

THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, BANGALORE

THE Governing Council of the Indian Institute of Science will soon be confronted with the difficult and responsible task of appointing scientific men of eminence, experience and character for the many professorships which have remained vacant for some time. It will generally be conceded that the reputation and status of the Institute has recently been challenged and has evoked a considerable amount of adverse, perhaps undeserved, comment. All the well-wishers of the Institute, including the old and the present "boys", are eager to see that the scientific status of the Institute is raised to a position of internationally recognised pre-eminence.

The circumstance that five or six professorial chairs have to be filled in, offers the Governing Council and the Government of India, who have in recent years developed a deep and substantial interest in the welfare and ordered progress of the Institute, an exceptional opportunity to invite eminent men who can bring prestige and add lustre to the Institute. In making the choice, parochial considerations should be eschewed and it should be remembered that first class men would not respond to a casual advertisement in the Daily Press and in Scientific Journals. Such men will have to be *invited and induced to accept the Chairs*. In this attempt, we should cast our net over a wide transcontinental area, offer attractive terms and a reasonably long period of tenure and create a healthy atmosphere of academic freedom devoid of bureaucratic control and red tape.

India's prestige in other countries stands high, thanks to our Pandit Nehru and his recent visit to the continent and the U.S.A. It would not at all be difficult to secure the services of eminent scientists. As Sir S. S. Bhatnagar recently declared in the course of his Joint Convocation Address to the Harcourt Butler Technological Institute and the Indian Institute of Sugar Technology (4-11-'49) "there is no need to fight shy of getting suitable men from foreign countries, if suitable and fully qualified Indians are not yet available".

Discussing the recruitment of scientific men for positions of responsibility, Dr. Kenneth

Mees, Vice-President in charge of Research, Eastman Kodak Company, emphasises the need for exercising the greatest amount of care and thought in the selection of men, "since it is very difficult to remove him and his removal involves a great disruption of work". He adds "Occasionally those responsible for the organisation will realise that they have made a mistake—that the man they have chosen cannot do the work set before him—and then there should be no hesitation in making a change. This may seem an easy thing to do, but it is really very difficult. The great defect in management of all kinds is the tendency of those in authority to tolerate inefficiency rather than face the unpleasant task of removing the inefficient."

Dr. Mees utters a helpful word of caution when he declares: "The great danger is that the institutes might fall victims to a system of political jobbery and that the staff and even the director might be appointed for other reasons than their competence. This difficulty, however, would supply its own remedy. The Institute would simply fail, and the advance of science, locally checked, would proceed elsewhere."

Past experience has not been very encouraging; appointments made in a moment of patriotic fervour in the teeth of well-meant opposition, have not proved the success that was forecast at the time. The most depressing consequence of appointing men of low calibre, consists in the perpetuation of mediocrity; under such an auspices, the level of scientific work will not be permitted to rise above that of the man in authority. Usually, there is little chance for promising careers to develop to their full stature.

There is no use in thinking of the past; we wish to make an earnest appeal to the representatives of the Tatas—the great and illustrious founders of the Institute, the Governing Council of the Institute and the Government of India to utilise this golden opportunity for staffing the Institute with eminent men of science and thereby earn the everlasting gratitude of the rising generation of scientific men in this country.

ASTRONOMICAL INSTRUMENTS FOR INDIA

During his recent visit to the U.S.A., Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru paid a brief call at Harvard, where he discussed with Dr. Harlow Shapley and others the future of India's observatories. As a result, a new Schmidt-type telescope is being planned for Allahabad University

Observatory in the north and a solar coronagraph for the Kodaikanal Solar Observatory. Dr. A. C. Banerji, of Allahabad, has been deputed to go to America to get the first of these projects under way, and Dr. A. K. Das, the other.