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Organisation of Industrial Research

DURING the last week there have been two notable pronouncements from the public platform, both of which have a close bearing on the question of India's industrial future. Sir Mirza M. Ismail, Dewan of Mysore, in welcoming the delegates to the eleventh session of the *All-India Industries' Conference,* which met at Mysore on the 15th of this month, referred to the "fitful" and "fragmentary" character of our attempts to deal with the problem: "There has been no sustained and continuous visualisation of India's economic life in its several aspects into a self-consistent whole. Proposals like those of the Indian Economy Enquiry Committee for a comprehensive statistical organisation and of Sir Arthur Salter for an Economic General Staff, have been allowed to disappear into oblivion. On the other hand, specific fields have been surveyed with thoroughness by various Committees and Commissions, *i.e.,* Industries, Currency and Banking, Railways, Agriculture, but no effort has been made to examine the implications of the results of the surveys in their general economic setting."

In his welcome address to the fifteenth annual session of the *Inter-University Board,* which took place at Waltair on the same day, Dr. C. R. Reddi, Vice-Chancellor, Andhra University, spoke on the place of Universities in the war economies of a nation. He referred to the situation which arose 25 years ago and pointed out how the European countries and America grasped

the opportunity to achieve a state of self-sufficiency. "By confiscating enemy patents, by vigorously promoting domestic industries in regard to dyes, drugs, etc., and utilising Universities for purposes of the necessary researches, European countries and America became self-sufficing." The results of their efforts, can be judged by their present economic position, which is both permanent and enduring.

During the Great War, the Government of India appointed the Indian Industrial Commission, "to examine and report upon the possibilities of further industrial development in India and to submit its recommendations". The Indian Munitions Board which was the immediate outcome of its labours was constituted in January, 1917; some efforts to develop the national resources were made, but soon after the termination of the hostilities, little was heard of the Munitions Board, which might well have been constituted into a permanent body for promoting the development of industries in this country, as envisaged by the Commission.

Since the last War, a few institutions for the development of primary industries have been established in this country, thanks to the expanding activities of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research; the Lac Research Institute at Ranchi; the Indian Central Cotton Committee at Bombay and the Indian Central Jute Committee at Calcutta, are typical instances. But these at the moment have done little for the establishment and stabilisation of the consuming industries in this country. The researches on the utilisation of lac, are being pursued more actively at the London Shellac Research Bureau at the consumers' door than in India. In other words, these institutions have yet to play their part in helping the promotion of industries in India itself.

The Universities in India have fairly well-equipped laboratories and workshops; there are institutions like the Indian Institute of Science which provide facilities for industrial research; while a number of well-trained and competent men to tackle industrial problems, are available. What is needed, however, is a mechanism by which all the resources could be brought together under one directive authority for advancing industrial research.

The Indian Industrial Commission (1916) drew attention to the deplorable lack of organisation in the scientific services. They found that scientific experts formed themselves into heterogeneous groups with no uniform conditions of service, no definitely established policies or precise limits of their activities. They also discovered a complete absence of effort to secure collaboration in scientific research. This disorganisation had involved a considerable waste of money, time and talent, by duplication of equipment and effort. Even to-day, the conditions are not different. There is considerable overlapping of research work on some subjects and total neglect of others. There is no authoritative organisation for assessing the value of results on any particular investigation and a disconcerting variety of isolated and short-lived serial publications frequently make their appearance.

It is, perhaps, pertinent to recall that early in 1915 the British Government, in spite of the pre-occupations and distractions of a terrible war constituted the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research in order to ensure a systematic application of research

for organising her economic resources. Later, special research organisations, controlled and financed by this Department, were inaugurated to deal with the scientific aspects of the use of fuel, the storage and transport of food, buildings and roads—subjects of great importance to the common welfare of the community. The industries began to appreciate the importance of scientific research for their advancement and prosperity and it became possible for the Government to institute a number of co-operative research associations, autonomous and controlled by representatives of the industries concerned and financed by the funds of the Association supplemented by grants by the Department. The establishment of a Department of Scientific and Industrial Research in Great Britain, was soon followed by the institution of similar organisations in other parts of the Empire; Canada had its National Research Council in 1916, while Australia formed its Council of Scientific and Industrial Research in 1926. The United States of America founded its National Research Council in 1916, while Japan established its National Institution in 1919. India needs an organisation modelled on very much the same lines as the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research of Great Britain and the Government of India is the only authoritative body who should take the initiative in this matter.

Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, Commerce Member to the Government of India, mentioned at the recent Industries Conference that the Government could give the commercial community an indication of the kind of industries that might safely be developed during the war and of the nature of assistance they could extend to such industries. He also said that the Government would indicate beforehand, the nature of the aid which the industries may expect after the cessation of the war. Businessmen who launch upon new enterprises, taking advantage of the abnormal conditions created by the war, must be assured of some sort of protection after the termination of the conflict. An immediate declaration of such a policy by the Government at this stage would stimulate private enterprise in the field of Indian industry. The appointment of a committee to investigate the production of drugs and the proposal regarding the Government of India Statistics Act for allocating and collecting industrial statistics to enable the Government to have adequate information about industrial progress, were announced at the Conference. These announcements are reassuring and they will undoubtedly contribute to the development of industries in this country. What is even more vital to the industrial development of India is a national organisation for industrial and scientific research for developing the vast resources of this country. The labours of numerous committees in the past have resulted in the accumulation of valuable data regarding India's industrial potentialities and the time is opportune for establishing an organisation—a National Research Council—under the auspices of the Government of India for planning and directing Industrial Research on an all-India basis.