discussion.

I thank you all once again.