

The Association of Engineers

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

on 28-2-64

By Sri A. C. Sen, Chief Inspector,
Director of Technical Education.

We have survived these long fortyfour years fighting against odds. General Meeting. I also take the opportunity of thanking the members of the Association for electing me as the President for this year also.

We have survived these long fortyfour years fighting against odds. The Association of Engineers was founded in 1919 by some eminent Indian Engineers. This was a time, during British regime when Indian Engineers had very limited scope. The Government of the day apparently did not view the formation of this Association with much sympathy: with the result that the Association did not get any Government recognition.

In 1924, a similar body the Institution of Engineers (India) was started. I am told this Institution had the backing of British Engineers and obtained the Royal Charter of the United Kingdom and was recognised by Government. The National Government have also extended their recognition to this Institution. This was a serious set back to the progress of our Association as young engineers preferred, and naturally so, to join an institution whose membership would enable them to qualify for posts of engineers in Government service.

Still we managed to push our way through. Year before last a representation was sent to the Chief Minister, West Bengal, seeking an interview with him to state our case before him. He was kind enough to meet the President (I being the fortunate one at the time) and the Secretary and gave a patient hearing to our case. He felt that the State Government should have no objection to recognise the Association of Engineers as a body of national importance for the benefit of technical advancement of the country. He also promised to look into the question of giving aid for the development of our library and the journal. I must mention here that the Corporation of Calcutta gives a grant of Rs. 100/- per year for the library. We are grateful to the Corporation of Calcutta for this although, the sum is very small for a technical library.

I hope you will excuse me if I worry you with certain problems in regard to the education and training of our engineers. We are turning out engineering graduates in fairly large numbers. For the recent emergency we are turning out even more. Are the graduates in engineering required in such large numbers? The employment figures show that there is still a great demand of such engineers but the question is are they being employed in their right places? There is a growing feeling that most of them are employed in jobs much inferior to what they have been trained for. A diploma holder would fit in better in such jobs if his training had been a bit higher than what he is getting now. With the introduction of Higher Secondary Course it now seems somewhat easier for a better training for diploma courses. It will perhaps be better if we take up seriously revision of the diploma courses so that the graduates in engineering can be released for posts of greater responsibility.

Another serious problem which is causing me great concern is the apathy of some young engineers, not all of course, for field work. I know many young men who are carrying on in most difficult positions all over India. The concern is over those who are reluctant to do hard work or to go outside large cities. I once met a young man who was seeking a job in the educational line because he has to stay in a tent. Another young man who is employed in a large firm, came recently to me for a similar job as he finds his job in the workshop too hard for him in spite of the fact that his experience in that shop would carry him a long way in his future life. What is the reason for this? Is there any defect in their training? Have their teachers failed to give them the true picture of what they are being trained for or inspire in them the dignity of labour? Another cause, what I could gather from them, is that we give too much more importance to his degree or diploma than his actual ability. Many of the degree holders wish to pursue the Masters degree course and the diploma holders wish to pursue part-time degree course or study for passing Sections A & B of the Institution of Engineers for which they must remain attached to a technical institution or somewhere within easy reach of Calcutta. This caste system in engineering field should be discouraged. The industry in general is not so biased. I can cite an example where a diploma holder who has about eight years of experience is now earning Rs. 1200/- per month. We talk so much about close co-operation with the industry in the matter of technical education. But are we doing it? I hope that our members will seriously enquire into the matter and help the State with their valuable suggestions.

Another problem facing the country, is exodus of our bright young men to foreign lands. I understand that the United Kingdom and

countries in Western Europe are faced with the same problem, as many have gone away to the United States for better jobs. This has created a vacuum there and our engineers and Scientists find ready employment with better amenities in the United Kingdom and Western Europe. If we want our young men back we must first be sure that they are employed straight away, if not on similar pay, at least somewhat near it. Many young men would be glad to come back if they are assured of jobs. They are not so keen on a flat salary scale but a decent sum to live decently. But can we assure this? Our industry has yet to spread and develop to absorb all our young men.

In conclusion, I shall be failing in my duty, if I do not say a few words about the outgoing council members and office bearers. I wish, and I hope, you will join me in placing on record our deep appreciation of their commendable work for the cause of the Association. I wish all success to the new Council members and Office bearers.