

LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION STONE FOR THE NEW NCAER CENTRE

NCAER | The National Council of Applied Economic Research

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Transcript of Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's Informal Remarks

Friends, ladies and gentlemen, I am very happy to have this occasion to lay the foundation stone for the new Centre of the National Council of Applied Economic Research. This institute is a great national asset, and it is obligatory for all those who work here, or who are associated with this magnificent institute, to never lose sight of the vision of the founding fathers of NCAER.

I knew Dr P S Lokanathan when he came back from the ECAFE Secretariat and took over as the first Director-General of this great institute. And when I reflect on what he stood for, I am reminded of what A. C. Pigou wrote in his *Economics of Welfare*, that economics is “light-bearing” but it is also “fruit-bearing.” The purpose of the study of economics is not to provide settled answers to unsettled or difficult questions, but sometimes to warn economists and the world-at-large how not to be misled by clever governments.

And I would like to say that when we study economics, “...our impulse is not the philosopher's impulse, knowledge for the sake of knowledge, but rather the physiologist's, knowledge for the healing that knowledge may help to bring.” These are not the words of some ancient thinker, but of the father of modern welfare economics, A. C. Pigou.

In the same vein, Pigou went on to say, quoting Thomas Carlyle, “Wonder... is the beginning of philosophy,” and Pigou said, “It is not wonder, but rather social enthusiasm, which revolts against the sordidness of mean streets and the joylessness of withered lives, that is the beginning of economic science.”

I sincerely hope that NCAER will stay faithful to the ideals which its founding fathers stood for; and I must say that with the passage of time, the need for creative, purposeful applied economic research has not diminished, it has only gone up. NCAER has been served exceedingly well by its past and present director-generals and past and present members and presidents of the Governing Body. I sincerely hope that this new NCAER Centre will provide a hospitable environment for the pursuit of applied economic research in its truest sense.

With these words, I once again express my sense of joy to be associated with this function.