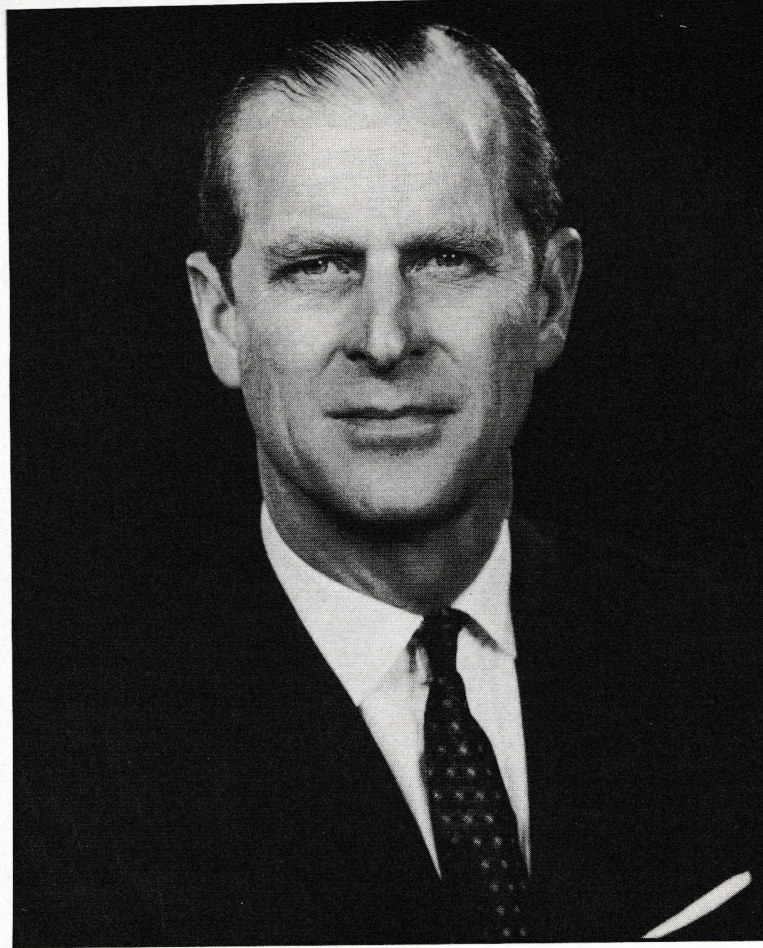


ONE hundred and twenty years' worth of articles and news about engineering affairs must be quite a collection. It also represents what will probably turn out to be the most prolific and successful period in British engineering.

In these days, when we take engineering so much for granted, it seems incredible that Britain's main source of wealth before the Industrial Revolution was the production of wool. The only difference is that everybody appreciated the value of the wool trade and the whole process of breeding the sheep, producing, treating, spinning, weaving, and exporting was considered to be of value to the nation and an honourable and praiseworthy occupation.

There can be no doubt that engineering has become the nation's most important wealth-creating activity today; yet the process of industrial manufacture, which converts engineering design into useful products, does not enjoy the prestige and esteem which it deserves. At the time *The Engineer* was launched the heroes of the day were the innovators and inventors and there was a genuine and popular admiration for the self-made man.

That enthusiasm for innovation gradually seems to have died away, partly I suspect as the squalor and misery produced by the industrialisation and urbanisation of Britain became apparent. The movement for social improvement and reform gathered strength until the years immediately after World War II ushered in the era of social security. Innovation, risk, and enterprise are incompatible



with complete stability and security. Furthermore, as the opportunities for the self-made man in the engineering industries were whittled away by the enthusiasm for scale, the only opening left to the enterprising was speculation in lucrative but non-productive spheres.

Naturally, we are all anxious to see Britain

recovering some of her former success as an innovator and her reputation as an industrial producer. This can happen only if the whole nation once again recognises engineering and manufacturing industries as our most important and worthwhile activities. The successful technological innovators must become heroes again. They must be allowed to gain and keep their rewards for success. The people who work for them must be allowed to share in their success. More people must be allowed to invest in innovation even though this entails a risk of losing.

I suspect most people would prefer to lose their money as a result of their own decision rather than watch helplessly as someone else takes the decision for them. If the rewards for success are adequate, many will take a chance and accept the occasional failure. The innovator hardly stands a chance when gambling on racing or football is treated more generously than investment in the wealth and employment creating ideas of engineers.

The Welfare State is a protection against failure and exploitation but a national recovery can take place only if innovators, and men of enterprise and hard work, can prosper.

