

Journal

of the

ASSOCIATION OF ENGINEERS

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Editorial Notes

GROWTH OF THE ASSOCIATION

With this issue we complete the 30th volume and the Association of Engineers completes the 35th year of its existence. The Association was originated in the year 1919 with the title *Association of Engineers (Bengal)* by a few members of the profession in the Province of Bengal under the presidentship of the late Mr. S. K. Dutta, M.A., Dipl. (Ing.) Berlin, who had then just returned with patriotic feelings and enthusiasm from Europe after completion of successful scientific activities in Germany.

The aims and objects for which the Association was founded are similar to that of the renowned Institute of Civil Engineers in England and these were formulated as follows:—

1. To improve the status and forward the interests of Engineers and the profession of Engineering generally and particularly of the members of this Association.
2. To promote the general advancement of the science of Engineering and allied subjects and facilitate the exchange of information and ideas on these subjects amongst the members of the Association and for this purpose:—

- (i) To hold meetings for reading and discussing papers bearing on Engineering or allied subjects.
- (ii) To print, publish, sell and distribute the proceedings and reports of the Association or any papers, communications works or treatises of Engineering or allied subjects in English or other language or any abstracts thereof or extract therefrom.
- (iii) To establish an Engineering Library and take charge of books, pamphlets, publications and Manuscripts, etc., of the Library of the Association.

3. To create an atmosphere of Engineering culture and to promote inventions and researches in Engineering or allied subjects by making grants of money, books or apparatus and in other ways.

4. To co-operate with other Engineering Associations or Institutions of this or other countries whose objects are similar to those of this Association.

5. To purchase, take on lease or otherwise acquire and also let, lease or otherwise dispose of any premises or other property for the purpose of the Association subject to the provisions of the rules and of Government of India acts regulating registered Associations.

6. To establish a Club-house for members who do not reside in Calcutta but may come here for private purposes or for the purpose of the Association requiring a short stay.

7. To organise an employment bureau, keep in touch with the employers and the members of the Association and thus to help the employers in quickly securing suitable men and to assist any member who may, for the time being, be in need of employment.

8. To collect, tabulate, print and sell or distribute information helpful for the promotion and improvement of industry and to help the industries of the country with technical advice, etc.

9. To promote social intercourse among Engineers and scientific men.

10. To co-operate with the P.W.D., Engineering Institutions, Railways, District Boards, Municipalities, Mining Boards, etc.

11. To provide indoor games and common rooms.

12. To do such other lawful things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above subjects.

Good progress was made in the attainment of these under the enthusiastic lead of Mr. Dutta up to the year 1924 when his untimely death caused a serious set back. But shortly after, a great extension of avenues for the fulfilment of the aims and objects were provided by the next President Mr. B. C. Gupta, in 1925.

The word "Bengal" was dropped from the title and work was proceeded with on an All-India basis. The publication of this journal was

also commenced in 1925 under the able Editorship of Mr. J. C. Ganguli who had formerly from the very commencement of the Association given his aid as an assistant secretary and was our President in 1952. The secretarial duties were at that time in the hands of Mr. S. C. Sanyal who was later chief Engineer of the Corporation of Calcutta, and Mr. C. K. Ghosh was also another of the Assistant Secretaries. To these three gentlemen go the Credit of most of the spade work done towards the building up of this Association.

In the year 1928, through the efforts of the vice-president of the Association, the late Mr. J. C. Banerjee, the Association became affiliated to the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, and took up an office at their premises at 20, Strand Road, Calcutta, where it had the much appreciated privilege and advantage of a big committee room and a spacious meeting hall generously granted by the Chamber to whom it is therefore deeply bound by gratitude. Together with the B.N.O.C. this Association has since then removed office for improvement and enlargement of accommodation on four occasions, first in 1934 to No. 2, Royal Exchange Place, next in 1941 to P2, Mission Row Extension, and again in the same year to 4, Clive Ghat, Street, Calcutta. When the B.N.O.C. moved to its present P-11 Mission Row in 1951 accommodation could not be found for our offices there and it was necessary to move in to the present poor site at 24, Netaji Road.

Efforts have from time to time been made to enable the Association to have a house of its own. An application was made in 1932 to the Corporation of Calcutta for the lease of a plot of land measuring about 13 kottahs suitable for housing:—

- (1) A Laboratory for testing materials and carrying on research work conducive to the growth of industries.
- (2) A small museum of indigenous products, particularly those connected with the Engineering industries.
- (3) A Guest Room for accommodation of visiting members from Mofussil.
- (4) A Meeting Hall.
- (5) A growing Library with Reading room.
- (6) A Night School, and connected offices.

A "Building Fund" was opened. An appeal for contributions to this fund received such a ready response from the members that it was expected to be raised within a very short time. But it is a matter of regret that a suitable piece of land has not yet been found available and effort to raise the fund have more or less subsided. The Corporation of Calcutta, however, being much impressed by the necessity of a good engineering library in Calcutta, made a grant of the Association Library for the first time in the year 1931-32 on the recommendation of the Ward Councillor, the late

Mr. D. P. Khaitan, M.A., B.L., Solicitor, of revered memory, who was himself a member of the Library Committee, and that grant has since then been generously renewed yearly and even increased from time to time by this great Corporation. As a result of this generosity the library has steadily grown and has now reached a dimension that is difficult to accommodate. In addition to books purchased with the help of this grant a large number of books and periodicals have been secured free of charge mainly through the efforts of Mr. K. M. Choudhury, who has helped as a Librarian for several years, and a few journals have been received in courteous exchange of the Associations Journal with that of other institutions. In spite of difficulties of accommodation the Association has throughout the years managed (a) to hold regular meetings for discussion of technical and scientific papers and (b) to maintain a Journal in which the proceedings have been periodically published. (c) From time to time visits have been arranged to various Engineering Works of importance.

Though the aims and objects of the Association have not as yet been fully achieved, the interest created by these activities has caused a large increase in its membership; its opinion has been called for on some occasions when large public constructions have been under consideration, and on one occasion during the last trade depression, it was called upon to take up a case against unfair racial discrimination by one of the public bodies in the matter of retrenchment of its Engineering staff.

Some members holding academic qualifications disapproved the inclusion of certain successful members of the profession because of their lack of academic degrees, though their knowledge and abilities were proved, and felt it an offence to their dignity to be placed in the same class of membership with them; applications for membership also from candidates with poor qualifications, who probably believed that entry into the association was easy, began to come in, in increasing numbers. It therefore became necessary to hold examinations to justify claims to membership.

For this purpose a committee was set up in 1934 to consider the question and a syllabus of subjects for examination was drawn up to enable the council to ensure that the standard of knowledge and experience possessed by candidates for election to any grade of membership was equivalent to that required by the best known institutions. Examinations are now held whenever it is considered necessary by the Council, and a number of candidates have appeared for examination.

Though the Association offers no inducement of any form of personal benefit or professional advantage to its members and though no form of compulsion or pressure is brought to bear on applicants for appointment to positions in public service to persuade them become Members of this Association, its membership has steadily grown and spread throughout the Provinces of India from the farthest North to the farthest South and from

the farthest East to the farthest West. Though the Association commenced work as a Provincial organisation it has now become an All-India concern. Its Journal goes outside India to China in the far-east and to America in the far-west, to Great Britain in the north and to Australia in the south. Though it is mainly moved by the patriotic feelings of the country of its origin yet it has given an Honorary Membership to one from Scotland and it is expected that, in a not distant future, work will proceed on an international basis with a large Membership from Countries outside India.

There are however many engineers who do not consider it worth their while to join an institution unless it has been patronised by a charter from the Head of the State, or at least affiliated to one which is so chartered. Efforts were therefore made to obtain a charter from the President of the Indian Union. But the constitutional procedure for the grant of such a charter does not appear to have been established here as in other countries and we have to work without the aid of a charter. Affiliation to another institution with a Royal charter from another country would raise certain constitutional difficulties and limit our freedom to follow our own programme of work and expenditure and it is therefore felt by some that such affiliation is not wholly desirable.

The best form of charter and recognition the Association can get is undoubtedly the recognition and the demand expressed for the papers presented at its meetings and published in its Journal.