

**Speech by Mr. H. C. Sampson, C. I. E., Director  
of Agriculture.**

YOUR EXCELLENCY, LADY WILLINGDON, LADIES, HON'BLE  
MINISTERS AND GENTLEMEN,—

It is my privilege this day, on behalf of the Agricultural Department, to welcome you to the Agricultural College Estate, and along with Mr. Hawkins, the Superintending Engineer who represents the Public Works Department, to welcome you to this ceremony of laying the foundation stone of this new college—a ceremony the result of which will, I trust, build the structure of agricultural education on the foundations which have already been laid.

This department has perhaps received more than its fair share of criticism both in the press and in the Legislative Council during this last year and especially during the recent budget debate. We are told by some that the reason is that people do not fully realize what work the department is doing and that we should advertise ourselves more. There may be something in this, but the very fact that this mass of criticism has been levelled against us may be taken as a compliment in that it shows that our work has not only aroused interest but has created a demand for the expansion of our activities, while suggestions for development from even the most bitter of our critics ask for more facilities for demonstration work, thus realizing that we have something which is worth demonstrating. Other suggestions, which have often been coupled with such criticism, have, in most cases, indicated that the present policy of the department is sound and that the work which the department has done in the past has been appreciated by the agricultural community and their representatives. That this appreciation may not be general, however, is shown by the following example. I remember once, when touring in the Atur taluk of the Salem district, asking the Tahsildar what had been the effect

of the then recent expansion of groundnut cultivation. He bemoaned the fact that it was then almost impossible to buy gingelly oil as groundnuts had taken the place of gingelly, but he admitted that the growers had been able to free themselves from debt and to such an extent that there was hardly a money-lender left in the taluk as no one wanted to borrow money.

Much of this criticism has been levelled against this Agricultural College and Research Institute and I propose to answer this to see whether the foundations on which the structure of agricultural education is to be built have been well and truly laid.

One of the criticisms of the training given at this Agricultural College is that, up to the present, it has been merely to manufacture officials. While I will not go as far as this, I will say that, to a great extent, this is, and must be, the case. The training given, however, is not entirely with this end in view and several of the past students of this College have returned to the land, either as actual farmers or as estate owners.

This was one of the criticisms made in the last budget debate, but the subsequent remarks made by the same gentleman showed that he was in entire agreement with the policy adopted. He emphasized the need for many more subordinate officers for the work of demonstrating agricultural improvements on the lands of the actual farmer. He emphasized the necessity of developing agricultural education to meet the needs of the rising generation of the farming community and he realized the value of research, emphasizing the necessity for postgraduate training in such a way as to avoid the necessity for Indians having to go abroad in order to specialize in separate branches of the subject. All these points indicate the necessity of training men to take up work either as officers in this department or in the Education Department, or in other scientific departments of Government; or, as I hope may happen in the future, for similar work carried out at private expense. In Madras, up to the present, all this work has devolved

on Government and its cost has had to be met from the general revenues of the country. This Presidency is not so fortunate as Bombay in having a benefactor such as the founder of the Sassoon Trust, who has placed the interest from large trust funds at the disposal of the Bombay Agricultural Department for carrying out special lines of agricultural research. A beginning, however, has recently been made as the manager of one school established with the aid of devasthanam trust funds has recently been inquiring whether men are available to take up work as agricultural instructors. But even for this work the general training required is the same as that which fits men to take up appointments in Government service. This institution must therefore be looked upon for a long time to come as a key institution which will train men for service for the development and expansion of agricultural improvement and agricultural education.

So far, however, it has been all that we can do to meet the requirements of a developing department such as this and there is no doubt in my mind that the Agricultural Department should have the first claim on the services of such passed students as desire to enter Government service. India is a poor country. At the present state of her finances any money which she has to invest must be made to earn an adequate return on the investment. Therefore, it is essential that research should continue, both here and on the district agricultural stations, and that the results obtained from this research should be demonstrated to the actual farmer. This will increase his prosperity, which in its turn will increase the prosperity of the country in general, which can then in due course consider how far it can afford to invest money without any immediate return for the education of the future generation of farmers. When this time comes, there will still be the need for continuing the present policy as far as this College is concerned, for teachers will have to be found for agricultural schools, agricultural colleges, rural training schools, etc.

To show how great is the need for district staff for this department at this present time, the following statistics are of interest. The Presidency is divided into eight circles, each in charge of a Deputy Director. The average area under cultivation in each circle is  $4\frac{1}{4}$  million acres. The proportion of uncultivated to cultivated area is on an average 60 per cent, which means that the average area of each circle covers some  $11\frac{1}{4}$  million acres. At the present time, the number of subordinate officers engaged on demonstration work is 88, which means one such officer for every million acres of area, or for every 3,90,000 acres under cultivation. These figures show that for the work of demonstration alone the staff employed is wholly inadequate if the man behind the plough who pays for this department is to obtain general benefit from it. Is it any wonder, then, that many farmers have never yet been reached by the district staff and do not realize that a department such as this exists? I do not say that they have not benefited by the work of the department. Very many of them have, but they do not realize it. Every grower of cotton in the southern districts, for example, has benefited by the work of this department and if one looks at the weekly reports of the Tiruppur cotton market one realizes how great this benefit has been. The market has practically been made by the work of this department. Uppam, the original cotton of the district, is now quoted at about Rs. 280. "Company" cotton or, as it is called in these reports, Karunganni, which is a strain of Tinnevely cotton improved and introduced by the department into this district, is quoted at about Rs. 345, while the best quality Cambodia cotton which was first introduced into country by the Agricultural Department is quoted at Rs. 380.

This shows not only the value of the work of demonstration, but the urgent necessity that there is of increasing this staff with thoroughly well-trained subordinate officers.

This brings us to another criticism sometimes made against this institution, viz., the limited number of students admitted to

this College and the cost of such training. If such a training is to be efficient, it is essential that it should be thoroughly practical and, in India, in the case of higher agricultural training, this is perhaps more essential than in any other country in the world. The reasons why this is so are several. Firstly, agriculture has always been looked upon as a derogatory occupation by the bulk of the educated classes. I am glad to say that there are signs that this idea may disappear. Secondly, in order to get sufficient education, to benefit by a course in higher agricultural education, a boy at school has to devote much more of his time to study, since he has not only to gain knowledge but has to learn this in a foreign language. Thirdly, the Indian has to think of earning his living at a much earlier age than young men in most other countries; thus his college career is in direct continuation of his schooling. He has thus, as a rule, had little or no opportunity of learning the practice of agriculture before he comes here and a subordinate officer either on an agricultural station or doing demonstration work in the districts is useless unless he has this knowledge. Several Indians who have been to Europe to study agriculture have complained to me that the universities there do not give them training in practical agriculture. The reason is that the majority of the undergraduates at such colleges have had this training before ever they come to the university. Sons of farmers in Europe are made to make themselves useful on the farm when home for their holidays and very often after they have left school they will work on the farm before they decide to go to college. I have only heard of one Indian boy who has ever done this. Usually, the boy at his secondary school thinks it beneath him to do actual farm work. Hence, the aim at this institution has always been to make the training thoroughly practical in every branch of instruction and to effect this, it is, and will be, essential to limit the number of students admitted, so that each can have this thorough practical training and can receive the personal attention of the teaching staff. When these students leave this institution and obtain employment,

is it not much preferable, both to the public and private employer, to have efficient men who are worth their salaries, rather than men who are only half trained? It is a natural wish of every member of the staff of this institution that every one who passes through the college course is a credit to it. Hence it has been necessary to limit the number of admissions.

Other criticisms have described the institution as a sinful waste of money and have suggested that money could be much better spent in demonstrating agricultural improvements. The suggestion made, however, shows that the critic does appreciate what the department has done in the past. He realizes that the department has something worth demonstrating and, if he realizes that, he must realize that it is because of this institution, where the whole district staff of the department are trained. He states that farmers are bewildered when they come and see this place, the research laboratories and what is being done there. They don't understand it. I am not ashamed to say that I myself do not understand all that is being done in these laboratories. I am not an expert in any of these lines of scientific research. But I do realize and do appreciate the results of this research and there are a multitude of farmers now in Madras who are appreciating this too, though they may not realize that it is the results of the research done in these laboratories.

In closing, I must apologize to the Public Works Department for taking up time at a function which is rightly theirs, but I am sure they will have already excused me, if they appreciate how vital is the need for this new college, which they are building for us, to the future of agriculture; and when my object has been to welcome your Excellencies once again to the Agricultural College Estate.

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