

PROF. RAVI J. MATTHAI'S ADDRESS

Mr. Chairman, Dr. Karan Singh, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are very grateful indeed to you, Sir, for sparing the time to be with us at this Convocation despite the very heavy demands on your time and your very difficult schedule. We are very glad indeed to have you with us, Sir.

It is my normal practice at every convocation to say a little about the progress that the Institute has made during the past year.

In terms of the admissions to our post-graduate programme, both the number and the quality of applications have improved considerably. For our academic year which starts in July '69, we received about 3,200 good applications out of which we will choose not more than 120 boys and girls. The Admissions Committee of the Institute continues to employ the rigorous selection methods which the Faculty have laid down.

In the Post-Graduate Programme itself during the year 1964 when this programme started there were about twenty courses being offered. During 1968-69, the Faculty offered 89 courses which makes it the most intensive and comprehensive management programme in the country.

In terms of the output of the Institute, both our summer and final placement reports show considerable success. Again, two years ago the average salary received by our boys and girls was about Rs.750. This year it is approaching about Rs.1,000 a month. Now I mention this not to suggest that these salaries are significant in themselves. I make reference to it merely as an indication of the extent to which the market accepts the products of this Institute.

We continue to run several executive programmes every year which are fully subscribed by Industry, by Government and other sectors of activity.

Case collection continues to be a major activity in the Institute and we do have a very substantial bank of teaching material.

During the last year, 68-69, we had in operation at the Institute about 68 research and consultancy projects which one could value at about Rs.12 lakhs. Again, I do not suggest that the value is of any importance whatsoever, but what I do suggest is that this, again, is an indication of the extent to which the market accepts the services offered by the Institute.

We have continued our work in various sectors of activity. Obviously the predominant sector in which we work is industry and commerce, but our work in the application of management ideas to agriculture is fast progressing. We expect more faculty to come to the Institute in that particular group, and this, I hope, will accelerate the progress of that work. We also work in the banking sector and I am pleased to say that after a year's discussions with the Reserve Bank of India, I was advised a few days ago that the Institute is going to receive a grant of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  lakhs for the next couple of years which will enable us to start a group on the management of banking systems.

In addition to this, our work continues on the management of educational systems. We have been collaborating with general universities in helping them set up their schools of management and more recently we started researching on the factors which inhibit innovation in the general educational system. We are also taking part in an activity which I for one particularly favour, which is a series of seminars organized by the Registrars and Administrative Officers of a number of autonomous educational institutions.

We intend to maintain this Institute as a center of excellence and in five years it is our hope that we will be able to transfer knowledge across the boundaries of these sectors, and

meet, what I think will be, an inevitable and considerable demand of inter-sectoral inter-dependence. For this we need a considerable amount of help which we have received substantially in the past. But there are perhaps a very few friends of ours who are a little apprehensive of continuing their support in such a substantial endeavour. I sincerely hope that they will continue but if they do not, our disappointment will only be exceeded by our determination to accomplish what we set out to do.

It is typical of our Chairman that he requested me not to say anything about him at this Convocation, which will be the last one at which he is Chairman. If I might displease the Chairman, I would like to say a few words about him.

Mr. Tandon has been associated with the Institute from very nearly the outset. He has been the Institute's Chairman since early '64 and the Institute does owe a very great deal to Mr. Tandon in its development.

In the early days he helped plan and design, and he participated in our early executive programmes. It was his initiative which caused us to start our collaborative work with universities. It was his early introductions and assistance which has now culminated in our being able to start a group on the management of banking systems. It was Mr. Tandon who was responsible for creating

the first and still the only Chair of Management Practices in the country, which he established at this Institute.

There are many ways in which many of us are personally indebted to him. There are two incidents, though they be small, that are significant in my life, which helped me develop a sense of proportion. One was, when I came down from Oxford I applied for a job in a mercantile house in Eastern India with its head office in London. I was interviewed and I was offered the job. Very shortly after that I was offered a United National Fellowship to do research in Geneva. So I rushed up to London and suggested to the very dour Scots Director who had been interviewing me that he might consider postponing my appointment by two years, so that I could do some research in Geneva. He very quickly put me in my place by replying : "You know, Mr. Matthai, you are not exactly indispensable now." The second instance was when I first met Mr. Tandon, and we were discussing the possibility of my moving over from the Calcutta Institute to the Ahmedabad Institute, after Dr. Sarabhai had conveyed the Board's invitation. I suggested to Mr. Tandon that I wanted complete freedom in the running of this Institute. Again he replied very wisely, "Ravi, you will get as much freedom as you deserve."

Perhaps many of us at this Institute are grateful in more ways than one to Mr. Tandon. I hope he will consider our regard for him continuing and I hope he will allow us to consider him an intellectual resource on which we may continue to draw.

This is the time at which we bid au revoir to our graduating class, the class of '67-'69. They have been through two years of a most comprehensive and intensive learning process. There are 100 boys and girls who have successfully completed the course. And many of them are wondering, how they will fair; will the knowledge they have gained be useful; will their colleagues in the organizations they join accept them with this sort of background; will the organizations they join permit them and encourage them to use the knowledge that they have gained? Perhaps many of them are apprehensive about the conflict it is so often suggested exists in the world of practice between conceptual knowledge and experience. To those who have been sceptical about the use of conceptual knowledge I would like to relate a story which was told many years ago by a professor of Harvard University.

The story goes that in a very cold country where the sky was always covered by the clouds so that you could never see the sun or the moon or the stars, there dwelt a man by the shores of a vast ocean. And he was a very keen observer. He observed the landscape, he observed the rocks, he observed the waves, and he also observed the movement of the tides as they ebbed and flowed. He knew these to be facts by observation. He did not know why they occurred.

At the same time there lived far in the interior, in a desert, under the clear sky a philosopher hermit who had never seen more water than in the oasis by which he sat. He knew something of the motion of the sun and the moon: he knew a little about the laws of gravity: And from these he inferred that these heavenly bodies must exert an unequal attraction on different parts of the earth surface. But the earth is too rigid to respond. 'However', he thought, 'if there were a large body of water covering a large part of the earth surface perhaps such a large body of water might respond to this attraction.' This was his theory. He had no means of verifying it, until one day the shore-dweller travelled inland and met the desert philosopher. The desert philosopher asked him, "In your travels have you seen a large sheet of water that covers a large part of the earth surface?" The shore-dweller said, "Yes, indeed! I live by a vast ocean." So the desert philosopher asked him, "Have you noticed variations in the level of the water?" The shore-dweller was astounded and he said, "Of course I have, but how did you know? You have never seen the sea!" And so the desert philosopher expounded his theory, which now was verified by observable fact.

I repeat this story not to decry observation and experience. Rather to suggest the complementarity of conceptual knowledge and experience.

Man has extended his knowledge by inference. He has an invincible tendency to reduce the diverse to identities. He does this within logical frameworks which he constructs to interpret and analyse the real world around him. These he verifies. These logical frameworks he extends by further inferences and these again he verifies. And those aspects which are inappropriate he amends, and those which are useless he discards. And so, a myriad of constructs evolve upon which rests the vast framework of human knowledge. A man may live by his experience alone and by virtue purely of the brains that God gave him, he will form his own logical frameworks in order to interpret and act within his own experience. But he will be limited by the narrow confines of his own experience.

Knowledge is power. It is power for good, it is power for evil and society will demand of you that you use your knowledge as power for good; but use it. Use it so that you will be effective; develop it, so that you may maintain your effectiveness. And above all, share it, so that your effectiveness may grow. If knowledge is power, you will be judged by the maturity with which you exercise this power and that maturity will come of your sense of discrimination - discrimination between what is right and wrong, between the important and the unimportant, between the appropriate and the inappropriate, between the timely and the untimely, between the efficient and the inefficient, but most important, between ends



and means. You perhaps have often heard that ends cannot justify the means, but you will, in your life, perhaps come across those in positions of power, of whom Bacon wrote, "It is a solecism of power that those who commandeth the end may not endure the means."

You go with our very best wishes. I wish you luck in the uncertainties of the future; I wish you joy in your work well done; I wish you wisdom in your use of knowledge, and I wish you courage in the development of your values. Perhaps when the class of 1979 will ask of you "How have you spent the intervening years?" I hope you will be able to say, as is said in one of the Psalms of David, "Judge me, Oh Lord! For I have walked in mine integrity."

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