

ON THE FACILITIES FOR PRACTICAL TRAINING IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

I WRITE this in view of the prominence you have given in your July 1947 issue, to the matter of the difficulties experienced by Indian students for getting admitted into works and factories abroad.

What else do you expect? Factories and works all over the world are not philanthropic institutions to distribute their experience gratis.

It is recognised by every one including the sponsors of the wholesale technical foreign scholarships, that the entire scheme is futile. Prof. A. V. Hill declared that one way of paying off sterling balances was by the institution of these scholarships, and it certainly fulfils this.

Works and factories will welcome aspirants if they stand to gain some benefit themselves. If you undertake to buy their product or plant in substantial quantity, then you can not only get welcomed but even insist on the training of as many scholars as you wish. There is the well-known instance of the Persian (present Iranian) Government enforcing the training of its nationals in petrol technology in return for oil concessions to the powerful Oil Companies.

One member of the Scholarship Committee declared that a big electrical concern suggested that rather than send single individual scholars to their works, it would be more profitable to send a team of a dozen or a score of men who will be put through the activities of their whole organisation. It appears this excellent scheme was turned down by the Government of India at the time.

Why should it not be adopted now? I would also like to ask how many industrial concerns in India will offer to train scholars gratis. It is in the experience of many of us that even visitors are discouraged in most of them.

It will be a good thing if the future Government made a statutory rule, that every industry in India should give training to suitable candidates, on payment of a premium or in some other form which may be determined. The huge amount of money now spent aimlessly abroad, may then be usefully diverted inside the country, and to better purpose.

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ENCOURAGEMENT OF SCIENTIFIC TALENT IN THE COUNTRY

IN a recent issue of *Current Science*,* Sir T. S. Venkataraman has drawn pointed attention to want of proper recognition and encouragement of scientific talent in the country. Coming from a person of his standing and experience, his advice is entitled to much respect.

One of the well-known defects of scientific investigators in the country is the tendency to take up a number of scientific problems, generally beyond the scope of a single individual to tackle. There is very little of intense specialization; which is so characteristic of leading foreign laboratories and which, as in the case

of Sir Venkataraman himself, can lead to outstanding achievement. The author of this note is himself a big sinner in this respect. This fissiparous tendency, as Dr. G. J. Fowler has often described it, is not always the result of one's own choice. The problems are often thrust on the people concerned and one's confirmation or promotion would depend on the number of enquiries 'disposed off' in the course of a year. The Head of an important laboratory once complained that he was expected to deal with fresh problems at the rate of one, and often two, per week! In research laboratories, selection of different lines of work is often the result of a combination of factors—the need for additional financial assistance which could be obtained only on the basis of different programmes of research; and provision of encouragement for and even subsequent employment of the associated research students. In Europe and America, it is not uncommon to find one trained in protein chemistry taken up by the petroleum industry. In India, unless a person is associated, at least in a small way, with a particular line, he has no scope for employment in that line. That is due to the very limited opportunities for employment in the country.

It is not always that a scientist willingly gives up active research to take up an administrative position. Contributions to science do not always count in life, and a senior worker in India may find that, even after several years of good work, he remains in the same position and draws the same emoluments, while his own needs and commitments go on increasing. He sees no scope for advancement under such conditions and has soon to make up his mind between continuing in the same position or securing an administrative position with higher emoluments, better status and power of patronage.

If the scientific man-power committee is to function effectively, it should first work out a procedure for finding scientific talent, wherever it may exist in the country. An obvious method will be to maintain a register or card-index relating to all the scientific workers. This will not, by itself, reveal much, as most of the information will have to come from the worker himself who is an interested party. Confidential notes from heads of institutions and departments may be more helpful, but they may not always be unbiased. An alternative will be to have a permanent commission consisting of quite senior people of high scientific standing who would tour the country and visit all the scientific laboratories and other institutions at least once a year. They would then be able to come into direct contact with various workers and form first-hand impressions about them. The commission could then make its own recommendations to the Government as to how the most promising people could be best utilised by the State. There would naturally be greater stimulus to effort and achievement if the young scientists are aware that, in addition to their immediate superiors, there is also a big national organisation watching over them; that they have scope