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THE EGERTON COMMITTEE REPORT

THE long and the eagerly awaited press summary of the report of the Egerton Committee on the working of the Indian Institute of Science, has appeared in the Daily Press and according to the same source, the full report is scheduled to come up for discussion before the Governing Council of the Institute at its meeting to be held during the first week of July. The Egerton Committee is the fourth of its kind which has periodically reviewed the work of the Institute and made recommendations on its future development. According to reports appearing in the press, the report consists of 68 pages of printed matter and is divided into four sections: (1) General considerations and character of the Institute, (2) Organisation and Administration, (3) Review of the work of the Institute and (4) Financial review.

The Committee considers that the character of the Institute has changed considerably during its life of some forty years and concluded that the Institute has, as it exists to-day, much in common with sister establishments like the Imperial College of Science, London, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston. The Committee is of the opinion that having regard to the broad intentions of the illustrious Founder and the prospective needs of the country during the next 20 years, the Institute should develop along the lines of a higher technological institute, its functions being mainly post-graduate teaching and research. The Committee has gathered the impression that the development of the Institute has not been entirely satisfactory and that it has not attained the status it might have done. The

lack of a clear, well defined and uniformly sustained directive has been considered to be responsible for the vascillating, timid and hesitant character of the policy which has distinguished the administration of the Institute in the past. It will be recalled that the preceding Reviewing Committees also have made in their reports a similar remark. In 1921 the Pope Committee recorded "it cannot be denied that the Institute has lost in efficiency by reason of the fact that its policy and lines of development have never been defined with sufficient precision". The Sewell Committee in 1930 also deplored the lack of a definite policy and expressed the opinion that "a suitable balance of pure and applied research had not been established and that greater emphasis should be laid on fostering contacts between the Institute and the industries in India". The Irwin Committee which had the misfortune of conducting the enquiry in the then prevailing tempestuous atmosphere of prejudice and passion, "felt compelled to consider the whole question of the aims and objects of the Institute" and expressed the view that the "province and purpose of the Institute must be defined in more precise terms than at present" and pleaded that "such a definition should be adopted officially both by the Council of the Institute and by the Government of India". It is regrettable that the Egerton Committee, the fourth in succession, should still have been obliged to record the lack of a well-defined objective in the development of the Institute.

The Egerton Committee has taken note of the fact that the Institute has greatly expanded in recent years, both in scope and size, and that several new departments of national importance have been inaugurated. These far-reaching developments are due to the vision and statesmanship of Sir J. C. Ghosh who, in the best interests of the smooth, efficient and ordered execution of these expansion plans, should never have been disturbed from his position as Director.

Before further stages of expansion are initiated, it is felt, that the present expansion should be satisfactorily completed and fully consolidated. The expansion schemes should take into consideration the lines of development of the National and other laboratories and avoid wasteful duplication of scientific effort. It is generally felt that the administration of the Institute has not bestowed adequate thought to this aspect in its scheme of expansion; it is not difficult to point out duplications in the lines of development. In this connection it is pertinent to quote the Sewell Committee which has declared that "whatever developments take place in the universities, we are convinced that with the resources at its disposal, this Institute ought always to be in a position to supply such opportunities for training as cannot be obtained anywhere else in India. *This Institute should do what no other institution can do. It should maintain a position of pre-eminence; it should acquire a national, even a world reputation; it should become a place of reference*".

The Committee have generously admitted that the Institute has an established position and has, in the past, constituted a centre of research where much has been accomplished and valuable personnel trained. The happy circumstance that some of the most responsible positions in the scientific departments and industrial concerns are held by the alumni of the Institute bears eloquent testimony to this proud fact. The late Sir Martin Forster who was during his directorship associated with a brilliant team of departmental heads—Drs. Simonsen, Norris and Catterson-Smith, has been largely responsible for this solid contribution.

A criticism which may be legitimately offered in connection with the development of the Institute relates to the question as to why the Institute has not established itself as an international centre of research. Forty years is a sufficiently long

period for an institute to achieve this distinction. To-day some may even challenge the pre-eminent position which the Institute is expected to occupy in the scientific and technological life of the country. The Egerton Committee provide an answer to this when they state that the status and development of an institute "like that of all organisations will depend largely upon the calibre of the men in the higher posts". The Committee have attached the greatest importance to the question of choosing proper *Men*, the most vital of the four Ms enunciated by Professor A. V. Hill.

Sir C. V. Raman, soon after he assumed charge of the Directorship of the Institute in 1932, found the Institute wanting in the right type of men and made a vigorous attempt to staff the Institute with men of international eminence. His world-wide fame and his universally recognised eminence and prestige constituted great assets in attracting the topmost men of science to occupy some of the positions which fell vacant during his distinguished directorship. Professor George Hevesy, for example, who later received the Nobel Prize, was to have occupied the Chair of Physical and Inorganic Chemistry if events had moved in a direction fortunate to the Institute. Unfortunately for the Institute, a great opportunity was lost; the prospect of a glorious future envisaged at that time was, shall we say, postponed for another two decades. It is interesting to reflect that Sir C. V. Raman, some 17 years ago, had already anticipated the recommendations of the Egerton Committee, particularly with respect to the expansions, *e.g.*, the Chair of Mathematical Physics and the Department of Instrumentation.

The Egerton Committee appear to have emphasised the imperative need of a scientific man of eminence "with a keen appreciation of research and a capacity for leading men", for presiding over the affairs of the Institute as the Director;

they add that the Director should be invested with full powers for administration. The Pope Committee considered that the Principal (Director) "should be a scientific man of eminence and of proved administrative capacity; no person, however capable he may be, can preside with intelligence and sympathy over the operations of the Indian Institute of Science if he is not himself steeped in scientific modes of thought and scientific aspirations". It may be useful to record here the views of President Vannevar Bush of the Carnegie Institution of Washington who has declared: "The Directors of Departments and Chairmen of Divisions in the Institution occupy posts demanding a rare combination of abilities. The position of the director is marked even more strongly by that duality which I have noted in the functioning of the Trustees. The director can and should be both an investigator and an administrator. As an investigator he joins with his colleagues on a plane of equality in planning a scientific program in which all participate and in which he has his unique part. As the director he administers the program, resolves differences of view, and maintains contact with the President and Trustees. To meet this dual responsibility, he must be a scientific worker of proved ability, and he must possess the qualities of leadership, inspiration, and firmness that evoke the best efforts of colleagues and keep operations moving in the agreed direction. He must likewise have the ability at understanding and guidance for which younger members of the staff will look to him. Thus as an investigator he shares the duty of all scientific men toward rigor, vision, and collaboration. As an administrator, he faces the same duties and needs the same capabilities as does the head of a department in an academic institution and, to some extent, as does the director of research in an independent laboratory."

If men of eminence cannot be found in

India, we should not hesitate to invite others irrespective of nationality. The Sewell Committee records that "in more cases than one, the reputation of a university has been built up round the work of some pre-eminent men. Students are attracted by the reputation of the man under whom they hope to work, rather than by any particular virtue of the university itself. A Nernst or a Ramsay (or a Raman) would draw men to any Institution to which he happened to be attached. We are of the opinion that the Chairs in the Institute should be filled by men of the highest eminence irrespective of nationality and we recommend therefore that the terms of appointment to the Directorate and

Professoriate be made sufficiently favourable to attract such men." The Egerton Committee holds the same view and has accordingly recommended "a revision of salary scales so as to attract and retain men of the highest level".

We hope and trust that the Governing Council of the Institute will take early action on these recommendations and maintain the exclusive and pre-eminent character of the Institute, a position to which it is entitled not only because of its pioneering and brilliant services in the past but also because of the potential prospect of an even greater and glorious future which belongs to it.

THE ADVENTURE OF EDUCATION*

THIS admirably printed and edited Journal is published under the auspices of the Office of the Educational Adviser to the Government of Bombay. Annual Subscription payable in advance is Rs. 8 only; and single copy Rs. 1-8-0 only.

To quote from the Editorial, the ambition of the Editorial Board is "to make the Magazine reflect truthfully (and if possible in a refreshing manner) the trends of educational thought and practice both inside and outside the Province, and we, therefore, invite all those who have anything significant and sincere to say about education, to make use of the Journal". Thus at a time when the country is feeling the effects of newly earned freedom and is planning for an all round development, a journal of this kind devoted to the cause of education and the spread of educational thought is, indeed, quite welcome.

The Journal aims not only at presenting outstanding educational problems in a clear way but also at giving special attention to new educational developments both in India and abroad in the hope that their study will stimulate freshness of approach on the part of teachers. The object is to provoke educational thought and lead to adventurous activity.

In addition to the Editorial, the Journal has the following features:— Educational problems, Education forges ahead, the Educational Digest, the Educational World, the World of Books and the Teachers' Forum. There are a number of interesting articles in this issue of the Journal and a note on "Our Contributors". We wish the Journal useful service and a bright career.

* "The Adventure of Education," Vol. I, No. 1, Jan. 1949, pages 124, a bi-monthly by Mr. K. G. Saidain with an influential Editorial Board.