

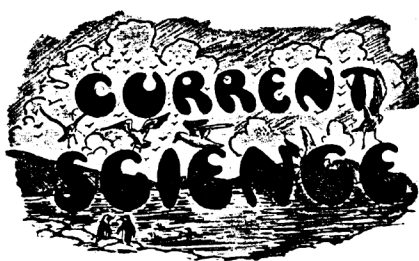
RESEARCH NEWS

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FROM THE ARCHIVES



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Automobile Industry in India

The question of establishing an automobile factory in India is just a part of the general scheme of industrialising the country, and, if it is agreed that the development of all the available material resources of this great sub-continent is desirable and necessary for the promotion of the prosperity and the well-being of the Empire, it is inconceivable why the modest proposals for the inauguration of a motor factory in Bombay were discouraged. It will be remembered that in connection with framing the outline of the project, Sir M. Visvesvaraya had investigated the possibilities of this new venture in all its detail, by visiting a large number of automobile factories in Europe and America, and by consulting with their directors and technical experts. The report that he prepared after exhaustive enquiry, revealed the fact that practically all the experts consulted favoured the project, by offering active support and co-operation. It was a grave misfortune

that, while the report was being sympathetically considered by the promoters of the scheme, they appear to have been suddenly seized with a spirit of pessimism in respect of the success of the proposals formulated in the report, and that they were almost inclined to believe the misleading doctrine that India would do better to buy foreign motor vehicles than build them in her own factories. The establishment of a large industry, such as the one Sir M. Visvesvaraya was contemplating, must necessarily affect vested interests and must even provoke a certain measure of hostility, but what is puzzling is that the hard-headed business men, who take a practical and a long-range view of industrial concerns, should succumb to the blandishments of false and futile economic philosophy. In 1936, efforts were made to enlist the sympathy and the active support of the Government of Bombay and the Government of India. The Government of India were profuse in their sympathy, but adhered to the policy of discriminating protection for Indian industries; enunciated by the Fiscal Commission of 1921–22 and in pursuance of this policy the Imperial Government could offer no assistance to ‘an industry that was not started’ and could therefore make no promise for the purchase of its products. The Congress Ministry, then in power in Bombay, however, offered provisionally a guarantee of 3 or 3.5 per cent interest on a capital issue of Rs 150 lakhs for the industry for a period of ten years. Before the concession could

be finally sanctioned, the Congress Government went out of office. . . .

It is not surprising that the Government have dealt with the proposal in their traditional grand style. In war, more particularly in its acute phases, such as those in which we find ourselves at the present moment, it might be supposed that temporary make-shift arrangements are what are most urgently required, and some may even be disposed to think that the time is inopportune for the inauguration of large-scale industries. According to such views, it would be safest for all concerned to follow traditional methods of thought and action. But wars shatter traditional methods because they introduce into our political, social and economic institutions unfamiliar and devastatingly new problems. It is only on a basis of quantitative knowledge that industrial problems can be formulated and that the need for the institution of new industries can properly be determined. The problem presented by Sir M. Visvesvaraya’s brochure is definite and simple, and it is hoped that the Governments, to which appeals for support and encouragement for the projected factory have been preferred, will not be lacking either in ability or willingness to remove delays of industrial advancement and economic development in India. ‘Policies’ are sacred, and they acquire more sanctity by furthering the industrial prosperity of the People. ‘Vested interests’ are serious and they earn better respect by not injuring national interests.