

SPEECH BY THE PREMIER, DR. THE HONOURABLE C.B. JAGAN  
AT THE TECHNICAL INSTITUTE PRIZE GIVING NIGHT ON  
THURSDAY, 4<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 1963 AT 7:30 P.M

As the Principal has told you in his report, this Institute, which was established for thirteen years is producing craftsmen and technicians to meet some of the demands of a growing and developing country. He has given you details of one year's work, and we have witnessed the presentation of prizes to those students who have earned them by their efforts. To all of you who have succeeded during the year under review, whether you have gained a prize or a certificate, I would like to offer you my congratulations. However, you must not let your success blind you to the fact that, for you, the battle has just begun. You will now have to take your place in industry and prove that you are not content to have gained your qualifications by a flash of brilliance, but that you are willing to apply yourselves to the everyday tasks of helping the community. More often than not, in life the successful person is not the one capable of isolated brilliance but the one who is willing to apply himself to the daily hum drum routine, continuously performing each duty to the best of his ability.

A nation is built by its people. Economic progress and ultimately social progress do not depend only upon money, raw materials and markets. One of the most important factors is an adequate number of trained personnel including craftsmen, technicians, technologists and scientists. If we are to become a nation, we must develop more skills and techniques to utilize our raw materials to full advantage. It is imperative that we diversify the present economic base of our society. There are many examples of the importation of consumer goods which are made of raw materials that are available locally. I refer particularly to the furniture trade, light manufacturing industries and others such as cattle and dairy products, food processing and canning, all of which can be developed locally to meet our own needs, and to conserve our expenditure abroad. From these beginnings there is no reason why we should not eventually be in a position to export these items to those of the less fortunate neighboring territories.

The struggle against economic backwardness, industrial inefficiency and complacency is being fought in each and every classroom of this country. Technological progress has been described as the lightener of man's lot and load on earth. The various forms of energy which man has mastered have not only enabled more people to live more abundantly than they have ever lived before, but it has made life tolerable in remote areas and has encouraged decentralisation of society. We must rapidly learn to apply modern science and techniques not only to survive but to lighten our load, and to lay a sound foundation for our future growth.

Couples with the growth of our population is the demand for more and better education. More and more of our boys and girls are looking forward to higher education and facilities must be provided for the education of all. There is no doubt that our youth are desperate for learning at all levels. In the field of adult education, especially among those persons who never had the opportunity of completing their education, there is strong evidence of a desire to improve.

In some of the metropolitan countries, certain writers have expressed the view that the tragedy of the world is man's intoxication with the miracles of his own technology. But the real problem as I see it, is not that technology has gone too far, or too fast, but that its benefits are not shared equally throughout the world.

The development of the underdeveloped countries such as ours could provide an excellent substitute for war. Instead of war against nations, the war against want and disease could be far more effective and satisfying.

In spite of his technological progress, man has yet to fully tap such resources as the heat from the sun, the heat from the Earth and even tidal power. In the Soviet Union there is a proposal to convert the climate of the Arctic by constructing a giant dam across the Bering Straits and using nuclear power to pump water from the Pacific into the cold Arctic Sea. This is the sort of imaginative project which can turn man's technological ability to the service of mankind instead of to destruction.

But these are world problems, and tonight I would prefer to confine my thoughts to the needs of our country. As far as our economy will permit, we are determined to establish a long-term national purpose out of which will grow a truly Guyanese philosophy of education and philosophy of life.

In developing our fundamental concepts of education, we could profit much from what is happening elsewhere. We must consider ourselves free to adopt the best practices, avoiding the faults of other systems. With the many examples of failure and success before us, we should be able to establish a system which could even perhaps be emulated by the older countries in time to come.

In many of the older countries, education provisions were initially made on a class basis – with separate types of facilities for the upper-, middle- and working-class groups.

This point is made in a survey of the World Trends in Secondary Education published by UNESCO.

“Until the dawn of the modern era, the universities of Europe were very largely devoted to the study of the learning of Greek and Roman antiquity, and the grammar schools has as their main function the early preparation of young people in Greek and Latin so that they could study in those languages at the university. As entrance to the university was the way to rise to the highest positions in the State, access to the secondary schools was the way to the privileges of a select class; so both they and the universities tended to resist any broadening of their traditional functions and studies. With the development of science and industry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, the middle classes in several European countries grew in power and influence. They needed secondary schools for their children, and they needed modern scientific and commercial knowledge. At first the older schools resisted the newer needs and therefore different kinds of secondary schools were set up, for example, scientific and modern languages schools and a variety of technical and commercial schools. Throughout the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth centuries these schools struggled to obtain some of the privileges associated with the older classical schools, notably the privilege of preparing pupils for entrance to the universities and other institutions of higher learning and for the higher offices of the State.

When economic development required a rudimentary education for children of the working classes, quite different school systems were set up. They were complete in themselves, and at first taught only reading and writing in the mother tongue, and the elements of religion. Later their curriculum broadened to include arithmetic, general knowledge, drawing, handwork, singing and other subjects.”

We cannot afford here, to perpetuate snobbery in education such as that which exists in some countries where educational provisions are still made on a class basis. We must remove the conditions whereby paper qualifications are regarded as passports and symbols of success. We must emphasis the need for initiative and hard work and establish an effective balance between the practical and theoretical work. We must provide opportunities for the education of all.

As far as this Government is concerned, efforts are being made to ensure “that educational opportunities are available on an equal basis to all sections of the population, whatever their economic and social position, and it is our intention to provide an education for any who has the ability to profit from it.”

We are short of time. Our educational system must be put into high gear to meet the needs of our rapidly expanding population. The first and most

important task is to produce the trained personnel needed for the development which the Government plans for the immediate future. With this in mind, the Government has recently published its White Paper on Education.

\*Paraphrased from paragraph 3 and 7 of Sessional Paper No. 1/1963.

But all training schemes are naturally a cooperative venture. The recruits to our secondary and other schools are the most valuable of the assets of this country, and parents, firms, and Government must all play their part in converting this most valuable raw material into the finished product.

At the same time we must not produce human machines. It is essential that liberal studies be included in all our training programmes.

For some time now it has been quite evident that the broader general education has not been available to all the young persons who attend schools. For example, practical subjects are omitted in most, if not all, of our secondary schools. It is proposed to establish comprehensive Secondary Schools throughout the country as our resources permit. These schools would combine the best elements of the Grammar (or High School), Technical Schools and Agricultural Schools. I quote from Sessional Paper No. 1/1963:  
***“After a common 3-year course of basic secondary education from age 12, facilities will be provided for a further 2-year course in at least two of the following fields: Academic Education, Commercial Education, Technical Education and Agricultural Education. Pupils who successfully complete this five-year course would have the necessary qualifications for admission to higher education at the University of Guyana and elsewhere. No fee will be charged for these courses.”***

This reformation of the educational pattern at secondary school level has been long overdue. We must realize that with independence all these schemes must be thought out, planned and executed by us Guyanese. Guyanese in turn cannot afford to resist changes because they are not accustomed to these new ideas.

Consideration is being given to establishment of suitable facilities for higher education. I understand that plans are well on way for the commencement at this institute of the first two year diploma courses for the training of Technicians in the fields of Mechanical, Electrical, and Civil Engineering, including Surveying. These are the first steps towards the establishment of higher level technician courses and at the same time, filling the long felt need for middle grade supervisory staff, whose responsibility it will be to see that our development projects are executed to the highest standards

without waste. No longer will it be necessary for young technically minded men to remain frustrated because they cannot pursue their desires, nor for them to seek admission to Technical Colleges elsewhere.

In our attempts to provide higher level technical training we have received assistance from other countries. We are grateful for the valuable assistance which we have already received from the United Nations, from USAID, under the Canadian Technical Assistance program and from the UK Department of Technical Cooperation.

Employers and Industry locally play their part in that they are responsible for much of the practical training. They are linked with the Technical Institute through its Board of Governors and through the Board of Industrial Training. Exchange of ideas between industrial and academic staff is always necessary to maintain, not only the highest standard, but a uniformity of purpose.

Training places are nationally limited. But these could be increased by Group apprenticeship schemes which would benefit not only the small employer who may not have sufficient facilities for the complete training of the young apprentice, but the young apprentices themselves.

To the bigger firms who have better facilities for training, I would ask that, as part of their national contribution, more persons should be trained than they actually require not only to assist the smaller firms, but to create a valuable reservoir upon which they can draw when ready to expand.

To the Teachers of this Institute and indeed all teachers, I would like to say that apart from imparting technical knowledge, you can play the most important role of humanising those who come under your charge. To you is entrusted the task of not only training technicians but young Guyanese men and women who would ask when they graduate “what contribution can I make” and not merely “how much money can I make.”

Office of the Premier,  
Public Building.  
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