

Editorial

Over the last fifteen months we have been having extended discussions with many scientists from research institutions, universities and professional bodies as well as with teachers in colleges about the state of our scientific journals and the need for improving them. Current Science is one of our journals which has a fairly large circulation both in India and abroad. But it is clear that there does exist a strong opinion in favour of changing the present editorial practices both to enhance its reputation and to serve the scientific community better. Among the many points made in the discussions were:

(i) The first step in improving the quality will be to taper off publishing papers of indifferent quality in various fields

(ii) While botany and agriculture are important in the Indian scene, there may be some merit in diverting some of the papers in these subjects to other journals

(iii) Attract more papers in the physical sciences, and in subjects like experimental and conceptual biology, applied sciences, technology, geophysics, space sciences, materials science, oceanography, ecology, archaeology, anthropology, history of science, science of science, etc.

(iv) Publish more review articles in varied subjects that are also understandable to scientists not working in those specific subjects

(v) Report the latest discoveries in different fields in India and abroad, pointing out their implications

(vi) Write about new instruments designed or available in India together with their possible applications in the Indian context

(vii) Discuss matters relating to education and teaching techniques in universities, colleges and schools

(viii) Report news from academies and professional bodies of scientists, engineers and technologists

(ix) Publish personal notes about scientists.

In short it was felt that Current Science should be a medium of communication among scientists rather than just a vehicle for scientific publications and scientific 'communications'. It is our intention to attempt these changes in the months to come.

One of the suggestions made by many was that Current Science should also discuss important issues related to science and open its columns for expression of views by the scientific community. This is essential in the Indian context today, as many issues and policies of importance to science in India are never discussed. The views of scientists should be presented to policy-makers before final decisions are made. To find out whether these ideas would be in tune with the policies laid down by the founders of this journal, the present editor scanned some of the earliest issues of Current Science, and was pleasantly surprised to note that all the suggestions listed earlier were in practice in the early days. Many important policy issues were indeed discussed, and innovative and extremely progressive suggestions put forward.

It was in Current Science that the need for an 'Academy of Science for India' was first discussed. It is now a well-known essay, often quoted. It would be appropriate to examine how the present Academies, formed after this essay appeared, are now functioning. It is also interesting to note that an issue of Current Science gave, in broad outline, the main principles of a new educational policy, which was called 'A Ten-Year Educational Plan for India'. One is heartened and even strengthened by the courage displayed when we were still a subjugated nation. Said Current Science, 'The fundamental weakness of the whole educational organization in India is due to the fact that the movement took its origin in the seat of Government and not in the hearts of the people.' The same

thing could be said about our present educational systems and therefore it is necessary to discuss them. The strong editorials written about unemployment and the educated classes, or when university funding was slashed, are worthy of note. One cannot but admire the statement made in the editorial 'Science and Statesmanship': 'To the low types which the human race has produced from Cain down to Tartuffe, the age of democracy has added a new one—the politician.' There are many more examples.

We shall draw strength from our forbears and begin to make Current Science a better journal by acting on the suggestions listed earlier. It is our desire that all the material should not originate only in the editorial offices but should also come from active scientists all over India and outside. We welcome articles discussing scientific topics, policy matters, views which can form the subject matter for a reader's forum, and reports of recent discoveries and developments in science. Everyone would agree that a certain editorial judgement would have to be exercised in publishing these. We realize that there may be ideas for improvement that have not been listed here. These may be communicated to the Editor. Given a positive response and support, we hope to be able to restore to Current Science its original strength and vitality.

S. RAMASESHAN
Editor
