

really wishes to develop as large a network of supporters as possible, it will have to avoid adopting openly ideological stances. Here again an example from the jan vigyan jatha comes to mind. If one saw the exhibition on the dangers of nuclear energy that the jatha took around, one could easily come away with the impression that the Soviet Union or China had never exploded a nuclear device, that the last major nuclear accident occurred in Three Mile Island, that Chernobyl was a figment of the western imagination, that Pokhran had never taken place and that no one need be concerned about the proposed nuclear power station at Narora being sited close to a seismic fault. Such blinkered vision may of course have won the jatha a number of friends but it also helped to irritate and even antagonize a number of potential supporters. The proposed institute, I think, will have to be a little more even handed in dealing with problems affecting people's science.

One other issue which needs to be worked out is how much should the institute undertake, how wide should be its mandate? Clearly this will depend upon the interests and capabilities of the people who start the institute and the challenges that they choose to respond to. However some parameters need to be defined from the beginning, because, if the institute functions successfully, the demands on its services will grow, the pressure to expand its activities will mount and before you know it the organization's reach will have exceeded its

grasp. Thus the institute must consciously define its reach from the beginning, and also consciously encourage the development of a network of similar institutes throughout the country so that together they are able to shoulder the responsibilities of science for the people. A built-in mechanism for multiplication must form the initial blueprint for the institute.

The struggle against the dangers arising from development must be undertaken by the people exposed to these dangers if it is to be undertaken at all, and an institute like the one proposed is a crucial element in empowering the people in this battle against industrialists and an often indifferent government. I see in fact a network of such institutes spread all over the country, as being essential for giving substance to the conception behind the slogan — science for the people. The right to know and freedom of information will also acquire substance in the context of people's science only if such a network ensures that scientific information on any matter of public interest, no longer remains the property of the government and its research agencies. The breaking of this official monopoly on information is essential if any meaningful public debate is ever to begin on formulation of official policy and the effect that the implementation of such policies has on public lives. I see therefore a vital, dynamic and pioneering role for such an institute in our struggle towards a more humane, a less oppressive and a more open society.

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## NEWS

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### POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Prof. C. N. R. Rao, Director, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, and Chairman of the Council of Scientific Advisors to the Prime Minister, has been

nominated as a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Prof. Rao, is the first Indian to be nominated to this Academy.

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