

Scientific Manpower and Industrial Development

Report of a One-day Conference on 16th November 1960 organized by the Institute of Personnel Management.

It was hardly to be expected that a conference of industrial personnel and training officers, public servants, heads of departments from universities and colleges of technology, and a few others, should produce any really new ideas on the subject of scientific manpower and industrial development. It was therefore no surprise that none was produced. What was a surprise, however, was that after brilliant speeches from Lord Hailsham (Minister for Science), Sir Harold Roxbee Cox (a former member of the Scientific Manpower Committee of the Advisory Council on Scientific Policy, and the present Chairman of the National Council for Technological Awards) and Sir Owen Wansbrough-Jones (formerly Chief Scientist, Ministry of Supply), much of the morning's discussion should be concerned with no more constructive matters than complaints from the C.A.T.s about their salaries and the unsuitability of the name "Diploma" for their main award.

Lord Hailsham in his opening address emphasized that the form of intellectual snobbery which put Applied Science below Pure Science must be eliminated, that we must try to estimate the country's real needs in scientific manpower and not merely try to "keep up with the Joneses," that we must do something about getting women to enter science and technology, and that we must not overlook the need to train technicians.

Sir Harold emphasized the difficulties of comparisons with other countries and the importance of the non-graduate professionally-qualified engineer. He thought that the production processes of large quantities of simple items offered as interesting a field of work as the more glamorous fields of aircraft and electronics and that more young scientists and engineers should be attracted to production engineering. He, too, stressed the need for technicians as well as technologists.

Sir Owen thought that the teachers in universities and C.A.T.s would always readily adapt their courses to demonstrable needs, and that they were, in fact, in touch with the needs of industry. He thought that greater specialization and longer courses were needed, and underlined many of the points made by Sir Harold.

The floor during the rest of the morning was held by the C.A.T.s, in spite of pleas from the Chair. The continued emphasis by the C.A.T.s of

their hardships—not very convincing to a University head who has experience of C.A.T. lecturers applying for university posts at very much lower salaries, and of the generous scale of equipment provided by the Ministry of Education—looked like an apology for failure. But are they failures? Surely they should have been talking with enthusiasm about their work, their plans, the growth of their research, and the quality of the people obtaining Dip. Tech.'s.

The afternoon session opened to another vigorous and stimulating speech by Dr. B. V. Bowden, Principal of the Manchester College of Science and Technology. He stressed the failings of the British nation, and pointed out that the same complaints of the lagging-behind of our industry and universities were made by people like Huxley a century ago. Our failure to come to grips with the educational problem is thus a very long-standing one. Dr. Bowden then pressed his case for an enormous development of technological education in Britain on the lines of the methods used on the Continent. He emphasized the advantages of large institutions and of a closer link (to the point of partial integration) with industry.

The discussion which followed this address got off on better lines than that of the morning. Professor W. R. Hawthorne of Cambridge University and Professor A. S. T. Thomson of Glasgow Royal College of Science and Technology spoke of steps the universities were actually taking to provide better facilities for engineering students to learn industrial engineering.

The final speech was by Mr. J. E. A. Stuart of the Staff Department of Imperial Chemical Industries. His theme was quite different from the others. He spoke of the importance of engineers and scientists in management and showed what I.C.I. were doing both in this regard and in the recruitment and subsequent encouragement of younger people. He discussed the necessity of making scientists and engineers more effective by studying closely the nature of their duties and removing unnecessary tasks. The employment of non-scientific people (e.g. Arts graduates) could help a great deal in some work.

On the whole, the conference was well worthwhile and it is to be hoped some positive advances will result from it.

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