WHAT DO YOU THINK?

"If the shortage of engineers prevents talented men from moving up into managerial positions, it would be a national disaster."

This statement was made recently by the President of a senior professional institution. Evidence that this possibility is acknowledged in Government circles was given at a public meeting a few weeks ago, when Lord Hailsham said:

"British industry is short of men with the necessary knowledge of managing the biggest units and developing rational policies." He went on to say that a small Group had been set up to study the problem and expressed the hope that something useful would emerge from these deliberations. It is to be hoped that this Institution will have an opportunity of conveying to such a Group the views of the membership as a whole, backed by the combined experience of over 13,000 qualified production engineers.

The Institution is making steady progress in its threefold aim to make a major contribution to the national economy, to establish the status of the Production Engineer, and to reinforce the work he is already doing in industry with teaching of more advanced work in his professional career. Members can note with satisfaction that a great deal has already been achieved. It has just been announced, for instance, by the University of Birmingham, that the establishment of the Education Trust has enabled the admission next year of the first students for the B.Sc. Honours Course in Engineering Production. Up to now, the work of the Department of Engineering Production has been entirely postgraduate, and for the past four years admissions have had to be restricted to 30 M.Sc. and Diploma Students and six Ph.D. students.

Those who have already demonstrated their support of the Trust can justly feel that their generosity is already paying dividends.

The speaker quoted at the beginning of this article has also said: "There are good reasons to expect that many engineers who have become specialists will, by gradual development in broader fields, become good general managers. Although it rests with engineers who wish to transfer to management to qualify for the change, there is an opportunity and a duty for the engineering institutions to give encouragement to their members in order that, in all industries, engineers may take full share in direction."

Production Engineers take pride in the fact that they are practical men. Here is perhaps the most important opportunity offered to members of The Institution of Production Engineers to contribute, in a practical way, to work of outstanding national importance which will also enhance their own status and assist the long-term development of their own branch of the profession.
It is an investment in the future, which will bring positive benefits. No progressive industrial concern can afford not to be associated with this project.

I am well aware that some people consider we should concentrate on supporting the work of the Colleges of Advanced Technology in training for top management. These Colleges throughout the country are doing splendid work but our aim of establishing Production Engineering as a primary technology cannot be achieved without the provision of University training.

There are many difficulties in the way — but production engineers are accustomed to overcoming difficulties. The Government has stated that they cannot for some years increase University Grants. But are we sure that the £90,000,000 already allocated is being spent in the best possible way? New Universities are being planned at seven centres throughout the country, and millions of pounds are being raised to support, in the main, Arts education. Very little is going to the field of Science, which includes Production Engineering. It is high time that those people who have the responsibility of distributing this money should be made aware of the desperate needs of industry. And only those engaged in industry can draw attention to those needs by demonstrating in practical fashion that they are prepared to help themselves and prove, by results, that their thinking is right.

The most immediate and impressive way of doing this is to support the work of the Education Trust which, as you know, is specially charged with the initial responsibility of setting up a pattern of training which, once proved, will be recommended to the Government to consider the establishment of similar centres in at least 12 Regions throughout the country. The Institution’s Regions and Sections are now studying plans of operation, and the information which has been sent to them may help them to formulate their own schemes for active support within their own areas.

The work of the Trust is now under way. The rate of progress will be directly dependent on the support of the Institution’s membership.

[Signature]

PRESIDENT.