

HIGHER TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN GREAT BRITAIN

IN replying to a question in the House of Commons on November 23 regarding higher technological education, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. R. A. Butler, said he had nothing to add to his statement of July 13; but when pressed with regard to the position in Wales, he indicated that he intended making a further statement which would give a broader picture than that which he had given previously. This promise was repeated by Sir David Eccles, the Minister of Education, when replying to questions on this subject, in the debate on the Queen's Speech on November 30, arising out of the reference in that Speech to the Government's intention to "stimulate the expansion of facilities for higher technological education, so that advances in scientific research may be matched by increased industrial efficiency and production". Sir David dealt particularly with questions on technical education from Mr. Malcolm MacPherson, who suggested that within the Ministry of Education a division should be set up dealing specifically with technical and technological questions. Sir David agreed that there is real urgency to treat technical education as a major problem, and he announced the lifting of restrictions as to the industries for which new technical education facilities could be provided. The amount of new work which could now be started for technical education would be increased by about £2½ million a year. He added that the Secretary of State for Scotland is also anxious to see more rapid development of facilities for technical education and will be letting the education authorities concerned have details of his proposals shortly.

The promised statement was made in both Houses of Parliament on December 7. In the House of Lords, the Lord President of the Council, Lord Salisbury, stated that the Government's plans provide for the massive expansion of the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London, and for major developments at Glasgow, Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham, including also developments on a fairly large scale at Cambridge and Sheffield, and specialized developments at other centres in Great Britain, notably at Edinburgh, Newcastle, Southampton, Nottingham and Swansea. Some of them are to be financed by industry and some by Treasury grants. The Government is endeavouring to avoid either excessive centralization or undue dispersal of resources, and is concentrating its efforts on institutions which are already receiving Treasury grants. In its view, higher technological education must be closely linked with other university studies, and those who are studying technology should work closely with those who are occupied with the more fundamental problems of science and with its application in other fields. The problems of technology are the problems of human relations as well as of science, and in training for industry the humanities have an important part to play. Where a technological institution and a university are associated, as in London, Glasgow and Manchester, this linking of studies could be achieved. If, however, new universities are to be established in other centres by upgrading the technical colleges, it will be necessary to provide them also with additional departments, and the nation cannot afford the necessary resources of teachers, buildings and money. Accordingly, Lord Salisbury indicated that the Government does not propose to start entirely new technological institutions; but it will seek close association between the

universities and industry, and it has been encouraged by the recent founding of new chairs in technological subjects with funds raised from industry. Lord Salisbury added that the universities are becoming more responsive to industrial needs by designing post-graduate classes to meet particular local requirements and by inviting industry to assist with instruction.

About one-eighth of the total recurrent grants to the universities are used for technology, in the narrower sense of the term, or about £3 million a year. Additional recurrent grants for technology, amounting to £196,000, have been made for the present academic year; these will be increased to £404,000 next year and to £704,000 for the academic year 1956-57. This will be in addition to the extra cost of salaries announced in November. For building and equipment the capital expenditure and liabilities against public funds incurred in recent years for technology, in the narrow sense, now amount to about £10 million, including a number of projects authorized last July. Further building has been authorized to the extent of £1 million, in addition to the normal university building programme for the year 1955-56, and the Chancellor will be prepared to consider, for starting in the following year, other technological projects included in the University Grants Committee's plans for developments beginning in the quinquennium. The total capital cost of this project over ten years may well be about £15 million.

With regard to the expansion of the Imperial College of Science and Technology in London, Lord Salisbury stated that building work is already in progress on the northern part of the site in South Kensington to the extent of about £1.2 million, including equipment. Further progress will soon require the release of some other parts of the site from their existing use, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer has now authorized new building work to proceed in Bloomsbury to enable existing University of London activities (such as the Warburg Institute) to be transferred there in due course from South Kensington. Approval has been given for the erection of part of the north section of the British Museum (Natural History) and the completion of the new centre block of the Science Museum to release accommodation now occupied by the Aeronautical Collection of the Science Museum. To minimize the disturbance of the Indian Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, plans have been approved which will enable a substantial part of this Collection to be permanently on view in the main building of the Museum. Alternative accommodation will be needed eventually for that part of the Royal College of Art which is housed in the same building as the Aeronautical Collection. The Government is still considering the future of the Imperial Institute, and it is hoped to reach an early decision.

In reply to a question in the House of Commons on December 14, regarding the development of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, into a technological university, the Secretary of State for Scotland, Mr. J. Stuart, said that the Government believed that the progress of higher technological education in Glasgow could best be served if the College and University worked out a relationship which, without hampering the development of the College, enabled their work to be co-ordinated. The Government had invited the two institutions to enter into discussions with the view of evolving a satisfactory scheme.