
Introductory Remarks

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Introductory remarks

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I would like to join the President in welcoming you to this discussion meeting on Manufacturing Technology in the 1980s. Before going any further I should say that the lion's share of the organization has been done by Dr Williamson. In addition to finding many of the speakers he has had to deal with every question which has arisen during the last month as I have been away on a month's visit to India, Australia and the United States.

This is the third discussion meeting in the Royal Society series dealing with technological developments in the 1980s. The first two meetings dealt with building and ship technology, while the one after this is concerned with agricultural productivity.

Manufacturing covers the entire range of industries from continuous processes like those in the metallurgical and chemical industries involving large capital expenditure, to the back-street workshop producing components for local sale or for larger industries. In the United Kingdom, and in nearly all advanced countries, manufacturing is by far the largest single element in the gross national product. A consideration of future developments is therefore something which will affect a large proportion of the working population.

While this meeting cannot hope to cover all aspects of the subject, the organizers have arranged the programme to cover the spectrum from continuous processes to batch manufacture. In the formal papers the speakers will examine trends of development not only in technical matters but also in human and environmental terms. It has been said that the Western world is entering a second Industrial Revolution in which industries will have to provide greater intellectual stimulus for their workers, particularly those working on mass-production processes, much better communication between management and workers, and much greater consideration for the environment both inside and outside the factory. Meeting these problems is likely to absorb every bit as much management and engineering talent as has gone into the technical achievements of the last hundred years.

Put another way, the first Industrial Revolution was technology based with little or no consideration for environmental and human factors. The second Industrial Revolution is likely to be just the opposite: we can now foresee the virtually complete integration of technological and environmental factors in future manufacturing technology.

At this stage of her development Britain is the victim of her past successes and long history. Our management/labour attitudes have not changed as drastically as they have in many of the countries from which our overseas visitors have come. We will therefore look forward to the stimulus of their views on the second Industrial Revolution – a Revolution which will involve concern for people as much as for technology.