PEASANTS
AND
CONGRESS

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PREFACE

The Kisan Sabhas throughout the country are gaining enormous strength and have grown into powerful class organisations and strong Anti-Imperialist bodies, thanks to tho strenuous and consistent propaganda of our Kisan Comrades. The capitalist minded section of our Congress Leaders have naturally therefore developed a sort of fear for the Kisan Sabhas and have tried to discredit Kisan Leaders and undermine the influence of these class organisations by proclaiming that they are anti-congress, forgetting, may be wantonly, the fact that nesst of the Kisan Comrades are genuine congressmen having sacrificed tbeir all in the cause of Indian Independence and National Liberation.

With singular exceptions like Pandit Jawaha rla| Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, the Congress leaders have not realised the need for real class organisations and the strength they secure for the Congress. Speaking on the fall of the Wafd Party in Egypt Pandit Nehru said that the leaders of the Egyptian Nationalist Party have no contact with the masses. He ascribed the party's failure to the lack of independent class organisations of the Peasants and Workers. It is really unfortunate that our Congress leaders should continue in their self-imposed blindness to the growing realities and shonld also refuse to move with the times.

It is a deliberate travesty of facts when they say that the Kisan Peasant Organisaiicns are anti-congress. It is necessary to check this false and in some cases even malicious and harmful propaganda and to that end we publish this book. In this Prof Ranga has shown, beyond a shadow of doubt that the Kisan Sabhas are not opposed to the congress and that the kisans have only been asking of the Congress Leaders what had been conceded to them in the Fundamental Rights Resolution, the Election Manifesto and what had been promised to them by Rajendra Babu, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose when they were presidents of the congress.

It is necessary to read this book to understand the exact relation that exists and ought to exist between the National Organisation—the Congress—and class organisation of the Kisans.

The second part of this book contains a few hints to Kisan Workers on particular problems as Press and Publicity, Agricultural Labour, Forests etc.

We commend to our readers the lat est pronouncements of Subash Babu, the Rashtrapati and Prof. Ranga our leader.

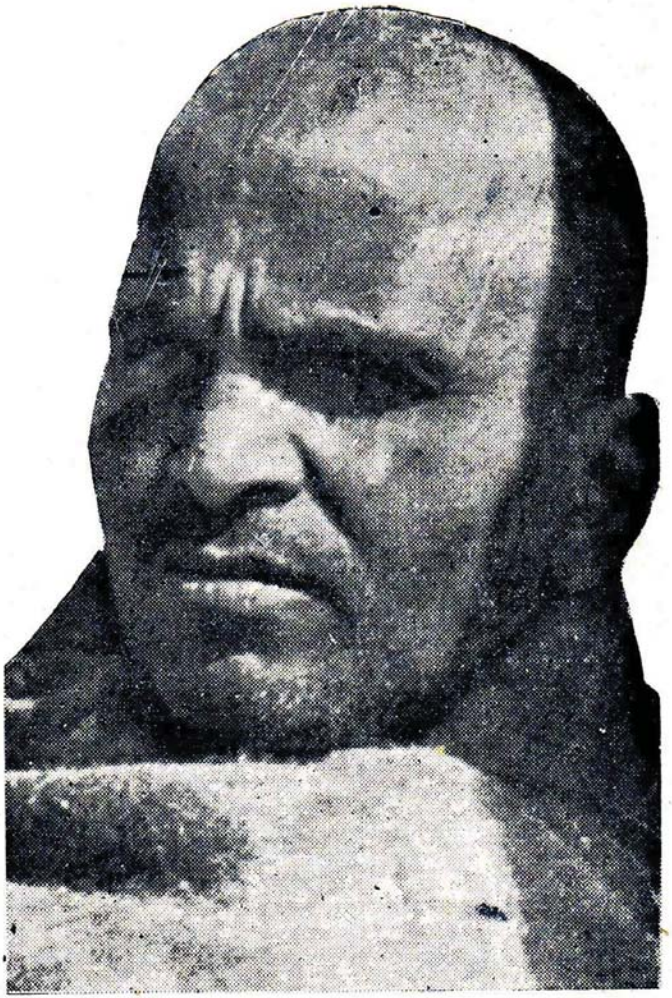
Manajing Editor

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	Rajen Babu's Views	1
	Congress Election Manifesto ...	5
	Gandhiji and Zamindars	11
	Karachi Fundamental Rights' Resolution	15
	Minority Rights	18
II	Provincial Ministries and Kisans ...	21
	Ten-point Programme	30
III	Bihar Tenancy Measures by Swami Sahajananda Saraswathi ...	37
IV	Kisans Unite	48
V	Our Sanctions and our Achievements ...	61
VI	Separate Kisan Sabhas ... ... by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru	77
VII	Haripura, Delhi Congress Resolutions ...	85

PART II

I	Press and Publicity	1
II	Agricultural Labour	8
III	Agrarian Labour and Sub-tenants ...	24
IV	Programme for Forest Ryots ...	33
	Famines	45
V	Delhi A. I. K. C. Resolutions ...	49



Swami Sahajanand Saraswathi

President A. I. K. S. (1937-38)

RASHTRAPATI SUBASH BABU'S MESSAGE TO KISANS

In the course of his message to Tamil Nad Provincial Kisan conference held on 30th December at Rajapalayam, the Congress President said:

KISANS AND THE CONGRESS

One cannot overlook the fact that in certain parts of the country there is a misunderstanding between Congress workers and Kisan workers and between Congress Organisation and Kisan Organisation. Personally I never understood why there should be this misunderstanding and conflict. The Congress has conceded the right of Kisans to organise themselves and as long as the Kisan organisation follows the principle and policy of the Congress, there is nothing to prevent Congressmen from sympathising with Kisans or taking part in their organisations. I admit that there may be difference in outlook and ideology between orthodox Congress workers and Kisan workers but is not mutual toleration one of the guiding principles of the Congress? As long as an individual or an organisation stands for the Anti-Imperialist attitude and follows the principles and policy of the Congress, there should be no misunderstanding or conflict of any sort. If Congressmen or Congress-minded men and women guide the Kisan

Movement one can very well hope that such misunderstanding and friction will be gradually obliterated. We have always to bear in mind that our common enemy is Imperialism and in order to combat Imperialism and its Indian allies all Anti-Imperialist forces in the country should join hands and constitute what may be called the United Front. I hope and trust that the Provincial Kisan Conference under the guidance of so distinguished a leader as Prof. Ranga will give a proper lead to the Kisan Movoment in Tamil Nad so that the Kisan organisations throughout the Province may be a powerful ally and support to the Congress Movement.

India is a land of Kisans. The welfare of India therefore means largely the welfare of Kisans. Let us therefore do our best to prevent misunderstanding and friction between Kisan Organisations and the Congress so that we may be able to expedite the political and economic emancipation of Indian masses.

Prof. Ranga answers critics

In the course of his Presidential Address he said:

The Ryots Movement is as Nationalist, Anti-Communal, Patriotic and Mass-minded as the Congress. They have given the clearest possible proof in all the electioneering campaigns that they are solidly behind

the Congress itself. By their constant, fearless, and truthful criticisms and suggestions made in good time in regard to every important move made by the Congress and its Ministries, in so far as they relate to our ryots, the Kisan movement has always assisted the Congress to know our reactions, our constructive suggestions and thus benefit by our experience and contribution which after all have their inestimable value to that National Parliament. Indeed the National Congress is distinctly made more powerful and popular among large sections of our people, especially those who have come too much under the spell of communalists, be they Hindu Mahasabhaites or Muslim Leaguers. The best and most effective antidote so far discovered for communalism is the economism of our Kisan and Muzdoor Sabhas. It is just because the communal Ministries of Bengal and Punjab have realised how dangerous are Kisan Sabhas to their communalism that they inaugurated their very intensive and unashamed repressive policy against Kisan sabhas and leaders. he citadels of Hindu and Mohammedan communalism are to-day being broken irrepairably by Kisan propaganda and Kisan Sabhas and I venture to say that the last vestiges of it remaining in our Southern India also can be more effectively and surely destroyed if only our Congress leaders make use of our Ryots Associations and Kisan-mindedness of our masses.

iv

KISAN SABHAS ARE NON-VIOLENT

But some raise the bogey that Kisan Sabhas believe in or use violent methods for achieving their objectives. It is false accusation that our Kisan movement countenances violence. Kisan Sabhaites no more believe in violence than orthodox Congressmen. What is more Kisan movement knows only too well that in any violent struggle our Kisans have always suffered most since the Courts, Police and Prisons-the claws of the State-are always there to grind them down unjustly and cruelly. That we have rightly claimed to be the real owners of our own lands, irrigational facilities, mineral resources, forests, village common grazing lands and all other communal properties that appertain to agriculture but never even attempted to encroach upon others' legitimate rights is borne out by the findings of Prakasam's Committee. That we have only asked for our rightful due, when morotorium was demanded by us is admitted by Bombay, Madras, the U. P. and Bihar Governments by their declaration of morotorium. Our demand for a radical scaling down of debts is accepted though implemented only in part, by the Bengal and Punjab, the U. P., Bihar, Madras and Bombay Governments. Our insistence upon the return of our lands which were sold away in Court auctions at too low prices in satisfaction of Court decrees, was considered to be right by the Bihar Government which has provided

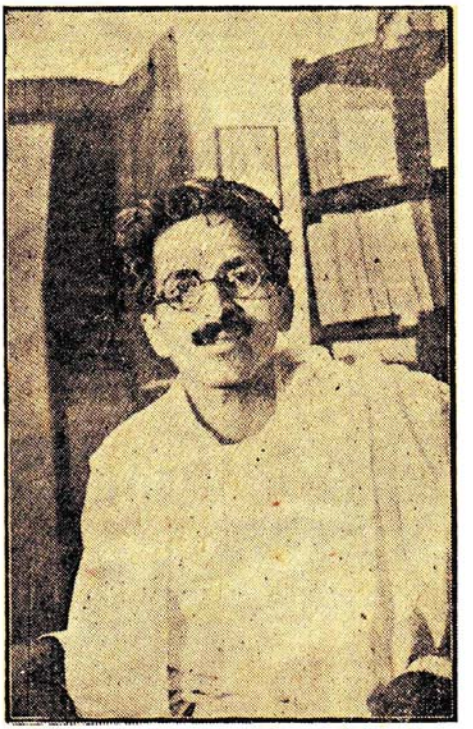
for the return of such lands. Almost every one of our Kisan demands is based upon our just needs, capacity and duty of the State to fulfil and our respect towards others' equally just and necessary claims for a decent and deserved living. No wonder both the Karachi and Faizpur Congress Charters have tried to approximate themselves with our demands and needs. How can any one even doubt as to the truthfulness of our demands and the agitation based upon them and the movement seeking to achieve them ?

To affrod adequate protection to our peasantry and workers in the transitional stage against all kinds of exploitation and also to ensure for them full opportunities to gain complete control over all the essential means and factors of production as well as the State machinery, we need a Socialist State. If by any other means we can assure the achievement of a peasants' and workers' Raj, we shall be very glad to adopt it. But so far as we can see socialism seems to be the only instrument answering our need and demand. Hence Kisans' partiality towards socialism.

GANDHISM IS WELCOME

If the voteries of Gandhism differ from socialists only on the twin principles of truth and nonviolence, then let them co-operate with Socialists so long as both parties are genuinely truthful and non-violent in their

Kisan activities. If Gandhites believe in the ultimate triumph of truth, then let them carry on their propaganda for class collaboration while Socialists work on their belief that the present class conflict can be resolved only by its destruction and leave the issue to be decided by the public as a whole and the course of events. Thus on the basis of truth and non-violence and democratic discussion and genuine mutual forbearance, both Gandhites and Socialists can co-operate with each other as Kisan Sabhaites and work for the establishment of not only political independence but also the ultimate Peasants' and Workers' Raj.



Prof. N. G. Ranga

President, A. I. K. S. (1936-37)

PEASANTS AND CONGRESS

CHAPTER 1

BABU RAJENDRA PRASAD'S STATEMENT.

The deputation of the South Indian Federation of peasants and Agricultural Workers met Babu Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Indian National Congress at Sri Bhaug at 2 P.M., on the 17th of October 1935 and presented to him their memorandum on their minimum demands. Desoddharaka K. Nageswara Roa, M.L.A. the President of the Federation, welcomed Rajen Babu and Prof. N. G. Ranga, the Secretary read the Federation's Memorandum. Mr. V. V. Giri thanked the President for his very encouraging reply.

Peasants Plea.

We all desire the advent of complete independence of India and you know it only too well how great and glorious has been the part played by our peasants in our recent national struggles. It is in a spirit of friendliness and confidence that we approach you now with our plea for an assurance, that in its efforts, ceaseless and constant as they have to be, to harmonise different and sometimes antogonistic interests of various classes of Indians, the Indian National Congress does accord to our peasants and agricultural workers a fitting place, justified by their numbers, crying needs and comparative helplessness, in its scheme of political and economic reconstruction.

We also need your assurance that whenever the interests of peasants and workers conflict with the great and growing vested interests as those of the landlords, industrialists and merchants, we can always feel sure of moral and material sympathy and support of the Congress. With such an assurance to hearten and strengthen us, we can go back to our villages broadcast it widely organise our masses in all their millions and prepare, them to face the future and its grim demands so as to achieve Swaraj of the masses under the aegis of the Congress at the earliest possible moment.

Reply of Babu Rajendra Prasad.

Friends—You need not thank me for finding an opportunity to meet you. Here I am meeting only just a few of you whereas in my tours in my own province and in other provinces as also whenever I had to visit my village home, I meet hundreds and thousands of peasants and labourers. In India where more than eighty percent of the population lives in villages and is dependent on agriculture one cannot help meeting agriculturists even if one were anxious to avoid them. But I am really a villager withouta roof or hut which I can call my own in any town or city, under which I may lay my head and it is therefore no wonder that I have to be in constant touch with your compatriots. I need not therefore assure you of my constant care and sympathy and in so far as I am personally concerned I can claim that that sympathy takes the form of service whenever an opportunity offers itself. What I have said of myself personally is also true in a sense of the congress. An

organisation which claims to represent this country cannot help interesting itself in eighty percent of the population of the country and as Mahatma Gandhi said at the Round Table Conference, the Congress is par excellence and in a sense a peasants organisation. That does not mean that it excludes those who are not peasants or that it does not attempt to harmonise the various conflicting interests. Indeed being a national organisation it has to do that and it has always done that and you yourself recognise that function of the Congress in the small pamphlet that you have given me. It is therefore easy for me to give you the assurance that the Congress always has the interests of the peasantry nearest to its heart.

The Significance of Karachi chart to Peasants.

The Karachi Congress in a few comprehensive words defined the congress attitude. It requires the system of land tenure and revenue and rent to be reformed and an equitable adjustment made of the burden on agricultural land giving immediate relief to the smaller peasantry and a substantial reduction in rent or revenue, and in case of uneconomic holdings exemption from rent or land tax so long as necessary. The conditions in different provinces vary considerably and it requires study and investigation in each province to be able to draw up a scheme in terms of the Karachi resolution in the light of local conditions. The Karachi resolution also insists on security of tenure and relief of agricultural indebtedness. These again are questions requir-

ing technical investigation in each locality. In the demands you have handed over to me, it seems you have devoted time and care to a detailed study of the subject and have suggested remedies. I have had no opportunity of studying the problems of your province in detail and you would not expect me therefore to take every item of your demand and express an opinion on it. In fact such expression of opinion from me is not even necessary in regard to the detailed proposals.

Duty of Congressmen.

But I take it Congressmen in this province have taken up the subject and have been helpful in drawing up the proposals. Others have now an opportunity of pursuing the subject and considering them in detail. Whether they agree in all the details or not, I am sure and I want you to accept that from me, that it is the duty of congressmen to do what they can to secure justice and fair treatment for you and I am confident you will have no reason to think that you have been neglected.

Power of Peasants.

But more than that you are in a position to influence and indeed determine the views and actions of Congressmen and as days go on your power will go on increasing, Congressmen cannot therefore afford to ignore or neglect you even if they wish to. But as I have said they will not do that and am certain they will show by their conduct that they will not be a party to exploitation of the masses by any power from where-

soever it comes and will always be prepared to advance your welfare in every possible way. Many of your suggestions require legislation and other large investments. These are essentially questions which your local leaders will undoubtedly consider and when you are there to remind them when they are remiss (forgetful), there is no danger of any kind. I desire to give you only a word of caution. You should not run away with the idea that the Congress can do whatever it chooses. In the very nature of things it has no power of that kind at present and you will do well to bear that limitation in mind when you find the Congress unable to achieve all that you and I wish it to achieve for you. But you will certainly be right in blaming it, if it does anything in disregard of your rights and help in perpetuating conditions which are unjust and unfair to you.

(From "Kisan Speaks")

Pages 18 and 19

Congress Election Manifesto.

(*August 1936*).

The Congress has always laid stress on the development of the strength of the people and the forging of sanctions to enforce the people's will. To this end it has carried on activities outside the legislatures. The Congress holds that real strength comes from thus organising and serving the masses.

The Congress realises that independence cannot be achieved through these legislatures, nor can the problems of poverty and unemployment be effectively tackled by them.

Nevertheless the Congress places its general programme before the people of India so that they may know what it stands for and what it will try to achieve, whenever it has the power to do so.

At the Karachi session of the Congress in 1931 the general Congress objective was defined in the Fundamental Rights resolution. That general definition still holds. With a view to this the Lucknow Congress laid particular stress on the fact that " the most important and urgent problem of the country is the appalling poverty, unemployment and indebtedness of the peasantry, fundamentally due to antiquated and repressive land tenure and revenue systems, and intensified in recent years by the great slump in prices of agricultural produce," and called upon the Provincial Congress Committees to frame full agrarian programme.

Pending the formulation of a fuller programme the Congress reiterates its declaration made at Karachi—that it stands for a reform of the system and land tenure and revenue and rent, and an equitable adjustment of the burden on agricultural land, giving immediate relief to the smaller peasantry by a substantial reduction of agricultural rent and revenue now paid by them and exempting uneconomic holdings from payment of rent and revenue.

The question of indebtedness requires urgent consideration and the formulation of a scheme including the declaration of a moratorium, an enquiry into and scaling down of debts and the provision for cheap credit facilities by the state. This relief should extend to the agricultural tenants, peasant proprietors, small landholders, and petty traders.

In regard to industrial workers the policy of the Congress is to secure to them a decent standard of living, hours of work and conditions of labour in conformity, as far as the economic conditions in the country permit, with international standards, suitable machinery for the settlement of disputes between employers and workmen, protection against the economic consequences of old age, sickness and unemployment and the right of workers to form unions and to strike for the protection of their interests.

The Congress has already declared that it stands for the removal of all sex disabilities whether legal or social or in any sphere of public activity. It has expressed itself in favour of maternity benefits and the protection of women workers. The women of India have already taken a leading part in the freedom struggle, and the Congress looks forward to their sharing, in an equal measure with the men of India, the privileges and obligations of citizens of a free India.

The stress that the Congress has laid on the removal of untouchability and for the social and economic uplift of the Harijans and the backward classes is well-known. It holds that they should be equal citizens with others with equal rights in all civic matters.

The encouragement of khadi and village industries has also long been a principal plank of the Congress programme.

In regard to larger industries, protection should be given but the rights of the workers and the producers of raw materials should be safeguarded, and due regard should be paid to the interests of village industries.

The treatment of political prisoners has long been a scandal in India. Every effort should be made to improve this and make it humane. It is equally necessary to change the whole basis of the prison administration so that every prisoner might be treated in a humanitarian and rational manner.

It is necessary to bear in mind that the whole communal problem in spite of its importance, has nothing to do with the major problems of India—poverty and wide spread unemployment. It is not a religious problem and it affects only a handful of people at the top. The peasantry, the workers, the traders and merchants and the lower middle class of all communities are in no way touched by it and their burdens remain.

The object remains the same ; the ending of the Act. With a view to this end every endeavour will be made to prevent the introduction and functioning of the federal part of the scheme, which is intended to prepetuate the domination of imperialist interests and the feudal interests of the States over the whole country and prevent all progress towards freedom. It must be borne in mind that the new provinicial assemblies will form the electorate for the proposed federal central legislature and the composition of those provincial legislatures will materially affect the fate of the federal constitution.

Agrarian Programme.

The Congress, at its last session, being fully conscious of the fact that the most important and urgent problem of the country is the appalling poverty, unemployment and

indebtedness of the peasantry called upon the Provincial Congress Committes to make recommendations to enable the All-India Congress Committee to draw up an All-India Agrarian Programme. Many P. C. Cs have not yet submitted their recommendations for such a programme. The Congress regrets this delay but realises that the subject is vast and an intricate one, requiring close study and investigation. It trusts that such P. C. Cs as have not reported so far will take early steps to send in their recommendations.

The Congress is convinced that the final solution of this problem involves the removal of British Imperialistic exploitation and a radical change in the antiquated and repressive land tenure and revenue systems. It feels, however, that the deepening crisis has made the burden on the peasantry an intolerable one and immediate relief is urgently called for. Pending the framing of an All-India Agrarian Programme, therefore, the following steps are necessary.

1. Rent and revenue should be readjusted having regard to present conditions and there should be substantial reduction in both.

2. Uneconomic holdings should be exempted from rent and land tax.

3. Agricultural incomes should be assessed to income tax like all other incomes, on a progressive scale, subject to a prescribed minimum.

4. Canal and other irrigation rates should be substantially lowered.

5. All feudal dues and levies and forced labour should be abolished, and demands other than rent should be made illegal.

6. Fixity of tenure with heritable rights along with the right to build houses and plant trees should be provided for all tenants.

7. An effort should be made to introduce co-opertative farming.

8. The crushing burden of rural debt should be removed. Special tribunals should be appointed to inquire into this and all debts, which are unconscionable or beyond the capacity of peasants to pay, should be liquidated. Meanwhile a moratorium should be declared and steps should be taken to provide cheap credit facilities.

9. Arrears of rent for previous year should generally be wiped out.

10. Common pasture lands should be provided, and the rights of the people in tanks, wells, ponds, forests and the like recognised, and no encroachment on these rights should be permitted.

11. Arrears of rents should be recoverable in the same manner as civil debts and not by ejectment.

12. There should be statutory provision for securing a living wage and suitable working conditions for agricultrual labourers.

13. Peasant unions should be recognised.

Gandhiji on our Attitude Towards Zamindras.

(HARIJAN 12—4—1938.)

To understand our Commilla resolution, a perusal of the following extracts from Gaudhiji's interview at Calcutta is necessary.

Kisans and Zamindars

" The difference between your view and mine is based on the question whether the Zamindari System is to be mended or ended. I say it should be mended, and if it cannot be mended, it would end itself. You say that it is incapable of being mended." In these words Gandhiji summed up the difference between the Socialist school, and what may be called the Satyagrahic school, before an informal meeting of Calcutta Congressmen. At the root of the various questions that arise on the subject lies this fhndamental difference, and the answers to those questions naturally reflect the philosophy which the replier holds. Thus one of the questions that puzzles many is :

" The zamindars and mahajans are the instruments of the bureaucracy. They have always sided with it and are an obstacle to our progress and freedom. Why shonld not the obstacle be removed ?"

To this Gandhiji's reply reflecting his philosophy was this : " They are indeed part and parcel of the bureaucracy. But they are its helpless tools. Must they for ever remain so ? We may do nothing to put them away from us. If they change their mentality, their services can be utilized for the nation. If they will not change, they will die a natural death. If we have non-violence in us, we will not frighten them. We have to be doubly careful when the Congress has power."

Q.—But can't we say the system of zamindari is an anacohronism and should go, by non-violent means of-course ?

A.—Of course we can. The question is ' must we ?' Why can we not say to the zamindars, 'These are the evils which we ask you to remove yourselves ?' I admit that this presumes trust in human nature.

Q.—Would you say that the Permanent Settlement should remain ?

A.—No, it has to go. The way to make the kisans happy and prosperous is to educate them to know the reason of their present condition and how to mend it. We may show them the non-violent way or the violent. The latter may look tempting, but it is the way to perdition in the long run.

EXTRACTS FROM " PURNA SWARAJYA INDEPENDENCE DAY." DECLARATION.

" We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any government deprive a people of these rights and oppresses them the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically. We believe therefore that India must severe the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or complete independence.

India has been ruined economically. The Revenue derived from our people is out of all proportion to our in come. Our average income is seven pice (less than two pence) per day, and of the heavy taxes we pay 20 per cent are raised from the land revenue derived from peasantry and 3 per cent from the salt tax, which falls most heavily on the poor.

Village industries, such as hand spinning, have been destroyed, leaving the peasantry idle for at least four months in the year, and dulling their intellect for want of handicrafts, and nothing has been substituted, as in other countries, for the crafts thus destroyed.

Customs and currency have been so manipulated as to heap further burdens on the peasantry. British manufactured goods constitute the bulk of our imports. Customs duties betray clear partiality for British manufactures, and revenue from them is used not to lesson the burden on the masses but for sustaining a highly extravagant administration. Still more arbitrary has been the manipulation of the exchange ratio which has resulted in millions being drained away from the country.

EXTRACT FROM MAHATMA GANDHI'S ULTIMATUM TO VICEROY

2nd March 1930.

" Unless those who work in the name of the nation understand and keep before all concerned the motive that lies behind the craving for Independence, there is every danger of Independence itself coming to us so changed as to be no value to those toiling voiceless millions for whom

it is worth taking. It is for that reason that I have been recently telling the public what Independence should really mean.

Let me put before you some of the salient points. The terrific pressure of land revenue which furnishes a large part of the total, must undergo considerable modification in an Independent India. Even the much vaunted permanent settlement benefits a few rich zamindars, not the ryots. The ryot has remained as helpless as ever. He is a mere tenant at will. Not only then, has the land revenue to be considerably reduced but the whole revenue system has to be so revised as to make the ryot's good its primary concern. But the British system seems to be designed to crush the very life out of him. Even the salt he must use to live is so taxed as to make the burden all the heaviest on him, because of the heartless impartiality of its incidence. The tax shows itself still more burdensome on the poor man when it is remembered that salt is the one thing he must eat more than the rich man both individually and collectively. The drink and drug revenue too is derived from the poor. It saps the foundations both of their health and morals. It is defended under the false plea of individual freedom, but, in reality, is maintained for its own sake. The ingenuity of the authors of the reforms of 1919 transferred this revenue to the so-called responsible part of dyarchy, so as to throw the burden of prohibition on it, thus, from the very beginning, rendering it powerless for good. If the unhappy Minister wipes out this revenue he must starve education, since in the existing circumstances he has no new source of replacing that revenue. If the weight of taxation has crushed the poor from above, the destruction of the central supplementary

industry, i.e., handspinning, has undermined their capacity for producing wealth.

The tale of India's ruination is not complete without a reference to the liabilities incurred in her name. Sufficient has been recently said about these in the public press. It must be the duty of a free India to subject all liabilities to the strictest investigation and repudiate those that may be adjudged by an impartial tribunal to be unjust and unfair. The inequities sampled above are maintained in order to carry on the foreign administration, demonstrably the most expensive in the world."

KARACHI CONGRESS SESSION—1931

Fundamental Rights and Economic Changes.

Mahatma Gandhi then moved the resolution on the declaration of Fundamental Rights. The following is the text ;—

" This Congress is of opinion that to enable the masses to appreciate what " Swaraj," as conceived by the Congress' will mean to them, it is desirable to state the position of the Congress in a manner easily understood by them. In order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions. The Congress, therefore, declares that any constitution which may be agreed to on its behalf should provide, or enable the Swaraj Government to provide, for the following ;

1. Fundamental rights of the people including :

(i) freedom of association and combination ;

(ii) freedom of speech and of the press ;

(iii) freedom of conscience and the free profession and practice of religion, subject to public order and morality;

(iv) protection of the culture, language and scripts of the minorities;

(v) equal rights and obligations of all citizens without any bar on account of sex;

(vi) no disability to attach to any citizen by reason of his or her religion, caste or creed or sex in regard to public employment, office of power or honour, and in the exercise of any trade or calling;

(vii) equal rights to all citizens in regard to public roads, wells, schools and other places of public resort;

(viii) right to keep and bear arms in accordance with regulations and reservations made in that behalf;

(ix) no person shall be deprived of his liberty nor, shall his dwelling nor property be entirely sequestered or confiscated, save in accordance with law.

2. Religious neutrality on the part of the State.

3. Adult sufifrage.

4. Free primary education.

5. A living wage for industrial workers, limited hours of labour, healthy conditions of work, protection against

Mahatma Gandhi

the economic consequences of old age, sickness and unemployment.

6. Labour to be freed from serfdom or conditions bordering on serfdom.

7. Protection of woman workers, and, specially, adequate provisions for leave during maternity period.

8. Prohibition against employment of children of school-going age in factories.

9. Right of labour to form unions to protect their interests with suitable machinery for settlement of disputes by arbitration.

10. Substantial reduction in agricultural rent or revenue paid by the peasantry and in case of uneconomic holdings exemption from rent for such period as may be necessary, relief being given to small zamindars wherever necessary by reason of such reduction.

11. Imposition of a progressive income-tax on agricultural incomes above a fixed minimum.

12. A graduated inheritance tax.

13. Military expenditure, to be reduced by at least one half of the present scale.

14. Expenditure and salaries in civil departmets to be largely reduced. No servant of the State, other than specially employed experts and the like, to be paid above a certain fixed figure which should not ordinarily exceed Rs. 500 per month.

15. Pretection of indigenous cloth by exclusion of foreign cloth and foreign yarn from the country.

16. Total prohibition of intoxicating drinks and drugs.

17. No duty on salt manufactured in India.

18. Control over exchange and currency policy so as to help Indian industries and bring relief to the masses.

19. Control by the State of dry industries and ownership of mineral resources.

20. Control of usury-direct or indirect.

It shall be open to the A. I. C. C. to revise, amend or add to the foregoing so far as such revision, amendment or addition is not inconsistent with the policy and principles thereof."

Calcutta Congress Session-1931.

MINORITY RIGHTS.

The Congress has solemnly and repeatedly declared its policy in regard to the rights of the minorities in India and has stated that it considers it its duty to protect these rights and ensure the widest possible scope for the development of these minorities and their participation in the fullest measure in the political, economic and cultural life of the nation. The objective of the Congress is an independent and united India where no class or group or majority or minority may exploit ano ther to its own advantage, and where all the elements in the nation may co-operate together for the common good

and the advancement of the people of India. This objective of unity and mutual co-operation in a common freedom does not mean the suppression in any way of the rich variety and cultural diversity of Indian life, which have to be preserved in order to give freedom and opportunity to the individual as well as to each group to develop unhindered according to its capacity and inclination.

In view, however, of attempts having been made to misinterpret the Congress policy in this regard, the All India Congress Committee desire to reiterate this policy. The Congress has included in its resolution on Fundamental Rights that

(i) Every citizen of India has the right of free expression of opinion, the right of free association and combination, and the right to assemble peacefully and without arms, for a purpose not opposed to law or morality.

(ii) Every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess and practise his religion, subject to public order and morality.

(iii) The culture, language and script of the minorities and of the different linguistic areas shall be protected.

(iv) All citizens are equal before the law, irrespective of religion, caste, creed or sex.

(v) No disability attaches to any citizen by reason of his or her religion, caste, creed or sex in

regard to public employment, office of power or honour, and in the exercise of any trade or calling.

(vi) All citizens have equal rights and duties in regard to wells, tanks, roads, schools and places of publice resort, maintained out of State, or local funds, or dedicated by private persons for the use of the general public.

(vii) The State shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions.

(viii) The franchise shall be on the basis of universal adult suffrage.

(ix) Every citizen is free to move throughout India and to stay and settle in any part thereof, to acquire property and to follow any trade or calling, and to be treated equally with regard to legal prosecution or protection in all parts of India.

CHAPTER II

Provincial Ministries and Kisans

DISILLUSIONMENT OF OUR MASSES.

Responsible Government has been so long in the coming that a majority of our responsible Congressmen are labouring under the enormous assumption that it cannot do anything against the people over which it governs. There is at present the same innocent but unjustified faith in infallibility of such a government as there used to be in the England of last Eighties and Europe and America of the last Century. All the bitter experience of the masses of Europe and America during the arduous fears of this Century and their disillusionment in regard to the political capacity of the voters at large, the capacity of voters to influence the policies, conduct and internal management of parties seems to have had no effect upon our nationalists. That the Government of a people by a majority party is not tantamount to that of the masses, that the parties as we have come to experience them not excepting even our own Congress constitution, are not as amenable to public opinion as they are supposed to be, thanks to their very efficient propaganda, and that there are not enough opportunities for the voters at large and their functional organisations either to influence the decisions or to control the actions of these political parties is a knowledge easily to be gained by a study of the experience of the so-called democratic governments but could be obtained if such a study is ignored, only by passing through similar better processes of disillusionment. All that has happened since the advent of Provincial autonomy warns us that Indian Nation-

alists also tend to take their own time to learn the lessons which others had learnt in Europe and America through their long and tortuous experience of democratic governments. To prevent this there is only one effective remedy and that is mass action. It is only a Satyagraha Campaign of peasants or a strike of industrial workers which can open the eyes of the public and especially workers and peasants to the inability of our provincial Ministries as they are constituted to-day to satisfy even their minimum demands and the unwillingness of our legislators to transcend their class prejudices and interests.

The Congress-Zamindars agreement of Bihar has shown how, rather than bravely meeting the demands of peasants, a Congress Ministry is inclined to shortcircuit a a problem by coming to a compromise with one of our vested interests. The recent Punjab Agrarian legislation demonstrates the notorious fact that whichever class or caste is in power gets things done for itself and succeeds in limiting to benefits and that legislation to its own class. The vested interests of our Country have already inaugurated their campaign of false propaganda that the existing Provincial Ministries are upsetting the present order of society and destroying the upper classes by passing discriminatory legislation. Both the Punjab and Bengal Governors who are the watch dogs of vested interests and established balance of economic power in our country have given the lie direct to this propaganda by giving their assent to the local legislation. Both the Bihar and Madras Ministers frankly stated that they were undertaking their debt relief and other legislation only to slave off revolution and to save the economic interests of our society. Mahatma

Gandhi has himself made it perfectly clear that any thought of abolishing the Zamindari system is far from his mind. Therefore at best our provincial ministries can and will attempt to remove some of the worst anamolies in our Society, just as the Liberal parties of Europe had done since 1880. They may provide a few opportunities here and there for the ALLEST of the masses to squeeze themselves into the ranks of the upper classes. But they will do nothing to disturb the equilibrium of forces—social, economic or political of our Society.

What has happened during the last year and a half to amply bear out these conclusions.

To take the Bombay ministry first, it tried its best to resist our demand for a moratorium for all agricultural indebtedness until it could no longer stem the tide of our revolutionary forces. Why did it so loudy persist in its opposition ? Because the Bombay, Ahemadabad and other capitalist forces have a predominent influence over the political parties of that presidency. The Congress Assembly party may protest that it consists of a majority of non-capitalist M. L. As. So did the British Labour Party, not to speak of the British Liberal Party. Yet did it prevent the Labour Party from bowing to the demands of vested interests.

Its latest bills regarding the trade Disputes and tenancy are again the product of the class collaboration theory. It means that these bills only seek to stabilise the essential rights and previlages of our vested interests by seeking to make a few concessions to the masses.

The Sind ministry also pursued the same policy, when it became imperative, it reduced the land revenue demand

for the year and soon after, prohibited all kisan marches fo any officer, because it rallied to its side, by its concession, some of the moderates. The next ministry had chosen the imposition of an enhancement of irrigation rates in preference to a ministerial crisis, but when it was threatened with the active opposition of the Congress Party, it served again in favour of peasants demand. Thus its pendulam of prejudice swings in favour of that class that holds the political power in its hands.

The Punjab ministry is singular in its class-consciousness. It is backed by the kulaks' of Punjab who are declared as "statutory agriculturists" by the Land Alienation Act of 1903. Though it is supposed to be terribly opposed to the money lending-class of towns, it has so far abstained from declaring moratorium for agrarian indebtedness. Why? Because a large number of kulaks or jaghirdars are themselves money-lenders and are continually swallowing the lands of their debtors since the land Alienation Act does not prevent them from purchasing other agriculturists lands. Yet it has hastened to write off the usufruct mortgages that were entered into before 1903. Why? Most of the beneficiaries from this legislation would be the rich land lords. It was after considerable agitation by our Kisan Sabha and the Congress Assembly Party that the ministry agreed to extend the benefits of the legislation to the mortgages held by agriculturist money lenders also. This Six and a ministry even today refrains from amending the land Alienation act in such a way as to cover all genuine peasants and to prevent any alienation of land from poorer Kisans to richer Kisans. The latest amend-

ment Act only prevents such alienations for the next 5 years to come only as a result of debt settlements.

But when it came to introducing a proper system of distribution of irrigation water, it would not yield to the poor peasants. Nor would it abstain from proceeding with its resettlement exactions in Lyalpur or operations in Amritsar. It went even to the extent of perpetrating another Jallianwallah Bagh tragedy on the 20th July by prohibiting our Kisan March to the local officials to protesr against the resettlement operations and by lathi charging Kisans and arresting a large number of them.

The U. P. Congress Ministry is much more far sighted, and so it passed stay Orders on all rent arrears and civil suits for agrarian debts with in a fortnight of its assumption of power. But its rent proposals fall far short of our Kisan minimum demands. Even in that, it could not persistently fight against the Zamindari opposition and pass its bill, without coming to a compromise with Zamindars. True, it tried to rally our Kisans to its side as against Zamindars since last April but it had considerably weakened itself by carrying on a consistent and systematic campaign against the independent existence of our Kisan Sabhas, both directly and indirectly through the P. C. C. To whit, minister Kidwai's attack on the activities of our comrades and president Mohanlal Saxena's opposition to independent Kisan Sabhas have weakend the ministerial front against Zamindars. No wonder even the most forward Congress ministry is obliged to make terms with the class-enemies of our Kisans. Swamiji's chapter on Bihar

tenancy legislation tells the Bihar ministry's concessions to Zamindars. Morotorium is not declared in Bihar for all our agrarian indebtedness and the moneylender's bills and other bills do not touch even the fringe of the problem,

The Bengal Ministry was unfortunate in its very formation. Mr. Fuz-lul-Huq who was returned to the Assembly with his party the Krishak-Praja was trusted to be faithful to an economic programme which was fairly radical. But he joined hands with the very people who had fought him hard but in vain during the elections and who had so little in common with his peasant programme. What can be expected from Europeans, the custodians of vast capitalist interests and the beneficiaries of the commercial safeguards and from the followers of Sir Nazirud-din and Nawab of Dacca, the Protoganists of Zamindari interests ? Even the recent Tenancy Act was more the achievement of independent Krishak-Praja Party which boldly broke away from Faz-lul-Huq and demanded the tenancy bill.

Thanks to the presence of Mr. Nalini Ranjan Sircar, the famous financiar of Calcutta in its Ministry, the Bengal Goverment has so failed to declare a morotorium for its peasants.

The Assam Government has little to its credit, as its Ministry is Zamindari-ridden and as its repressive policy seems to be still effective. Barring a paltry suspension of land revenue in the Assamee portion of the province, it did little more than persuading the Governor to disallow our Kisans' Tenancy Amendment Bill.

The Orissa Ministry is the only one which consists of non-zamindari members.

The Orissa Ministry is the only one which made one big bid for meeting one of our demands. It tried through its Madras Estates Land Act Amendment Bill to reduce the rents charged by zamindars te the level of land revenue assessment charged by Government i.e. reduce rents from being half gross income to half of net income. But owing to the class collabaration theory wbich was announced as an economic thesis in last March and the subtaranean influences of the Madras leadership, this bill is still held up by the Governor, without there being any ministerial crisis

The Madras Congress Ministry has passed the Debt Relief Act which is considered by so many of our people as the most radical measure. But it is not generally known that it was proceded by a Morotorium which was sabotaged by the Powerful Money-lenders and that it has not been followed by any legislative or administrative measures to enable peasants to pay off their scaled-down debts in easy instalments over a number of years. Naturally our peasants have gained very little beyond a new hope of getting their burdens lessened in their weight, since they find it so hard to obtain fresh credit either to pay off old debts and thus prevent the alienation of their lands or to finance their current agricultural operations.

The same criticisms hold good to the Bombay Morotorium and debt relief legislation. The Bombay ministry does not even extend its Morotorium to all peasants nor does its morotorium even for small holders immune from the discretion of local officials. The District Magistrates are to have power to discriminate between money lenders

and thus exempt any of them from the operations of this morotorium.

Coming to the question of land revenue as a whole, the Madras Government has done little more. So was the case with the C. P. Sind and N. W. F. P. Governments.

The Punjab Government alone appointed a Land Revenue Committee to investigate the possibilities for replacing the present system by a graded income-tax on agricultural incomes above a prescribed minimum. The report is not yet published although it is some time since it was submitted to Government. The Gandhi Seva Sangh has constituted a Land Revenue Committee, evidently to prepare a scheme for adoption by Congress ministries but one can only conjecture when, at this rate, Congress ministries will come to implement either the Karachi demand or even Mahatmaji's demand to Lord Irwin.

As for the forests, the Bombay Government alone has abolished all grazing fees charged by its Forest Department. All that our agitation has secured is halving of such fees in the Sind and Madras Presidencies and a Forest Advisory Committee in Madras.

But no really effective steps are taken in any of our provinces to check, if not to root out, the cancer of corruption so widely prevalent among our officials. The U. P. Government is most noteworthy for its mere energetic steps to warn officials of earning a bad name. But the Madras Government has contented itself with emphasizing an order issued in 1936, in response to our peasants than accepting the recommendations of the Land Revenue Committee appoint

ed by the Interim Ministry. It therefore stopped all resettlements, cancelled those resettlement enhancements that were imposed inspite of our opposition in 1931—33 and ordered a few remissions in different parts of the Province. But the Bombay Government has done little more than order paltry remissions in the Land Revenue arrears of the last one or two years. MARCHES, that any five people could lodge a complaint against any officer and it would be enquired into.

Mahatma Gandhi's Vidyamandir Scheme is more talked about than adopted. His demand for establishing prohibition is only played within a few Districts of the country. His prayer for the abolition of untouchability is heard partially only by the Bombay Ministry. His anxiety about the uplift of Harijans is respected by the promises of our ministries. If such was the poor response given to the very head of the Congress, what wonder is there if demands of others are not even heard properly by our ministers? Why does all this happen? For the obvious reason that to do any of these radical things and achieve progressive reforms, our ministries have to go against their essential class interests. They will do only those things and upto that limit as they are obliged to. Therefore the only weapon that we can use, not only to get our demands but also to obtain satisfaction even upto Mahatmaji's demands is our mass struggle and agitation. Thanks to our comrade's sacrifices and our peasants' sufferings, our sanctions are daily growing in their intensity, magnitude and effectiveness.

As things are, it is a mistake to expect our Congress Ministries to give us full satisfation unless we change the very personnel of Congress leadership and the content of programme and principles. We can achieve that as much by trying to capture the Congress Committees as by our constant association with the masses and thus raising their revolutionary tempo, and political capacity. Since the present office-bearers of Congress Committees are doing their best to prevent our class conscious Kisans form obtaining places of vantage in the Congress, the other means for influencing the Congress policy, programme and leadership has to be pursued with determination. We must therefore carry on incessant struggle against the growing anxiety of Congress Ministries to compromise with zamindars and money-lenders and oblige them to attend to the needs of our masses, even at the risk of being criticised or condemned by our own Congress leadership, with the firm conviction that our intentions are pure, our methods non-violent and our propaganda truthful.

I will now try to sketch out eleven points, as a supplement to our Kisan manifesto. We will be able to broaden our propaganda by adopting these demands and our propaganda, Sabha and we certainly keep ourselves in close touch with their actual needs by sponsoring our campaign on those fronts also.

TEN POINT PROGRAMME

Apart from these failings of Congress and other ministries in regard to the Faizpur Agrarian Programme, new problems are arising every day without our ministries

trying to take any bold or Statesmanlike steps to face them.

1. There is to-day a serious crisis facing the producers of cotton, wheat, groundnut and sugar.

It is true that the A. I. C. C. appointed at its Calcutta meeting a Sub-Committee to study the cotton situation but the recommendation of that Sub-Committee that crop-planning ought to be undertaken by the Provincial Governments is not yet implemented. The measures taken by the U. P. and Bihar Ministries to fix certain zones ofcane production for sugar factories cannot produce any effective results for sometime to come. But even the recommendations of the P. C. C's. of U. P. and Bihar in regard to the fixation of an adequate minimum price were not implemented by the Provincial Governments. The wheat and groundnut growers have not received any special attention at all either by Congress or Ministries.

It is therefore the duty of our Kisan Sabhas to concentrate on the need for a constructive crop-planning scheme, being adopted and implemented by provincial governments.

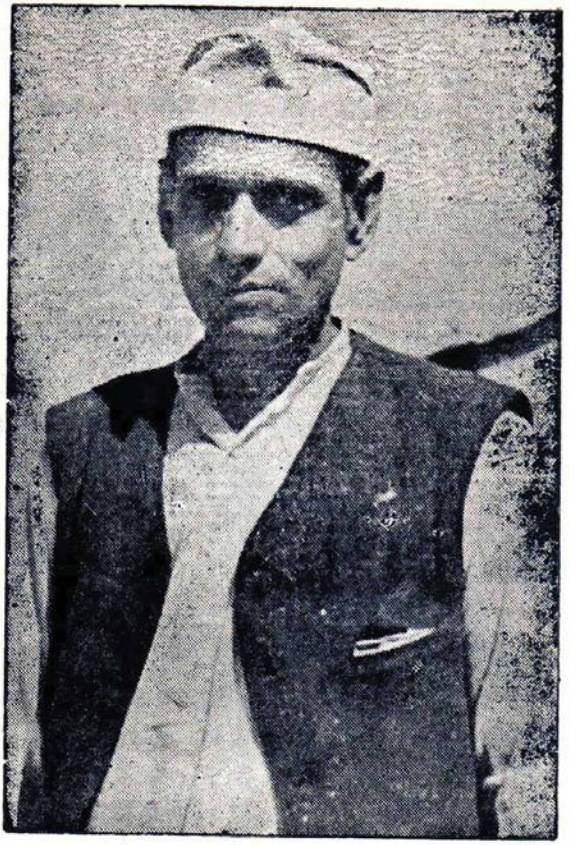
2. This problem is likely to assume a special importance in the near future in view of anxiety of the Congress to non-cooperate with the British Empire in the event of war. This non-cooperation may extend to the British Empire and its alies and that will naturally lead to the automatic prohibition of our exports to other Beligerant countries. In that event, it is our peasants

who will be hit the hardest, not only by their inability to derive any special advantage due to the increased demand for our agricultural commodities as can be expected but also by the stoppage of even their usual exports of agricultural produce. What is to happen to our peasants in that event? Do we not need an alternate cropplanning scheme which can be put into operation the moment such a war comes and our Congress decides upon such a non-cooperation? We will have to see that necessary preliminary steps are taken to ensure the economic protection of our peasants as well as their whole hearted cooperation in our national campaign against the British Empire.

3. We have to concentrate on the need for raising the general level of prices of our agricultural produce. So long as the price-level is too low to cover costs of cultivation and maintain our peasants and agricultural workers on at least the minimum standard of living, very little can be gained from all other remedial measures. This can be done by one of two measures. The rate of exchange can be manipulated or the total money in circulation can be increased in such a way that the level of prices of our agricultural produce can be raised.

4. We have also to insist that along with this raising of general level of prices, atleast 50 per cent of the benefit of such a step shall go to agricultural workers.

5. Untouchability in all its forms must go and its removal is the first preliminary to a real advance in the



Sjt. Indulal Yagnik
Editor, The Kisan Bulletin.

life of our workers. But that alone will not be enough. We have to raise their economic status. That can best be attempted and immediately consistent with the financial resources of our provincial governments by adopting the three following means. All lands belonging to Government and public trusts and big landlords which to-day are not cultivated but are cultivable shall be granted only to agricultural workers without any right of alienation and only for Co-operative Cultivation. A fair wages clause shall be stipulated in all contracts given out by the Public Works Departments and the Local Boards. Agricultural wages Boards have to be constituted, consisting of representatives of peasants and workers in equal numbers to study the economic conditions of both these sections of our rural folk and fix minimum rates of wages to be paid for different agricultural operations.

6. We have to engineer an intensive campaign to oblige our ministries to undertake an effective and comprehensive anti-illiteracy and adult education programmes to achieve universal literacy in atleast a couple of years. The halting steps so far taken by the Bihar Ministry and those proposed to be taken by the U. P. Ministry and the empty talk of the Madras Ministry and the mere passing of a resolution in its favour in the Bengal Ministry cannot satisfy any earnest patriot, not to speak of an educationist.

7. We have also to insist upon the dovelopments on a large scale of irrigation works all over our country. Major and minor works, productive and unproductive works will have to be sponsered by our Kisan Sabhas on

the sole ground that they will provide protection to more and more of our Kisans from famines. Hence my welcome to the recent Rayalaseema Campaign in favour of Tungabhadra Project.

8. Equally necessary is a statesman like and courageous lead in regard to anti-flood measures. The congress has so far failed to grapple with this terrible menace to our Kisans of Punjab U. P. Bihar Bengal, Orissa and Madras. We need inter-provincial co-operation to successfully tackle this trouble and arrest its ravages.

9. Another economic depression has already begun in the world and its tantacles are slowly spreading over our country and unless preventive steps are taken, within the next two years our peasants will again be plunged into much greater gloom and degradation than they have been since 1929. It is stupid to think that the outbreak of a war will not save us from all these troubles. War there has been for the last 3 years in some part of the world or other and its claws are spreading. Yet it is in the very same period, that our exports of cotton to Japan, groundnuts to Europe, have gone down and on imports of cotton and wheat have gone up, leaving our peasants much poorer. Therefore it is necessary for our provincial governments to launch upon a bold constructive public works programme. consisting of the provision of protected drinking water supply, houses for all our workers, roads to all our villages, warehouses for our agriculturists and construction of open markets, in addition to the building up of various irrigation and drainage works.

10. Side by side with all this, we have also to insist upon the improvement of the technique of our agriculture, cattle breeding, dairy farming, other subsidiary agricultural industries and the development of the productive capacity of our villagers for their own civic improvement. Mere rural development works either on the lines of the Brayne movement or on those of the U. P. Department cannot help our masses to improve their economic or civic life.

In conclusion I must sound a note of warning that unless our Kisan Sabha puts up a stong fight against this disintegrative provincial autonomy and in favour of a strong central responsible government in an independent India, responsible for the welfare of our masses, we are likely to run the grave risk of being tossed about from one Provincial Government to another and between a Provincial Government and the Central Government. Let it be realised and it cannot be realised none too soon—that our peasants, problems cannot at all be adequately tackled by any one or two provincial governments. To take only a few, the flood, famine, crop planning, prices and marketing and exports of agricultural commodities, destructive pests and insects, are all serious problecms demanding all-India action by one authority responsible to all the people and commanding the finance and resources of the whole nation. Neither prohibition nor the replacement of land revenue and Zamindari tenancy can be achieved without there being immense contributions from the revenues derived from income-tax and customs and that cannot become practicable until and unless the Central Government shoulders the responsibility for the economic well being of our peasants. I therefore suggest that our Kisan comrades

have to carry on our intensive and incessant propaganda that in any future scheme of constitutional re-building of Indian State, agriculture and the welfare of peasantry and agricultural workers and the uplift of the village shall be central responsibilities and that our provincial governments shall act not as autonomous bodies, as has suited the evil, genius of the British to create as at present, but as the agents ef the Central Government of Independent India.

RECRUITMENT FOR WAR.

This naturally brings me to the recruitment that is going on for the next world War in which British Empire may be involved. In the teeth of the opposition of our Congress Party, the Criminal Law Amendment Bill was passed in August 1938. Government of India has created a new offence. It is now out to recruit our peasants and workers, not for the standing Army of our country or even for the peace time but, for the imperial army of British Empire. We need all our Kisans and workers to remain in India at the time of the next world war to aid us in our struggle for Swaraj. We cannot allow our Kisans to be butchered for the sake of imperialism nor can we sit complacently while our masses are spirited away into the Defence Forces which are the worst cells for imperialist and unpatriotic propaganda. It is therefore the duty of every Kisan Sabha to see that provincial Government does not extend this infamous Act to its province. Let it not be forgotten that if at all our Kisans are to shed their blood let them do so only in the service of the country and their class and not for the sake of defending our imperialist masters.

CHAPTER III

TENANCY MEASURES IN BIHAR

SWAMI SAHAJANAND SARASWATI.

There are loud and profuse talks and preachings about the achievements by the ministry in Bihar in the shape of the tenancy measures to give relief to the Kisans and in this way it is sought to discredit here the agitation in this connection on behalf of the Kisan Sabha, by trying to prove that it is carried on either deliberately and maliciously with some ulterior motives, or else it is the act of some misguided people who are out to earn the cheap leadership of the Kisans and the masses. Nay, we of the Bihar provincial Kisan Sabha are, every now and then, seriously charged with, and accused for, wilfully misrepresenting to the Kisans these measures and other popular activities of the ministers and thus alienating their feelings. A comprehensive list of these gains is repeated *adnauseum* and it is likely that the public at large not closely following the developments, not intelligently scrutinising the much talked of achievements and not having intimate knowledge of their concrete applications, may be influenced by these talks, preachings and writings. I, therefore propose to make a somewhat detailed examination of these measures solely with a view to present them before the public in their naked forms.

Before proceeding any further I should like to draw the pointed attention of all concerned towards five guiding factors which will prove immensely helpful in

judging accurately the situation and arriving at a correct conclusion. First of all we ought to remember that it is not the mere absence of the legal provisions helping the Kisans, which has caused their miseries, degradation and ruin in the end, in fact a lot of such provisions are already there to save them to a considerable extent from the clutches of, and the troubles from, the zamin dars, and yet the lot of the Kisans has ever remained unaltered, because there has been no vigilent and prompt machinery to enforce them strictly with its eyes towards the maximum benefits accruing thereby to the Kisans. And if there was any machinery at all it was not only devoid of a heart and a will for the Kisans, but also it did not move in the matter with the requisite promptness and thus in the meanwhile afforded chances, though unconsciously, to the money and the influence on the side of the oppressors, to succeed almost everywhere. Besides, it was so costly and complicated that the famishing and the simple Kisans could not generally avail of it and were easily hoodwinked. The Government, while providing for the machinery did not take into account, more over, the over-awed and terror-stricken conditions, the Kisans were continuously in, right from the horrifying days of the inception of the permanent settlement, thanks to its notorious regulations, and considered them, for all practical purposes of the law, equals of the zamindars. This has been the greatest handicap for the Kisans in getting their grievances redressed through the legal machinery. For instance, there is the section 58 of the B. T. Act penalising the landlord for non-grant o

rent receipts, or a statement of accounts, and also section 55 for crediting the sum paid by the Kisan in the year and for the instalment declared by him. But these have been practically dead letters all along and above 80 per cent. zamindars have neglected them scornfully. Much capital is made of the fact that the ministers have penalised abwabs and feudal dues, but there are already sections 74 and for the same purpose, though in a different shape, and there is also section 186 making a criminal offence any undue and illegal interference with the produce of the Kisans' holding. But has any one seen the Kisans in general benefit by them ? An emphatic no is the only reply. Then there is the section 69 with regard to Bhawali. But instead of helping the Kisans it has proved a veritable machinery for their ruination. I can easily multiply instances. So what in reality the Kisans need first of all, is the typical machinery referred to above. Hence they are apt to judge, and rightly so, measures for their benefit on this criterion at first.

Secondly, it must be borne in mind that good and beneficial provisions alone won't do, although they are promoted with the best of intentions. But the totality of the actual effect of their application favourable to the Kisans is what is really wanted, Take for instance the replacement by the Batai (share dividing) system of the most accursed Danabandi (appraisement) system by the ministry. No doubt, the Danabandi is most oppressive and it ruins the Kisans. But, then there are certain other aspects also of it and they are certainly favourable to the Kisans. So they should not be lost sight of

and hence counter balanced by the disadvantages resulting from the Batai if and when it takes the place of Danabandi. Firstly, there is every prospect of Danabandi being favour able to the Kisans only if the illpaid amlas of the zemindars entrusted with the work are paid some thing secretly in advance by the Kisans. Then there is the freedom for the Kisans to gather and deposit crops at the places which suit them the most. Thirdly, there is no question of the wages being paid to the cutters and the gatherers from the joint produce. But in the Batai now all the three are gone. It is evident, there is no room for the first. As for the second, for the easy safeguard for their interest the zemindars are bound to insist upon the crops being deposited at places of their choice and practically they have done it. The Kisans have but to yield and this has entailed a great hardship on them. Imagine for a moment the lot of a Kisan bringing his harvested crops to the zemindar's place miles away and then watching the same for days and nights and months together. The same thing is about the wages also. It is but neat and proper that the wages must be a part of the joint produce. But there is no mention of it in the clauses introduced by the ministry in the bill and the zemindars in general have refused point-blank to pay wages from their share also, and as they are the stronger party there is no help for the Kisans. No amount of doubtful survey records can possibly come to their rescue. Moreover, it is a debatable point whether the survey records about the wages etc., have any legal status and for the Danabandi holdings there is no possibility of even mentioning wages in

these records. Numerous other difficulties have been deliberately created by the zemindars after the replacement of Danabandi by Batai and these I need not mention. And the " manhunda, mankhap and chauraha " systems, twin sisters of Danabandi, but admittedly more oppressive, have been left strangely enough untouched !

As for the share of 22 and 18 in a maund, the less said the better. In the absence of any special machinery created for the purpose it has never enforced in more than 90% of the cases. Accustomed as they are generally to half shares or more, the zamindars cannot be expected to yield easily. And if they have yielded at all events, they have not allowed wages from the common produce and have fixed thrashing floors arbitrarily. Therefore in concrete forms this division of 22 seers to the Kisans and 18 seers to them has been nullified deliberately by them. And have the admirers of this change ever thought of its effect on the tenants-at-will ? They have been deprived of the little lands they used to get previously.

Thirdly, before assessing the value of any measure the circumstances in which they were introduced should be recalled to the memory and also the agency through which they were brought into being. Had there been a zemindar or non-congress ministry even after the Congress victory in the elections these very measures, or even the less would have been appreciated much more, or if these things had been done in an ordinary course even by the Congress ministry, or the like prior to the most alluring and high promises of the election days,

the value attached to these would have been naturally quite different, as the criterian to judge and weigh them would have been some thing extremely low and peculiar. But coming as they do from the Congress ministry after the fateful elections, when it was openly Promised and solemnly declared to exempt uneconomic holdings from rent, to wipe out generally the arrears there of, to abolish abwabs, forced labour etc., to remove rural debts and for this purpose to declare an immediate moratorium, to recorer rent arrears in the same manner as civil debts and to reduce substantially the rents and canal rates having regard to present economic conditions, and as owing to these promises very high hopes were created in the minds of the Kisans resulting in rendering them quite unmindful of the threats and oppressions of the zamindars for helping the Congress in the elections, and hence completely antagonising them, so the criterion has now been totally changed and it has become rather higher. Consequently, finding that in-stead of those pledges being redeemed they have. one and all, been comfortably shelved and easily forgotten in spirit, the Kisans are bound to resent, become desperate and feel angry, especially when they see to their utter dismay that there is no change for the better in their conditions which are steadily deteriorating, and as if to add insult to the injury the zemindars have become rather emboldened and continue their tyrany with impunity and all sort of wild threats from them have become the order of the day. In the circumstances mere repeated enumeration of those reforms won't cut much ce, it will enrage the Kisans in stead. First curve merci-

lessly the lawless, tyrannical and most objectionable activities of the zamindars and promptly teach them a terrible lesson for these and make them realise that they are under the regime of the popular ministry installed by the Kisans in spite of them, and see clearly that times are completely changed, then and then alone any value of these measures may be assessed by the Kisans.

Fourthly, we will have to ascertain carefully and minutely the effect of these changes and measures on the feelings and the minds of the opposite party, the zamindars in general. Undoubtedly they in a body not only feel happy and victorious, but are in a most jubilent mood over them and it is clear even to a casual observer. In this connection I quote the words of K. B. Ismail the bitterest enemy of the Congress who scornfully refused to co-operate with the Congress-Kisan Enquiry Committee and who even now has not changed his colour and made it clear on the 7th August by presiding over anti-ministry Muslim Meeting held at Patna, while the ministers were enjoying public reception organised mainly by the zamindars, bankers and capitalists. Said he on the 9-8-38 in the council, "By entering into agreement with the Congress the zamindars have not surrendered their rights. The agreement is in the interest of the zamindar community." The whole hearted support by such diehard zamindars is the real clue to the assessment from the Kisan point of view of the value of the agreement and the measures based thereon.

Lastly the politico-economic conditions of the Kisans and the consequent standard of their criterion to judge

the ministerial measures must not be lost sight of. The living political consciousness in them is at its lowest ebb and economically they are a ruined and finished lot. A they are impoverished, treated like dumb cattle by others in every respect, becoming fast landless and, as if to crown all these, the attitude of the police and the officials in general towards them is gradually worsening, in-stend of improving even after full 21 months of the elections promising their deliverance, they naturally lose heart, become nervous and want to test these measures only on the criterion of the immediate redress of the grievances. And who dare blame them? Being thems elves overwhelmed by all sorts of miseries and difficulties they are in no mood to even listen to the difficulties of the ministry and rightly so, and none of us is entitled and justified to expect otherwise from them after having made those promises of reliefs to them, while we realised and certainly ought to have realised those difficulties, if any which were to confront the ministry in the future. No amount of explanation will do now.

Judged in the light of the afore-said factors the much-talked-of achievements by the ministers present nothing to enthuse over. Their admirers are the loudest about the restoration of bakasht land clauses, which they call a distinct gain to the Kisans. But there too I find nothing of the kind, Frist of all they have been surrounded by about a dozen restrictions which it is impossible to overcome. They are not applicable to the zamindars of an annual income of Rs, 6000 or less, thereby leaving more than 99 per cent of the zemindars unaffected. But even in the case of the remaining there is the "settlements with others

in good faith" restriction standing just like insurmountable Himalayas, because on the basis of the bitter experience of the past it can safely be said that good faith on the part of the zamindars means every thing and nothing so far as their dealing with the Kisans are concerned. So it will end in smoke for the Kisans. This has been admitted even by the Congress press here. But I quote the "Times of India" of 17—8—38 which runs "In fairness to the tenants it must be said that the zamindars are not altogether free from blame. In anticipation of legislation compelling them to return to their tenants, lands which had been sold in rent-decrees they are said to have sold such lands or settled them on safe tenants of their choice, so that the question of returning the land to the original tenant might not arise.....While the smaller landlords would escape the operation of the measure seeking to restore the bakast lands, the bigger landlords were arranging things in such a way that they would have precious little left to restore to the Ryots when the measure was actually enacted."

Similarly the advantages of the part-sale of the holdings in rent-decrees have been taken away almost in to-to in a round about way through the device of the habitual-defaulter-clauses. Wiping out enhancements and general reduction of rents have not as yet been realised by the Kisans, as the same complicated unsympathetic and heartless machinery is sought to be applied for them. Nay, this wiping out of enhancements is not applicable to the Saran and Champaran districts and the Kosi diyara lands of Purnia and Bhagalpur. These latter will not enjoy the benefit of even rent reduction.

But there is a distinct hardship to the general public and especially the poor Kisans, owing to the increase of the stamp duty by about 50 per cent introduced by the ministry. And the inactive and dead "Distraint Chapter" of the Tenancy Law with its menacing amendments invigorating it and giving it a motive power has been made to hang over the heads of the Kisans in a thread just like the Democles, sword, while the same had been deleted in Bengal as far back as 1928 and the U. P. too is thinking seriously to treat it in the like manner.

I have done. In the end I want only to request the public to test and judge the claims of the Bihar ministry about agrarian measures in the light of the hard facts stated above and pronounce their judgment accordingly.

MINIMUM PRICE FOR SUGARCANE

Will they be raised this year?

Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, President, All India Kisan Sabha has issued the following to the Press :—

Speaking at the Annual General Meeting of the Indian Sugar Mills, Association at Lucknow on the 20th instant the premier Pant, while eulogizing the U. P. and Bihar governments for the measure adopted for the prosperity of the sugar industry of India, is reported to have said that "What these governments had done was for the betterment of the industry alongside with the benefit of the cultivator, "in fixing (minimum cane-prices) the governments depended on figures for the whole year and advised them to see that the cultivators get due

prices." May I most humbly remind the ministers of both the governments of the prices per maund of sugar prevailing last year and this year during these very months? Last year the Bihta sugar was selling at the rate of Rs. 6 and a few annas. More or less this was the rate every where and both the governments fixed the minimum prices of cane at the rate of five annas three pies per maund. But this year the sugar price has gone up, thanks to the sugar syndicate appointed by the governments, to just about Rs. 8. Thus it us evident that sugar mills have piled up their profits at the cost of the Kisans and the consumers, majority of whom again consists of Kisans themselves. Will the governments check it and instead of trying to bring down the sugar prices, as hinted in the said speech, will they raise the prices of sugar-cane proportionately? Last year it was argued ad nauseum than the fixation of higher price for cane would automatically result in dislocating and ruining the industry. But this fear now no longer exists and it is clear from the proceedings of the Association. I, therefore, request on behalf of the Kisans of U. P. and Bihar that both the governments should raise the prices of sugar cane just in proportion to the rise of sugar prices, so that the Kisans may be a bit benefited, the Kisans whose interest has been repeatedly remembered by the U. P. premier in the speeches referred to. Let me hope, both the governments will give no opportunity to the Kisans and the Kisan Sabha, at least in this respect, to complain and agitate. This demand of theirs is perfectly logical and there should be no difficulty in acceding to it.

CHAPTER IV
KISANS UNITE

Observance of our All-India Days.

The Lucknow Kisan Congress has inaugerated the All-India Kisan Day on the first of September. Ever since this Day was celebrated on that date which therefore has come to be as important in the annals of Kisan movement as the National Independence Day (26th of January) observed by all our Congressmen and Nationalists.

With the inaugeration of this Day an opportunity is provided for our Kisans all over India to feel, think and act in terms of their All-India needs, responsibilities. Instead of each province being left to look after itself and the Kisans of any local area being dependent upon their own moral and national resources, on this day all our provinces are made to realise their unity and mutual dependence and strength, all our Kisans are encouraged to feel that their sufferings are being watched. This cries for help being heard and this struggles being supported by all other Kisans all over India. However small may be our field of struggle, however parochial may be the significance of the upshot of any of our struggles and however little may be the attention bestowed upon such struggles by the nationalist press, our All-India Kisan Sabha is there to send out its powerful voice, the eagle eye of our bulletin is there to watch it and bring it to the notice of the nation as a whole and our All-India Kisan Day provides the exact platform and opportunity needed to bring it before the Kisan of India and to enable him to express his approval of the struggle and lend all his help.

Jawaharlal Nehru

But before we were able to create an All-India platform for our Kisan movement, we had to go through much struggle. When the first Ryot (Kisan) Day was declared in 1931 for opposing the Resettlement of Land Revenue of Godavari on the first of November, many Andhra Congress leaders themselves wondered at the need for it. Fortunately it was a success. When the Andhra Kisan March was started on the 6th March 1933, some Kisan leaders went to the extent of advising zamin Ryots not to take part in it since they had nothing to do with the provincial Kisan demands and succeeded in preventing the Nellore and Godavari Kisans from joining it. The third Kisan March was non-co-operated with by some Congressmen in Tamilnad in 1935 since they had felt that their local representations through their local associations about local grievances was enough. Owing to our persistent loyalty to the ideas of March and the development of a Kisan consciousness and our faith in the movement as a whole, the idea of bringing all our peasants to feel in unision with one another and studying shoulder to shoulder with each other has gained increasing support and resulted later on in the foundation of the A. I. K. C. and the observance of the All-India Kisan Day and the development of All-India Kisan Mind.

Thanks to the excellent traditions established by the Congress through its National Days, our very first All India Kisan Day was taken up enthusiastically by all our Kisan Comrades as well as Kisans all over India and thousands of Meetings were held and lakhs of peasants

were brought into touch with our All India Kisan Manifesto on that fateful first of September 1936.

The first of September 1937 witnessed tremendous gatherings of our peasants ; as many as a lakh had gathered in Patna 15,000 in Cuttack, several thousands at everyone of the meetings held in Bombay, Madras, Bezwada, Calcutta, not to speak of lakhs of peasants who took part in our thousands of Meetings all over the Country. The U. P. Assam, Sindh provinces which had not yet developed properly organised Provincial Kisan Sabhas have shown through their tremendous concourses of Kisans and numerous Kisan Sabhas in their villages that our Kisans have reached such a degree of class consciousness as to respond spontaneously to the call of the All India Kisan Sabha.

Thanks again to the precedents set up by the National Congress, our Kisan Sabha has succeeded in organising the following All India Days to enable Kisans all over the country to express their sympathy and support for any section of Kisans of any part of India in their struggles against their exploiters :—

(2) All India Debt Cancellation Day 27—3—1938.
(3) A. I. Mansa Day 3—4—1938.
(4) A. I. Mangrol Day 3—7—1938.
(5) A. I. Rayalasema Famine Relief Day 20—8—1938.
(1) A. I. Bihar Kisan Day 23—1—1938.

Thus during this year alone five All India Days were celebrated in addition to the Independence Day, China Day May Day, Kisan Day. If we remember the fact that every one of these days, arrangements had to be made for proper

announcements, publication of propaganda leaflets, bringing off prabhat pheries, organising meetings and reporting their proceedings to the press and appropriate authorities and organisations, we can properly appreciate the tremendous strains placed on our slender resources in men and money by the successful observance of all such days. It is therefore highly creditable to all our Kisan Comrades and Sabhas that they should have ungrudgingly placed all their resources at the disposal of the Kisan movement and developed, through their observance of these days, so great a moral strength for the Kisan movement to be placed at the disposal of our suffering but struggling heroic peasants.

It is indeed highly creditable to our movement that it should have readily placed all its resources, the Day, the Bulletin and the platform at the back of the few thousands of peasants of Mansa state which consists of only 15 villages in all. Instead feeling apathetic about the Mansa struggle with the thought that after all it was a tiny affair, as some of our most highly placed nationalists were inclined to in the beginning, the All India Kisan Sabha readily took up their affair and obsorved the A. I. Mansa Day, suggested by com Dinkar Mehta with such enthusiasm and sincirety that the nationalist press began to pay special attention to it. A similar response was given to the Mangrol struggle, although the Guzerat state, of which Mangrol is a part has no P.K. C. and the Mangrol is itself a very small area. It will thus be seen that a stage is reached by our movement that not a struggle of our Kisans in any part of India escapes without being noticed by all our Kisans all over; and supported

by our Kisan comrades. Our Kisan Sabhas are today busy with those not only with these resolutions concerning their local District or provincial problems but also with those concerning the grievances of peasants of other provinces and the Kisan struggles waged all over India. when the sufferings and the tempo of the struggles engaged in to get out of them reach such a degree as to call for intensified and concentrated all India support, an All India Day is organised of course in the nature of things, the All India Kisan Sabha can observe at best only a few such Days in any year.

A wrong impression has gone abroad, thanks to the mischievous propaganda of a section of our press, including the Anglo—Indian Press, that there is a constant struggle and competetion between the Congress and Kisan organisations. I am constrained to observe that some of the office bearers of Congress Committees who, for their local and personal reasons, are opposed to some of our Kisan comrades, also contribute to the growth of this wrong impression. At the same time our comrades have also to realise that even one false step by them and there had been none too few in same areas, specially in those places where we do not have properly organised and disciplined Provincial Committees—gets us unnecessarily into the clutches of the anti-Kisan Press, those selfish minded congressmen, zamindars and Anglo—Indian politicians who are out to exaggerate our differences from the local congress committees, if not to create them on ther own initiative.

I wish here to emphasise the great contribution that our Kisan movement is daily making to the

strengthening of the National Congress despite the in numerable instances of annayences or disappointments that we are obliged to suffer at the hands of our own fellow congressmen who for the time being happen to be office-bearers of local Congress Committees.

A part from the great and unforgettable services rendered by all our Kisans and Kisan Sabhas at the time of the last general elections, our Kisan Sabhas have enthusiastically observed the Independence Day on the 26th January and China Day on the 12th January, and all our papers have come out with special numbers on the Haripura Congress Day. In fact when it was discovered that the All India Bihar Day as originally fixed was likely to come into conflict with the China Day which was declared later on, we promptly postponed our own day till to the 23rd January. Thus there is ample evidence to show how spiritedly our movement has been strengthening our national movement, as led by the National Congress.

I will however fail in my duty if I do not also mention the hearty support we have received on certain occasions from the Local Congress Committees. For instance, the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee endorsed our Kisan Demands and wanted the Ministry to give effect to them so far as they are not inconsistent with the Faizpur Agrarian programme. The Various Congress Committees in the Andhra welcomed and supported our Kisan Marchers, although some of their office bearers were opposed to some of our Kisan Sabha etc.

The U. P. Provincial Congress Committee has itself taken the initiative in organising a Kisan Day in April

and all our Kisan Sabhas co-operated with it. The Sindh P. C. C. has been putting up a stout fight for the local Kisans who are threatened with an enhancement in their land revenue and irrigation rates. The Punjab Congress Legislative Assembly Party supported the recent agrarian bills while the Punjab P. C. C. refused to have anything to do with the anti-agrarian agitation. Our Kisan Sabhas have naturally been co-operating with those Local Sindhi and Punjab Congress Committees. I gratefully acknowledge the timely support given by the Punjab P. C. C. to our great Satyagrahis of Amritsar. Thus it will be seen that if only the office bearers do not fear any grudge against our Kisan Sabhaites because they have taught them in the congress election or continued to build up our independent Kisan Sabhas and develop the class consciousness as our Kisans, there is any amount of scope, as is evidenced by this year's work alone, for mutual co-operation and assistance between the comrades of the Kisan Sabhas and workers of the Congress.

But the office bearers of Congress Committees must cease to look upon Kisan Sabhas with hostility and treat Kisan Sabhaites as their potential enemies, if we are to have hormonious development of our anti-imperialist forces through these two great organisations.

It is only fair that they ought not to rush, as many of them as are inclined to, to the conclusion that every Kisan Sabha or comrade is an enemy of the congress merely because they dare criticise the views of the Congress High Command or the activities of the Local Congress Ministry. They must realise that every one of our Kisan comrades is

as loyal to our anti-imperialist struggle as any totalitarian minded Congressman and that as long as all of us are actuated by the same degree of patriotism and antipathy to the imperialist domination over India. What all we do through the Congress and Kisan Sabha, without doing anything to undermine each others work is bound to advance the cause of the Country. It means therefore that such things as the Congress-Zamindar agreement of Bihar, the non-co-operation of the Congress with the Comilla Kisan conference. The unnecessary objection raised against our Red Flag even at our own conferences will have to be avoided.

THE THIRD ALL INDIA KISAN DAY

News comes from every part of India of the phenomenal success of the third All India Kisan Day. Bihar and Andhra as usual have witnessed hundreds of Kisan Rallies and thousands of Kisan Marches. In Bihar, the Zamindar—Congress pact and, the restraint and other coercive provisions of the tenancy Bill were denounced and an irresistible demand was voiced for the immediate declaration of moratoriun and the raising of minimum price for sugar cane.

In the Andhra, Kisans expressed their dissatisfaction against the delay caused in publishing the report of the Government Committee on Zamindari Ryots and the failure of government to enable peasants to repay their debts, resettled by the debt Relief Act. "Forest Act, criminal tribes Act, and land Revenue system must go," thus declared the Andhra Kisans.

The special feature of this day is that the Utkal March has met with immediate success in that the Orissa tenancy Bill became an act on the 31st August i-e on the Kisan Day Eve. Thirty thousand Kisans, hailing from Cuttack District and other Districts and Dhenkanal state gathered at Cuttack and staged a monster demonstration at the very portals of the Government. "The peasants brought rations and subscriptions from their villages. Com. Navkrishna Choudari, Malati Devi, Saranghdhar Das, Lokanath Misra, Gourang Das, S. N. Divivedy, H. Patniak addressed the gathering. The resolution, saying "The peasants won't take it lying down if the Madras Estates Land Amendment Bill is not assented to by the Viceroy and they are prepared for a constitutional crisis on this under the Congress" was passed.

Punjab also has done excellently on this Day. Conferences were held at many places. Many of them have adopted new methods of our Ralleys. For instance, in the great Kisan March headed by Com. Chaudhry, Atma Ram, Harsichand, Hari Singh M. L. A., Balwant Singh Dukhia. Coffins of " Malba " and " Chabi " were carried in the procession and cremated at the conclusion of the procession. Hundreds of Kisans carried their ploughs and other agricultural implements. Resolutions demanding assessment of land revenue on income-tax basis, abolition of 'Malba' and 'Chabi thikripehra' Choukidara and Panchotra, condemning Army recruitment Bill were passed in all the Punjab Conferences. Com. B. P. L. Bedi wrote in his editorial to the Monday Morning." The internment and imprisonment of Socialist Kisan workers which has

been pursued by the Government with vicious vindictiveness, had already mobilised great forces towards an intensified action with the observance of A. I. K. Day. First September has also become a landmark in our fight against an anti-national Government which is hen-pecked by the dictates of Imperialist interests and strategy. The historic Lyalpur Kisan Conference presided over by Abdul Quyum M. L. A. was attended by 40,000 Kisans and the procession had the support of a lakh of Kisans. The whirlwind and bitter conflict between the Ministerialists and non-agriculturists has also added jest to the Kisan agitation in the Punjab and numerous meetings either to condemn the " Black Bills " or to support " Golden Bills " are being held all over the Punjab. Hence the equally great response to the Lyalpur Zamindars Conference of the ministry.

In Amritsar district, the day was observed with great enthusiasm in the villages of Chabba (illaq Sadar), Thatta (illaq Sarhali), Bhangwan (illaqa Jandiala Guru), Khadoor Sahib (illaqa Gharinda), Sanghe (illaqa Tarn Taran), and Baba Bakala (illaqa Bias). In Gurgaon district the Day was celebrated with great eclat at Baheen where thousands of poor Jats assembled to demonstrate their solidarity with their Kisan brethren of the rest of the Province. The loud speakers were installed and effective speeches made by the local Kisan workers and some Delhi Socialist workers. The Kisans of Jullundur, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Ferozepore, Lyallpur, Sheikhupura, Lahore and Ambala districts were also seen in motion on that historic day, when in co-

operation with the Indian Peasantry they demanded the fulfilment of their both immediate as well as basic Economic demands. The Kalsia, Nabha and Malerkotla States vied with the British Punjab in celebrating the All India Kisan Day. The States people are attempting hard to throw off the wretched yoke of the states autocrats—the remnants of the fudal age. They are preparing to rise in open revolt to the tyrany and repression of the Rajas and Nawabs. Retrospective Kisan activities, achievements and failures were reviewed at the meetings held throughout the province. A strong need was expressed for strengthening the Kisan Movement to get the immediate Kisan demands accepted and fulfilled by the Punjab Government. Besides Local resolutions the following demands were voiced most resolutely at every Kisan Conference :—

(i) Condemnation of the most hated Army Recruitment Bill recently passed in the Central Legislative Assembly, and the appreciation of the assurance given by the Kisans to fight it tooth and nail if not rescinded.

(2) Tearing criticism of the coming Federation which is going to be imposed upon us by the British Imperialists sooner or later against our wish. The peasant masses showed their iron will to give it a determined but non-violent fight to shatter it into pieces. They asserted their right to accept a Federation of their own making.

(3) The Land Revenue to be based on Income Tax basis.

(4) Cancellation of all the debts without any compensation and that the creditors be paid from the Government Treasury.

(5) The Abiana (water rate) to be realised equal to the annual expenses of the canals.

Assam is also making history. On the Kisan Day had assembled ten thousand Kisans and labourers at Sylhet under the leadership of Azizur Rahman, Dev and other Comrades and expressed their whole-hearted support to the Sylhet tenancy Amendment bill of Mr. Karunasindhu Roy and also to the tea Garden Labourers' Bill. Since this was the biggest demonstration, it created a great impression all over the Surma valley. These brave marchers tracked the whole way to Shillong and staged a great demonstration before the Legislative Assembly on the 5th September. That most of them are Moslems is a very encouraging fact.

Maharastra :—In Maharastra, the peasants of Arindh state started their march a couple of days earlier and staged a great demonstration before the state head quarters and demanded a radical revision of land revenue system and the cancellation of all arrears. The Maharatta peasants, march to the Legislative Assembly to demand the over hauling of the tenancy bill which is introduced by the Government.

Bengal:—Our Bengal Kisans are too busy to save themselves from the terrible floods that are swamping thousands of villages and speiling vast extents of crops.

Kisans assembling in Faizpur, Rangpur, and other places to demand adequate relief.

Reports received from other provinces are equally encouraging. Processions were organised, meetings took place. Kisan manifesto strengthened and Kisan Sabha supported in thousands of villages in every province. I am quite confident that if in the wake of this great wave of enthusiasm and atmosphere of Kisan-conciousnesss, our comrades carry on an intensive and persistent campaign in favour of our demands, coupled with a membership campaign, we will be able to obtain much immediate relief for Kisans and strengthen then the Kisan Sabha.

CHAPTER V

OUR SANCTIONS AND OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

I do not propose to review here in detail the doings of the ministries formed since the 1st April 1937. That study will come separately. Here only an account, though in brief of the relation between our own Kisan struggles and pressure and the reforms effected or relief afforded by the ministries in some of the provinces will be given.

In Sindh soon after the ministry was formed, two Kisan Marches took place in April and May to demand a reduction in land revenue and forest dues. The Ministry was considerably fluttered over them but soon decided to grant land revenue concessions and to halve the grazing fees. When it had found that the Congress was also behind our demands. But when later on it was found impossible to yield much more and therefore our marches were becoming too inconvenient for it, the Ministry banned any of our marches either to the Ministers or to the Council Chamber or to any of the District Magistrates. Owing to the immaturity of our Kisan organisation there and the absence of Provincial Kisan Sabha and the unreadiness of the Congress to take up the challenge, our Kisans in Sindh could not teach their ministers the lesson that our Amritsar Kians have recently taught to the Punjab Ministry.

Inspite of it the contingent threat of our Kisans and the backing of the A. I. K. C. of much less effective use than it is in other provinces where the local organi-

sation is itself powerful, have had not a little influence upon the doings of the Ministry in Sindh. Hidayatulla's Ministry was followed by Alla Bux Ministry in 1938 March-April and the new Ministry tottered badly over the question of raising the irrigation dues. Though a sliding scale of enhanced dues is introduced the Ministry is able to continue in power not by any moral authority but by back-stair tactics and influences, so Kisan minded are the majority of Alla Bux party itself has been obliged to become.

In U. P. there were three great Peasant Marches, one initiated and encouraged by the Congress Party itself and the other two organised on the intitiative of our Kisan Sabhaites. The very presence of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the anti-landlord proclivities of a large number of Congress M. L. A. S. thanks to their better electioneering fights with the Haig—Chattari candidates and the Ki san-consciousness of the P. C. C. have all strengthened the essential demands of our Kisans. Naturally within a few weeks after their assuming of office, the Congress Ministry stayed all actions in Courts for the eviction of tenants, realisation of rent arrears and enforcement of court decrees for debts and rent arrears. Secondly by the middle of July a Land Revenue Committee of the Legislature was appointed with Premier Pant as its Chairman to formulate rent proposals. These proposals which go some way the satisfy our minimum demands are now before the Legislative Assembly in the form of a Tenancy Bill. In view of the political strength and consciousness of U. P. Zamindars and the support lent to them by highly placed constitutional

authorities in and outside the Provinc the Ministry had naturally to welcome the move of the P. C. C. to organise a Kisan's Rent Day on the 27th of April and to develop an intensive mass campaign in support of its rent proposals. So it might appear as if the U. P. Government as well as the P. C. C. are themselves championing the cause of the Kisans because solely of their identification with the Kisan cause. If it were so, there need not have been those unseemly struggles between the Kisan Sabha and Congress Committee of Meerut, the threats complaints of and to Kisan Sabhaites by Hon. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai in May-June that Kisans were being persuaded not to pay rents and there could have been no grumbling that owing to our Kisan membership campaign, the congress membership campaign was suffering and so on. This apart, the very tactic so far adopted by the Congress Ministry in welcoming evidences of mass feeling and Kisan-demand in favour of certain radical land revenue reforms and by the P. C. C. indeveloping such mass demonstrations and in directly organising Kisan Days, Marches and other demonstrations is just the right method which ought to be emulated by all other ministries and P. C. C's.

If it had not been for the absence of a strong, united and class conscious provincial Kisan Sabha, the really militant District Kisan Sabhas with which this Province abounds and the large number of enthusiastic, energetic and educated Kisan comrades who are spreading out their activities and influence in every part of the province could have achieved much more and made the

very P, C. C. authorities who to-day are so loud about their totalitarian conceptions of the congress respect the Haripura resolution on Kisan Sabhas much more readily than at present and forced the Government to do much more and that more readily and earlier.

With all this, the Pant Ministry has taken energetic preliminary steps to control official corruption, although the recent publication of the circular of the Inspector General of Police to all his subordinates that they need not mind the attitude of the ministry, congress and other popular authorities, shows how much more there is to be done, The Palliwal Rural Development Department bade fair to create an organisation capable of revolutionary possibilities and radical improvement in our country life but Premier Pant's latest appeals to the civilians for co-operation seem to belie all our expectations in this direction. Pant's steps in fixing zones for Sugar factories, prescribing certain conditions for effective marketting of sugar-cane and prescribing minimum prices for cane, in co-operation with the Bihar Government are intended to benefit our Kisans. But the minimum prices are too small and the factories are retaliating by crushing smaller quantities of cane.

Next in chronological order is the Bihar agitation. There the tempo of our Kisan struggle has reached a high degree even before the advent of the Congress ministry since the zamindars who were alarmed by the Congress majority in the Assembly had begun to evict their tenants from their ancient homesteads, lest they should be obliged to concede

permanent occupancy to them once the Congress Ministry came in. So even while our A. I. K. C. was meeting at Niyamatpur restraint orders were being served on Jadunandan Sarma and several Kisans and hundreds of Kisans were threatened with worse consequences, just because they were reassuring the lakhs of peasants who are threatened with virtual eviction from their homesteads. When naturally the Congress Ministry came into power, the B. P. K. C. organised a Mammoth March of Kisans, numbering nearly a lakh, and presented with our demands. On the Second All-India Kisan Day, i.e. the 1st of September, were organised demonstrations in all parts of the province. Everywhere our Kisans in their lakhs were responding to the demands of our Kisan Sabha and the slogans "Declare a Moratorium" "Down with the zamindari system, official corruption" "Prevent Evictions" "Stay Legal Proceedings" were raised in every village. No wonder several zamindari agents took law into their own hands and evictions by thousands followed. This led to various skirmishes in some places and more intensified agitation in all villages.

The Congress Ministry, though backed by Rajen Babu, one of the most powerful and respected leaders of the Congress had no other choice but undertake immediate legislation to tackle the tenancy question. A bill was being formulated. But the zamindars raised a hue and cry and threatened Satyagraha if their rights were abrogated. I then issued a warning to the Central Government, Governor-general and Governor that if they were to rush to the rescue of the Zamindars, they would have to face the

united forces of the Congress-Ministry and Kisan Sabha. Unfortunately the Bihar Ministry instead of adopting the Pant and P. C. C. Methods of invoking the support of the Kisans as against the vested interests, committed the grave blunder of trying to negotiate the opposition of Zamindars by arranging a compromise between the ministry and Zamindars. It would have been right, even as a matter of compromise, to expect the two contending parties, the Zamindars and Kisan Sabha to reach, if possible, some understanding between themselves about the immediate demands of peasants and to offer to implement such an understanding. Even that was not done, the local Congress and Ministry took it upon themselves the sole responsibility of speaking for Kisans, just when there was a more aggressive and more effective 100 per cent spokesman for Kisans in the shape of the Kisan Sabha and concluded, inspite of the protestations of the Kisan Sabha and C.S.P. an agreement with Zamindars. Naturally our Kisan Sabha repudiated this agreement and questioned the right of the Congress Committee to claim to conclude any such agreement in the name of Kisans, when it was there to speak solely in the interests of Kisans, Swamiji and his comrades put up a brave fight and dared the P. C. C. to pursue its bellicose policy even against Kisan Sabhas but stood loyal to Kisans' real demands.

As a result of all this, the Zamindars had to quieten their own internal rebellion against the agreement and agree to the passing of the tenancy bill, and money-lenders bills. Since these bills do not all go far enough and the vicious powers of destraint and rent being first charge on

land are still there and moratorium is not declared yet, Gur Kisan Sabha is very sore with the position and there is a very keen sense of disappointment among our Kisans all over the province. But even this little bit could not have been done by this slow rather inefficient Ministry. manned by Zamindars themselves.

I cannot but refer, before I leave this province, to the unfair tactics adopted with or without the approval of but certainly with the knowledge of the Ministry and the Local Congress., to create a division within the ranks of Kisans by some of the Congress M. L. As, and Parliamentary Secretories belonging to the orthodox Congress Section. The Kisan-Mumdoor agitation and the passing of a vote of no confidence in the Kisan Sabha are all calculated to discredit the Kisan Sabha and disable it in its fight against the Zamindars and the unholy Congress-Zamindars agreement.

Next in the order of unfair doing of the Local Congress was to foist an unfair charge of preaching violence against Swamiji and the Kisan Sabha. To ask our Kisans to be always armed with their traditional 'Danda' and to exhort them to defend their Homesteads, women folk and the honour of their kith and kin against the rapacity, ravages and rancour of Zamindars and their hooligans was wrongfully construed as incitement to violence. All the exceptions that Mahatma Gandhi had himself provided for his creed of non-violence were brushed aside by the Local Congressites and were either misinterpreted or explained away by Mahadev Desai. Even the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code and Law were forgotten

and even the elementary right of a man to protect the honour of his women folk was disregarded. Most unfortunately even Rajen Babu was influenced to rush to the rescue of the Local Congress by placing before certain unauthenticated records. It must he said to the credit of Bihar Kisans that though this propaganda had succeeded in defeating so many of our comrades in the P. C. C. elections, they had stood loyally by the Kisan Sabha. On the whole it is true to say that the Local Congress and Ministry had, by coming to consider the Anglo-Indian and Zamindar press to be a greater friend than our Kisan Sabha and treat the Zamindars whom they had to defeat in election in a more friendly manner than the Kisan Sabha to which they owed their electioneering triumph and the present power, had seriously weakened the faith of the public in general and Kisans in particular in their statesmanship.

In Bengal our B. P. K. C. had won an initial triumph in compelling the Government to order an enquiry and on its report, to reduce the canal rates payable by Burdwan peasants. But the struggles against evictions, enhancement of rents in the Twenty-four Parganas are still going on without producing any immediate results. The Coalition Ministry received a terrible shock when more than 20 M. L. As. of the Krishak-Praja Party broke away from the coalition because of the failure of Fazlul-Huq, their leader to implement his election pledges of affording economic and immediate relief to peasantry. Soon after the Ministry came forward with its Tenancy Bill and on its introduction, Premier Huq had to bemoan the irresistible pressure

brought to bear on him which rushed him to introduce this interim bill. Though the Congress could not support it, it had to stand neutral owing to the pressure of our Kisan M. L. As. and Kisan agitation and the bill was at last passed. Premier Huq was also obliged to appoint a Land Revenue Enquiry Committee to propose radical and thorough revision of the whole system of Land Revenue.

When the Comilla Conference had to be arranged and comrades N. Dutt Muzumdar M. L, A., Ananta Mukherjee went there, they were prohibited to alight at Comilla and like brave comrades, they refused to obey the arbitrary ban orders and were sentenced for one month's imprisonment and therefore the Comilla Conference could not have their services.

The attempt to bring about a fusion between the Krishak Praja Party and the B. P. K. C., initiated in March 1937 has not so far resulted in any success. Our B.P.K.C. has reached a provisional understanding in August 1938 and it is hoped that in the not distant future the Krishak Praja party may come within the ambit of the A. I. K. C.

Orissa P. K. C, has been fortunate in having some M. L. As. who are able to make themselves effective in the counsels of the Congress Ministry. The Premier himself Mr. Biswanath Das was one of the founders of the Madras Zamindari Ryots Movement in 1926 and co-operated with me in persuading the First Andhra Provincial Zamindari Ryots Conference to adopt the slogan of " the abolition of the Zamindari system." As

befitting a real revolutionary, the leaders of the P. K. C. did not rest their oars because of these favourable circumstances nor did they repose too much confidence in the strength of constitutional means alone. They began to concentrate on the development of extra parliamentary mass strength for their Kisan demands in favour of radical revision of the Madras Estates Land Act and the Orissa Tenancy Act, reduction of rent and revenue, abolition of forced labour etc. As many as 15,000 Kisans met the Premier on the Kisan Day (1—9—37) and Comrade Gourang Das, Secretary of the Cuttack D. K. C. presented the Kisan's Demands to him. The Premier said " peasants should be the real owners of the soil they till and they should have full rights over the produce of the trees and the tanks of the land. In quick succession both the Madras and Orissa Tenancy Laws were amended. The one prohibits any rent which is more than 2 annas in the rupee in excess of the Government land revenue assessment charged on neighbouring lands and the other confers permanency of tenure on our lands and reduces rents to a small extent. Both these bills are awaiting the sanction of the Governor.

In C. P. the original budget proposals in September, October 1937 did not contain any reduction in rents or land revenue. Then came off a splendid Kisan March at Nagpur on the 13th December despite the rigorous efforts of some local Congress leaders to prevent it and the Kisans demanded immediate relief from tax burdens and brought much presure to bear upon the Congress M. L. As. The Congress cabinet soon respond-

ed by offering some reduction in rents and land revenue and staying the coercive processes in this collection. The provincial Kisan Conference held in April 1938 at Nagpur has considerably strengthend our Kisan movement in that province.

Bombay Government is in a peculiar position. It started with a very small majority and its opposition included Kisan champions like Mr. Perulekar and moderate socialists like Dr. Ambedkar and his followers. More over, though there is not a strong enough P. K. C. in any of the three linguistic provinces of Maharastra, Karnatak and Guzerat, there is a very powerful press at Bombay, strengthening radical forces, including the Congress socialist, Sentinel, Bombay Chronicle, Hind Praja, Kranti, Free Press Journal, now, the National Front to espouse the cause of our Kisan immediate demands. Inspite of it all, the Bombay Finance Minister Mr. Lathe continued to oppose our demand for interim Moratorium and the Bombay Government did not show any anxiety to declare any moratorium. Therefore comrade Indulaljie had made preparations to bring off a Kisan March on 7-1-38 in cooperation with every group of people willing to help the cause of Kisans. The Independent Labour Party of Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Perulekar and his supporters also cooperated. Some people misunderstood this as an anti-Congress move. But the Kisan movement is perfectly entitled to invite the cooperation of all sections of people who genuinely desire for the time being the advancement of Kisan interests on any particular issue, provided of course the lead is taken by our Kisan Sabhas and nothing done purposely to either to weaken or to discredit the

Congress. The Bombay Kisan March was a thumping success. Only a few days after the March, the Bombay Government was constrained to declare one year's Moratorium for the debts of small holders. It did not at all satisfy our Kisan Sabha since it had let too much power to the District Magistrates in addition to being too restrictive. But it has shown how effective do our Kisan Marches become, if only our Kisans stand loyally by their Sabhas and demands. The Bombay Government is now busy with its tenancy bill which also does not propose to do adequate justice to our tenants and also with the restitution of the lands of the Bardoli Kisan who had lost them owing to the Civil Dis-obedence Movements. *

BOMBAY, Sept. 2.

**It is understood that the Secretary of State for India has permitted the Governor of Bombay to accord previous sanction as required by Section 299 of the Government of India Act to Congress Ministry's Bill seeking compulsory acquisition of lands confiscated during the civil disobedience movement from the peasants of Gujarat and Karnatak.*

In this connection it might be recalled that the Bombay Legislature passed a resolution approving of the Government's policy of purchasing these lands at Government cost with a view to returning them to the original owners. As negotiations to acquire these lands were not very successful the Government proposed bringing forward legislation in the matter. The matter had to be sent to the Secretary of State for approval. According to the measure the present owners of the confiscated lands are to be paid for the land plus any expenses incurred in improving the lands 15 per cent by way of compensation and 4 per cent interest on the capital.

The Bill will come up for consideration before the Bombay Legislature during the present session.

The dispute will be decided by a Tribunal presided over by a person of the status of a High Court Judge.—A. P. I.

The Chapter on the Peasant Marches makes it clear the Magnitude and machanism of the great Andhra Peasants March. That March created so much awakening among our peasants and made the demands of our Kisans for the immediate declaration of Moratorium, reduction of land revenue and improvement of the status of Zamindari tenants so irresistible that the Madras Government was obliged to declare a state of Moratorium for Agrarian Indebtedness on the 1st of October 1937, order land revenue remissions amounting to Rs. 75 lakhs in December and appoint an Enquiry Committee into the conditions of Zamindari Ryots before the end of 1937. By the time the Marchers reached Madras on the 27th March the Debt Relief Bill was passed. This March has proved, if any proof were the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee appointed a Sub-Committee including R. M. Sarma, N. V. R. Naidu G. Brahmayya, V. Ramadas and myself who had been associated with the Zamin Ryots Movement from its very beginning to help our ryots to present their evidence before the Government Committee. I could not ce-operate with the Sub-Committee after the initial stage owing to my other pre-occupations and certain differences of opinion. But I must admit that our secretary, who is also the President of the Andhra Zamindari Ryots Association has done excellent work for a number of months in helping our peasants to present their memorandum and oral evidence in an organised, uniform and effective manner. This Sub-Committee has made very radical suggestions for immediate adoption by the Congress Ministry and its report is an able supplement to the earliar (1933) report of the Enquiry Committee of our Association.

The Andhra Forest Ryots Conference was held at Cumbum under my presidentship in December 1937 to ventilate the grievances and formulate demands of forest ryots. Comrades K- Obulu Reddi and Ch. Bali Reddi had done good work in conducting enquiries into the real nature and incidence of forest peasants' sufferings com. D. S. Reddi led a fight of Savaras, a hill tribe against the forest officials of Vizag District. All this resulted in the appointment by the Government of a Forest Advisory Committee and the appointment of a Special Officer to enquire into these grievances. The grazing fees were also halved.

The Rayalaseema Ryots Conference was held under my Presidentship in May 1938 to concentrate on the irrigation needs of those five famine-ridden Districts. The Andhra Famine day was organised on the 15th of June. An intensive Campaign is now being conducted for the achievement of Tungabhadra and other irrigation projects calculated to irrigate 15 lakhs of acres by com. D. S. Vallabha Rao, K. V. Ramakrishna, K. Obulu Reddi, and Y. Adinarayana.

The Punjab Government which has claimed to be a Kisan Government Par Excellence was also obliged to listen to our Kisan Sabhas and meet their demands half way. The recent four bills, regulating money-lending business, cancelling all usufruct mortgage that were contracted before 1903, extending the scope of the Punjab Land Alenation Act to the extent of protecting mortgagees from agricultural money lenders were introduced and passed as much because of the intensive propaganda carried on by our Kisan Sabhas as because of the anxiety of the

ministry to fulfil its election pledges atleast to the big land-holders. The appointment of the Land Revenue Committee to suggest a radical revision of the Land Revenue system and examine the possibility of replacing the present system by graded income tax on agricultural income above a certain minimum was the direct effect of the Llyalpur, Amritsar and Jullunder agitations during the last six years.

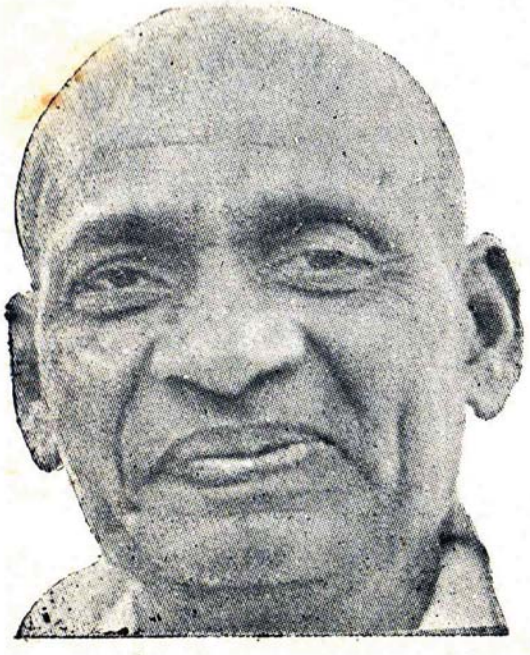
The recent fight of Assamee peasants of Desherbazar Area, consisting of 60 villages, demanding the cancellation of rent arrears and the halving of current rents was partially successful.

Even the North West Frontier is bestirring itself. The C. S. P. of that province has formed a War Council and is carrying on Satyagraha campaign against the heartless demands of the Nawab of Toru's administration for the payment in full of all the rent arrears for the last 5 years. Already a score of peasants have gone to jail and many more are ready. We have to see what the local Government will do. It has already failed in not having so far declared a moratorium for rent arrears atleast.

Our Assam Comrades have also achieved much success. Though there was no demonstrative Marches, the very organisational strength of our Surma-Valley Kisan Sabha and other Sabhas in the Assamese portion of the province has forced the Government to order suspension of land revenue and to introduce a few though paltry amendments to the tenancy law. But owing to the language difficulty and the weakness of the Congress Assembly Party not much more could be achieved.

Neither the indebtedness question nor the tenancy problem is so far tackled by the Ministry either in a bold or in an adequate manner. Unless the Kisan Sabhas of the Assamese Portion of the Province are well organised and brought together into a comprehensive Provincial Association we cannot expect any effective and appreciable results.

This short study of the nature of the sanctions developed by our Kisan Sabhas and the direct benefits derived by our Kisans makes it perfectly clear that our Kisan Sabhas have not only loyally stood by our masses and tried to focus their powers on their most important immediate needs but also succeeded even to the extent that they have done, in forcing the Provincial Governments to do what the pre-autonomy Governments were so unwilling to do and the post-autonomy Civil Servants and capitalists have tried so much to prevent. I have touched upon only a very few aspects of our sanctions and referred to an extremely fewer number of struggles that our Kisans have put up. But even this far from adequate and satisfactory narration is enough to demonstrate the immense amount of constructive work done by our Kisan Sabhas after I had appealed for such a development of our sanctions at the Faizpur Kisan Congress. As Swamiji, our President for this year has remarked at Comilla, even these paltry reforms would not have been achieved by the Ministries, Congress or otherwise, if it had not been for the growing revolutionary tempo as well as capacity of our Kisans."



Sirdar Vallabhai Patel

Babu Rajendra Prasad

CHAPTER VI
SEPERATE KISAN SABHAS

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

I have recieved many letters from Congress Committees and Congressmen enquiring about the duty of Congressmen towards labour and peasant organisations. Should these organisations be encouraged or not? And, if so, what form should they take; what relation, if any, should they bear to the Congress? These problems have arisen in many provinces and they require our serious consideration. Sometimes these problems are largely personal, sometimes they are mainly provincial, but behind them there is always the larger issue. In dealing with the local aspects of the problem, we mnst inevitably consider these peculiarities and even personalities. But we must be clear about the principles and the real issues before we lose ourselves in the forest of local detail.

THE JOINT ANTI-IMPERIALIST FRONT

These complications are, to some extent, inherent in the situation. The Congress is predominantly a political organisation representing the urge of all classes of Indians towards national freedom. A labour or peasant organisation is essentially a group or class organisation, primarily interested in the welfare and advancement of that group or class. The Congress thinks and acts mainly on the political plane, the workers' organisation on the functional and economic plane. Yet the differences are not so great as one would imagine and the development of our struggle and of political consciousness bring the two close to each other and they overlap to a considerable extent.

In any country under alien domination, the political aspect always overshadows other aspects. This in itself would make the Congress the dominant organisation in the country, but this pre-dominance has been further intensified by the part that the Congress has played in recent years in our struggle for freedom. The Congress is thus today far and away the most powerful and the most wide-spread organisation in India; it has tremendous mass appeal and mass support; even the workers and peasants look up to it and are influenced by it far more than by their own olass organisations."

CONGRESS A NATIONAL ORGANISATION

But, in spite of all this, the Congress remains—and has to remain—a national organisation and it cannot always represent the functional or class interest of the workers and peasants. It cannot function as a Trade Union or Kisan Sabha. In actual practice, where its contacts with the peasantry are considerable, it almost functions as a Kisan Sabha. The general tendency is for the Congress to develop into a predominantly peasant organisation and this process is likely to continue, but the leadership is bound to remain with the middle classes, chiefly the lower middle classes, so long as the Congress remains the National Congress and does not undergo a change into something entirely different."

CONTACT WITH THE MASSES

Bnt these are speculations about the future, and it is the present that concerns us. The outstanding facts of the present are (1) the Congress must be strengthened because it is the only organisation which can lead us effectively to our goal; and (2) the rising

consciousness ferment among the mases. If these two facts are correlated then we have a powerful movement which grows in strength and leads us to success. This is the basic reason for and the ' raison d'etre ' of the emphasis that is being laid on mass-contacts.

Contacts with the masses can be of two kinds: direct contacts by means of Congress members and village committees among the workers and peasants, and contacts with the workers' and peasants' organisations. The first, of-course, is essential and needs no argument. Without it the second does not come into the picture at all, for the second can only be a corollary to the first. If the Congress has not got direct and wide-spread and deep contacts with the masses, it is bound to be influenced far more by the middle classes and will thus move away to some extent from the mass outlook which it has been its consistent aim to develop. It must, therefore be the aim of every Congressman, and more specially those who have the interests of labour and the peasantry at heart, to develop these direct contacts by enrolling Congress members from the working classes and establishing village committees.

CONTACT WITH WORKERS

The second kind of contact, that is some kind of organisational relation of the Congress with working-class organisations, involving fnnctional representation has been discussed for sometime past and is still being discussed. It involves a basic change in the Congress constitution and I do not know when, if ever, it will be given effect to. Personally, I am in favour of the principle being admitted and given effect to gradually, as the U. P. Provincial Congress Committee has recom-

mended. This will not make much difference to begin with, as the workers' and peasants' unions which are properly organised and capable of taking advantage of Congress affiliation are very limited in number; and then the conditions for affiliation would be laid down by the Congress. But this question does not arise now as the Congress constitution does not permit such affiliation or any kind of functional representation. It is a debatable question and we need not consider it further here. But this I should like to emphasise again: that those who are in favour of this change cannot bring it about from outside pressure; they can only do so by having a large enough Congress membership of workers and peasants who want such a change. If the outside pressure is at any time great enough to compel the Congress to bow to it against its own will, that will mean that the outside organisations are more powerful than the Congress, and if so why affiliate? But this is a highly unlikely contingency.

While it is true that this question is beyond our purview at present, we see something vaguely similar to it developing all over the country. This is the increasing co-operation in actual work between local Congress Committees and working class organisations Sometimes even Joint informal committees have been formed. Often enough, the leading spirits of those local organisations are prominent Congressmen and so there is no difficulty in having this co-operation. But there is something more in it than this common link; there is the demand for this co-operation and a realisation that it is highly necessary.

PLACE OF SEPARATE ORGANISATIONS

Having laid so much stress on the importance of bringing in workers and peasants directly into the Congress, let us now consider the desirability of having separate working-class organisations. There can be no doubt whatever that both industrial workers and peasants have, or ought to have, the inherent right to organise themselves. That is in the nature of a fundamental right which the Congress has repeatedly recognised. There is no room for argument about it. The Congress has gone a step further and encouraged, in history at least. the formation of such unions.

In economic matters and those relating to workers' grievances, the union can have whatever programme it chooses, even though this may be in advance of the Congress programme. Congressmen, in their individual capacities, can and should be members or friends of the union and such will, of course, give it their advice. But a Congress Committee as such should not try to control a trade union.

THE PEASANT'S PROBLEM

"The important problem of the peasantry remains. and this, after all, is the most important of our problems. In the term "peasantry" I include the peasant proprietors as well as the tenants, the petty zamindars of the Punjab and elsewhere, the Kisans of the U. P. and Behar, and the Krishaks of Bengal and Orissa. The same method of treatment will not apply to all these: there will be variations. But, for the moment, I am dealing with the Congress approach to their special organisations.

The Congress has fully recognised the right of the peasantry to organise themselves, and in theory the considerations I have advanced in favour of trade unions apply to them also. But there is a difference. It is relatively easy to organise factory workers and the like; they are a closely knit group, working shoulder to shoulder and obviously suffering from common disabilities. It is far more difficult to organise the peasantry, loosely scattered and thinking almost in terms of the individual and not of the group.

Where Congress Committees are working effectively in village areas, an effective Kisan organisation in the same area would largely overlap. There would be duplication of effort and waste of energy. The Congress itself is usually considered by the peasantry as their own organisation, and that is as it should be. Thus we find that in such areas separate Kisan organisations have not grown up, although the Kisan movement, as a part of the Congress and more or less within its fold, is strong. Where, however Congress Committees are not functioning effectively in the villages, the gap is bound to be filled sooner or later by peasant organisations. *The important fact to be brone in mind is that there is deep ferment in the peasantry all over India and a powerful, though partly uuconscious, desire on their part to do something to get rid of their many burdens, which have become quite unbearable.* Fundamentally this is due to economic conditions, but also there is the fact that the political movement, under the leadership of the Congress, has raised mass-conciousness and made them resent many things which they used to bear silently like dumb beasts. They have also had a glimmering of the effectiveness of organisation

and united mass action. So they are expectant, and if the Congress call does not reach their ears, some other will, and they will respond to it. But the call that will find echo in their hearts must deal with their own sufferings and the way to get rid of them.

NEED FOR A PROGRAMME

Because of this we find to-day all manner of strange people, who have never had anything to do with the peasantry before, talking in terms of economic programmes and trying in their uncouth way to woo the peasantry. Even political reactionaries of deepest dye discuss unctuously agrarian programmes. Nothing will or can come of this, for far-reaching agrarian reform will never come out of political reaction. But this attitude of theirs shows us the way the wind blows.

This wind is blowing to the villages and to the mud huts where dwell our poverty- stricken peasantry, and it is likely to become a hurricane if relief does not come to them soon. *All our political problems and discussions are but the background for the outstanding and overwhelming problem of India—the Land problem.*

The Congress has realised this in a large measure, and, in spite of its political preoccuptions, it has laid down an agrarian programme. This programme, though it does not go to the root of the problem, is substantial and far reaching and undoubtedly would bring relief to the peasantry. So far as I know, agrarian programmes drawn up by peasant organisations do not differ greatly from this. But the drawing up of a theoritical programme is not enough. It must be given the fullest publicity among the peasant masses and the organi-

sation must reach the village. Further we must draw up definite schemes and proposals on the basis of this programme. These proposals will vary in different parts of India as conditions differ. It is the business of Provincial Congress Committees and Congress Assembly parties to draw up these proposals. It is true that we may not be in a position to give effect to this full programme under present conditions. But we must be ready with it, to the smallest detail, so that when the time comes we can go ahead confidently and with speed.

I have pointed out that present conditions in India and the very dynamics of the situation are leading to the organisation of the peasantry. The example of other countries points to the same conclusion. Therefore it seems to me inevitable that peasant organisations will grow up. Where the Congress is itself largely a peasant organisation, separate Kisan Sabhas and the like will not function effectively as organisations, though they may offer occasional platforms for the ventilation of Kisan grievances. Where Congress contacts with village folk are weak, the Kisan organisation will develop more. In any event the growth of peasant organisations, weak or strong, will take place. What should be our attitude to them?

NO RIVALRY

We cannot say that there should be no peasant organisations. That would be contrary to the declared Congress policy: it would be wrong in principle and it would come into conflict with that living movement and ferment that we see all around us. Nor can we say that a Kisan Sabha should be just a wing of the

Subhas Chandra Bose
President. I. N. C.
1938—39

Congress, each member of the Sabha being also a primary member of the Congress. That would be an absurdity, for under those conditions, it is hardly necessary to have a Kisan Sabha. It seems to me also out of the question to place peasant organisation in the same category as the All-India Spinners' Association or the Village Industries Association. Such restrictions will not stop the growth of separate peasant organisations; they will only result in putting them outside the pale of the Congress and make them look upon it as a partly hostile body.

It is important that there should be no thought of rivalry between the two, for this will be injurious to both and more especially to the peasant organisation which is bound to be much weaker. If large numbers of peasants are direct members of the Congress and leading Congressmen are interested in the peasants' grievances, there will be no rivalry and in effect though not organisationally, the peasant organisation will be a kind of wing of the Congress.

CHAPTER VI

Haripura & Delhi Resolutions.

In view of certain difficulties that have arisen in regard to the Kisan Sabhas and other organisations in some parts of India, the Congress desires to clarify the position and state its attitude in regard to them, *The Congress has already fully recognised the right of Kisans to organise themselves in Peasant Unions.* Nevertheless it must be remembered that the Congress itself is in the main a Kisan Organisation and as contacts with the Masses have increased, vast numbers of Kisans have

Press Statement published on the May Day of 1937.

joined it and influenced its policy. The Congress must and has in fact stood for these Kisan Masses and championed their claims, and has worked for the Independence of India which must be based on the freedom from the exploitation of all our people. In order to achieve this Independence and strengthen the Kisans and realise their demands, it is essential that the Congress be strenghthened and that Kisans should be invited to join it in larger numbers and organised to carry on their struggle under its banner. It is thus the duty of every Congressman to work for the spread of the Congress Organisation in every village in India and not to do any thing which weakens this organisation in any way.

While fully recognising the right of Kisan Sabhas, the Congress cannot associate itself with any activities which are incompatible with the basic Principles of the Congress and will not countenance any of the activities of those congressmen who as members of the Kisan Sabhas help in creating an atmosphere hostile to Congress principles and policy. The Congress therefore calls upon Provincial Congress Committees to bear the above in mind and in pursuance of it take suitable action wherever called for.

Civil Liberties.

(1) Inasmuch as people including Congressmen, have been found to advocate murder, arson, looting and class war by violent means in the name of civil liberty and several newspapers are carrying on a campaign of falsehood and violence calculated to incite the readers to violence and lead to communal conflict, Congress warns the public that civil liberty does not cover acts

of or incitement to violence or promulgation of palpable falsehood.

In spite, therefore of the Congress policy on civil liberty remaining unchanged, the Congress will consistently with its tradition, support measures that may be undertaken by the Congress Governments for the defence of life and property.

Both these resolutions are aimed at undermining the Kisan movement and discouraging all those Congressmen who have been interesting themselves in the cause of Kisans. As was feared at Haripura when the socalled charter for Kisan Sabhas was being thrust down our throats, several Provincial Congress committees have constituted Kisan Sub-Committees, including so many people who have distinguished themselves by their opposition to Kisan Sabhas and Kisan Comrades. The Congress funds, to which Kisans and Kisan Comrades have conributed so largely, are being spent upon an anti-Kisan Sabha agitation in more than one province.

To make matters worse, the Delhi A. I. C. C. has passed the resolution on the so called Civil liberties, which really negatives civil liberties and which is openly aimed at the land Satyagraha of our Kisans developed so far in Bihar and Andhra. The Congress Ministries which have done so little for preventing zamindars from ejecting our peasants from their hereditary lands and ancient homesteads and from molesting their womenfolk are today assured of support from the National Congress in their efforts to protect the person and property of the vested interests. It is hard to find a parallel in the whole annals of the Congress since it has begun its Gandhian

career, to this resolution in the wild, uncorroborated and irresponsible charges it makes on one wing of the Congress, in the failure of the Congress High command to take into consultation the Kisan Sabhaites who were there at the time in regard to the insinuations contained by the resolution and in the wholly hostile and intemperate attitude adopted by the Working Committee in condemning the Kisan Sabhaites without even giving them an opportunity to state their case. It is therefore clear that the present Congress leadership is anxious to precipitate a crisis and make it impossible for Kisan Sabhaites to remain in the Congress. Those of us who are on the A. I. C. C. have made it perfectly clear the dangers being ahead if such a suicidal policy were adopted. But we can only hope against hope that better counsels may come to prevail upon in the Working Committee and thus our unhappy country may be helped to achieve her independence through united front between all the anti-imperialist forces.

One thing is certain, the Present leadership of the Congress seems to be erroneously under the impression that our Kisan Sabhas do not scruple about violence. We have to disabuse their minds about this. It is the duty of every Kisan Comrade and Kisan Sabha to give publicity to the real non-violent nature of every satyagrahic or agitational move we make on behalf of our Kisans. we have also to take adequate precautions to see that even unconciously none of our Kisan Sabhaites countenances any out brust of violence on the part of our Kisans. I am perfectly convinced that so long as our Kisans remain non-violent and carry on their Satyaghraha in the true Peasant fashion, we can achive the success that we desire.

Kisan March at Hari pura.

CHAPTER I

PRESS AND PUBLICITY

Even at best of times our Kisans could not hope to have enough of press support. Their very demands are against most of the people managing and running our nationalist press. Our demand for the declaration of Morotorium annoyed and frightened the capitalists, in whose hands are most of our nationalist papers. Our demand for the abolition of zamindari system has alienated the few other papers which are in their hands.

But until October 1935 the response of our nationalist press to the little material that we ventured to send it received not too unfavourable attention. At Madras after we had a serious talk with Sirdar Vallabhai Patel over the need or otherwise for Kisan Sabhas, the attitude of our press began to cool off rapidly. The Madras conference of All India Kisan workers and the Lucknow All India Kisan Congress and the growing difference of opinion between the orthodox section of the congress and our Kisan Sabhaites have contributed not a little to the appearance of signs of hostility by some papers towards Kisan Sabha in the South and the North.

But the impending general elections for the provincial assemblies and the need for defeating the reactionary parties then in the ascendency in the legislative fields restrained the press from doing anything openly against us. In fact some papers which were till then very indifferent towards our movement grew eloquent about

us and particularly commended our appeal for support for the congress to our voters.

Soon after the elections were over and the congress ministries came, almostall our nationalist daily press had cold shouldered us and even the News Services had to cool off a little for obvious reasons.

Some papers like the Indian Express and Andhra Patrika of Madras, the Indian Nation, 'Searchlight' of Patna, and Hindustan Times of Delhi had begun to advocate the totalitarian views of Sirdar Vallabhai Patel and question the need for independent Kisan Sabhas and wonder at the impropriety of some congressmen even venturing to support Kisan Sabhas. What wonder is there that we are encountering more and more opposition in our nationalist press especially ever since our insistence that congress ministries should fulfil their election pledges. Any criticism of congress ministers and any evidence of impatience on our part towards their failure to render timely and immediate help to our Kisans have come to much unjustifiable and uncharitable criticism at the hands of these papers.

Hence the complaints of such prominent congressmen as Swamiji in Bihar, Bankim Mukherjee in Calcutta, K. S. N. Murti in the Andhra, that most of their legitimate news about the proceedings of our conferences, the resolutions passed, demands supported are not reported properly and in time and that the news of misdeeds of moneylenders and zamindars towards our Kisans is suppressed.

Even in our anger or exasperation at the news services or newspapers we cannot venture to start a

daily even for the whole of our Kisan movement all over the country, so poor are our comrades and so devoid are we of any influential or moneyed persons.

Yet we cannot go on depending so entirely upon the unforeseeable reactions of our nationalist press towards our movement. We cannot but sympathise with those daily papers, what with their fears of the frowns of Congress Ministries, the temper of Sirdar Patel who went to the extent of declaring that the "All India Kisan Sabha .....exists only on paper" and the 'Harijan's onslaughts on our movement. We must develop, as best as we can, our own press, if not a daily one, atleast a weekly one.

I am glad to say that our movement has shown through its achievements in this direction, that it is alive to this great need of having our own press.

As long ago as 1920, some of us started an Andhra wekly called "The Ryot". But unfortunately after my departure for England, it fell into the hands of reactionaries and so it had to be stopped, after my return in 1933.

In 1929 the "Ryot Patrika" of Rajamundry was started by M. Narasanna, B.A., but it ceased publication in 1933 owing to financial troubles. The "Zamin Ryot" was started in 1928 by Com N. V. R. Naidu, the leader of Zamindari Ryots and it is to day the premier Kisan paper of the Andhra. We have also the 'Vahini' of Madras started in 1936, and "Nava Sakti" of Bezwada in 1937 and "Prajabandhu" of Madras in 1935 and "Chitragupta" a fortnightly Magazine in 1933, "Praja Vani" of Chicacole in 1935. Thus in the Andhra we are served with a fairly powerful weekly press. For

Tamilnad, the C. S. P. weekly "Jana Sakti" started in 1938 is helping our cause.

The C. S. P. weekly, 'Janata' of Patna came to the rescue of the Bihar Kisan Sabha. The 'Kisan', a fortnightly of Allahabad, the 'Kirti' of Meerut have helped us in the U. P. and Punjab. A paper in Jhansi, the Kranti of Bombay, another in Amritsar Hind praja of Bombay, a Malabar paper and several other papers are also helping us.

The English papers, "New Age" of Madras, 'Congress Socialist' and 'National Front' of Bombay, the 'Comrade' of Calcutta have come to render us great service. We are particularly grateful to the 'Congress Socialist which has published our All India Kisan Bulletin from its very inception as its fornightly supplement. The 'National Front' has now begun to give special prominence to our movement and its publicity, in addition to publishing our 'Bulletin' also. The 'Comrade' has nobly reprinted on many an occasion our 'Bulletin'. The only influential quarterly "Contemporary India" and 'Monday Morning' a weekly of our comrade B. P. L. Bedi are rendering yoeman service to us.

I am still busy trying to start either a weekly or a monthly in English devoted entirely to the interests of our Kisans and Kisan movements.

In the meanwhile our 'Kisan Press' at Madras opened by Pandit Jawaharlal in October 1936 has now equipped itself for printing in English also.

The All India Kisan publications was started in 1933 but it began to publish books in English only in 1936. So far we have published in English the 'Modern Indian Peasant' and the "Kisan Speaks" and this book and

soon, the Peasants Fact Book will be out. But owing to the general poverty of our comrades the sales of these publications are proceeding extremely slowly and my slender resources do not permit any greater expansion of this publication work. But the more literature we can produce, the more brochures we can publish the better it will be for our movement. But where is the money for it and where are the comrades who can devote their whole time for our researches and economic studies.

There is such a lot to be done. We need a book on "The Kisan Acts" another on "The Kisan's Review of congress and other ministries" a third on "The History of the Kisan movement since the war of Independence, a fourth on "The Kisan's family and its maintenance" a fifth on "Co-operative cultivation and Kisan's prosperity", a sixth on the Kisan and the land lords, "The Kisan and the Law and order", "Kisan and world war" "The Kisan and Indian Independence". I am ambitious enough to dream of undertaking these studies and are passionate enough about the welfare of our Kisans to risk my money in their publication but I am not confident enough that either I will get the assistance of a sufficient number of competent comrades like Dinkar Bedekar, or, I can continue to spare enough money to discharge this task within the next couple of years".

We will be failing in our duty if we do not express our grateful thanks to the nationalist press in several and the Calcutta, Bombay, Lahore, Madras in particular for the very great publicity they have given us all these years, inspite of the powerful opposition of a large number of Congress leaders and sometimes of their own prejudices or disagreements with us.

Hind Praja and other papers with which com Lotewala has been associated have also rendered us much help in Guzerat.

We welcome the great interest displayed in our movement by that artist Comrade Taudulkar who has come from Russia with his experience of the publicity methods of our brother Kisans' there. It is most fortunate for us that instead of earning huge sums, as his art entitles him, by serving the great capitalist press-lords of our country, he has turned all his attention to our movement.

I appeal to all our Kisan Comrades to do all they can to push the sales of all our papers. To be a sales-man, advertiser, writer, correspondent, or reader of any of our papers that serve our movement and to sell any of our books is to render an invaluable help to our move-ment which cries out for more and more publicity. Hence my thanks to our enthusiastic and experienced Editor of the Bulletin Comrade Indulal Yagnik. He it is who has tried his best to obtain as much space for the activities of our Kisan Sabhas as we have obtained in the Bombay press. I may mention here that one of the important things taught in our Kisan Schools is how to report about our meetings, narrate the troubles of Kisans, ennumerate their grievances at zamindars and Sahukars in such a way as to find place in our press. Our comrades have to realise that it is not enough to hold meetings, organise marches, conduct demonstrations and carry on propaganda and other educational work. They will have to see that as much publicity in the press for such activities as possible is obtained. We need not and we canot subsidise any press or paper or journalist. We must ourselves become journalists, capable and

truthful reporters to the press in English and in our local language. However much the daily press may be prejudiced against us and to whatever extent the news agencies may be muzzled by the ministries, they cannot but give prominence to our news once we know how to do our work genuinely, write about it in a capable, brief and effective manner and develop a 'news sense' also. Let it not be forgotten that even the Anglo-Indian Press and the Associated Press and the Reuter had to strain every nerve to get news of the civil disobedience movement, though they hated it all and that similarly even the capitalistic ridden nationalist press will have to hearken to the Kisan's voice once it becomes effective and intelligible. It is our duty to make it both effective and intelligible.

No comrade can afford to be tired of sending the Kisan news to his local papers merely because on many an occasion they do not publish his news. For who knows that one out of his ten reports may come to be published and even that is something when we do not have our own press. For all these ages our Kisans have suffered because of the neglect of our press about his news. Their case has gone mostly by default. Now that they have awakened themselves, the press is trying to become deaf and dumb towards them. It is our task to break open this conspiracy of the press and compel it to keep its eyes open, ears strained and its heart a little warm towards Kisans' needs. Let every Kisan comrade therefore try to train himself as a good journalist.

CHAPTER II

AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

The very first attempt to organise agricultural labour into their class organisations was made in Guntur district so long ago as 1923 but the District Conference could not result in any organisation since the workers who assembled in that conference at Nidubrolu were not politically capable of seeing through the machinations of all the political parties which were ranged against them and withstand the influences of the Government and nationalist leaders. It is interesting however to know that only Harijans attended the Conferences and only universal franchise, better social treatment and a slight improvement in the economic status vis-a vis peasants were then desired by our labourers. But the local peasants were rightly afraid that it was only a begining and soon more radical demands would be put forth.

Failure of Government to help :

Though I was then disappointed, I was hoping but in vain, that when the British Imperialists raised the bogey of depressed classes as an objection to granting us Swaraj in 1926, they would atleast try to pass some legislation to afford some economic protection to our agricultural workers, the great majority of whom are Harijans. The Goverment of India passed the factory Act in 1926 but it took care not to extend it to agriculture, barring plantations. Neither the International Labour

Office nor the Round Table Conferences had tried to protect these people and the I. L. O's feeble attempt to control forced labour was frustrated in a shameless fashion by Government of India. Even the Royal Commission on Labour and the representatives of labour at all the conferences were completely indifferent to the needs of agricultural labourers for protection from their employers through State action. My efforts made since 1935 in the Central legislative Assembly to get the Workmen's Compensation Act, Payment of wages Act, exemption from attachment for civil Debts and arrest for debts, to these agricultural workers were mostly in vain because neither the Government nor the legislators have realised the extreme necessity for protecting these people.

Provincial Governments:

Coming to the Provincial Governments, only the Madras Government organised its Labour Department and devoted most of its attention to the welfare of Harijans and other depressed classes. A large number of special labour schools, a few hostels were organised, hundreds of wells dug, a few model hamlets constructed and a large number of scholarships provided since 1922. The Bombay Labour Department paid, on the other hand, more attention to urban and industrial labour. But neither Provincial Governments nor their legislatures took the matter seriously and tried to improve the economic status of those workers. If they wanted, they could have prevented the alienation of lakhs of acres of valuable land belonging to the state at dead cheap prices which took place between 1920 and 1936 because of their own auction sales. They could have granted all those and other government lands to

landless agricultural classes. They could have established minimum wages for workers while at the same time stabilising the prices of agricultural commodities and providing marketting facilities for our produce. They could also have established Labour exchanges and decasualisation Schemes in order to avoid unnecessary reserves of labour in any particular centre and maldistribution of labour in various parts of the country. It was open to them to have fixed weekly maximum number of hours of work with provision for special payment for over-time payment and also for monthly holiday and a minimum number of annual holidays with pay for atleast the farm servants who are employed either on monthly or annual contracts. But they only wanted to exploit the Harijans for their political purposes of preventing the advent of Swaraj for India. Hence Dr. Ambedkar's indictment of the British rule at the First Round Table Conference even in the name of our depressed classes.

But even the Congress did not try to tackle their economic problems. It has however tried its best until 1931 to remove the initial handicap of our Harijans by waging a war on untouchability but it could not achieve much success in that since the caste Hindus did not display either humanity or political sense to any appreciable degree. It was Mahatma Gandhi's epoch-making Poona Fast and the consequent Poona political and Social Pacts coupled with the bold though rancourous Political campaign of Dr. Ambedkar for reservation of seats for Harijans which really paved the way for a rapid liquidation of untouchability and for the entry of the bulk of our agricultural workers into politics not as a caste but as a part of a great

community. I do confess that uufortunately due to various causes, not the least of which is the political unpreparedness of Harijans and their leaders, almost all the members of Legislative Assemblies representing Harijans have so far failed to do anything to raise the economic status of our agricultural workers of whom Harijans form the most important section. It is very disheartening that the minimum expectations of Mahatma Gandhi and other well-wishers of Harijans are not so far fulfilled, not to speak of the hopes of Ambedkarites being realised. Except in Bombay where most of the Harijan M.L.A.'s have formed themselves into a seperate political group known as the Independent Labour Party, these Harijan M.L.A.'s have absorbed themselves into their locally predominent political parties, i.e., the Congress Party of seven majority provinces, the Coalition party of Bengal, the Unionist Party of the Punjab. This is largely responsible for the comparative neglect of the economic needs of agricultural workers. At the same time it must be recognised that owing to the Poona Pact and the Harijans faith in the Congress, both the Madras and Bihar ministries include members of the Harijans and this has raised the social status of Harijans in the view of the snobbish-minded people of our country, even if it has not so far paved the way for their economic uplift.

In view of the fact that so few of our Harijans and other agricultural workers own or cultivate lands under the ryotwari or Zamindari tenures, the tenancy legislation as well as the debt relief legislation that has been passed since April 1937 have not benefited more than a tiny minority of them. The moratorium declared by the U. P., Madras and Bombay Governments was

extended only to peasants and agricultural workers have not so far been protected by it. The pitiable thing is that the Harijan and Labour M.L.A.'s have not so far demanded in any effective manner that the demand of the All India Kisan Sabha for the cancellation of agricultural workers debt should be implemented. No wonder that the repeated representations of the South Indian Federation of Peasants and Agricultural Workers for the extension of moratorium for these unfortunate people have been in vain. Owing to his inexplicable opposition to the Congress Government, Dr. Ambedkar has not been able to influence the local government to any appreciable extent.

If I were to venture to conjecture what might have been done during the last 16 months of provincial autonomy, I could suggest the declaration of moratorium for all the debts and rent-arrears due from agricultural workers, the establishment of Land Courts to settle the rents payable by them to landlords in accordance with certain principles which would have immediately reduced the prevailing rents by 50 per cent and ensured a longer tenure of land and penalised all kinds of forced labour and initiated a comprehensive housing policy and reserved all unoccupied but cultivable lands belonging to Government and landlords and public trusts for allotment to co-operative societies of landless labourers alone and prescribed minimum conditions of payment and allowances to be satisfied by all the contractors of works of the P. W. D. and local authorities. There could have been very little, if at all, opposition to these transitional measures of relief but somehow none of the ministries has been at pains to achieve any of them. It is surely not for want of any programme

being submitted to the Congress High Command because I have submitted a fairly comprehensive charter of minimum demands of agricultural workers on behalf of the A. I. K. C. to the Labour Sub-Committee of the Congress in October 1937 and to the Labour and Agricultural and Rural Development Ministers of Madras Government in July 1937. Therefore the conclusion becomes irresistible that the needs of agricultural workers have been so far neglected and so unconscionably because of the political failure of the labour and Harijan M.L.A's, the political backwardness of agricultural labour and the absence of any political movement among this most suppressed and backward section of our rural masses and the pre-occupation of our P. K. C. is with the primary needs of kisans and of Mahatma Gandhi with prohibition and Congress internal and external politics.

Hence my heartfelt welcome to the Harijan movement of Gujerat, started under the aegis of the A. I. K. C. a similar movement of Sind, the agricultural labour movements of Andhra and Bihar. I am aware of the fact that in Bihar the movement has had rather suspicious sponsers. Parties and interests which are anxious to undermine the strength of the local kisan movement lent their support and probably gave an initial push in order to arrest the growth of the kisan movement. But there is no denying of the fact that irrespective of its origins and motives of its founders and supporters, the movement, once started, is bound to gain strength, if not for any other reason, atleast because of the crying need of the masses for organisation, agitation and political awakening. In the Andhra also, it is not possible to assert that motives other than those purely

in the interests of labour were not present in the minds of some of the first set of leaders of labour but it is on the whole true to say that the movement owes its present strength to the tireless services of very excellent workers and comrades.

The Present Position:

In Bihar Messrs. Jagat Narayan Lal, Jagajeevan Ram, Dr. Ragunanthan Prasad are busy developing a political movement of agricultural labourers aiming at an immediate conflict with Kisans. Their demands though not revolutionary are framed and presented in such a way as to cause immediate inconvenience and impediment to the local agressive kisan movement. For instance just because the Kisan Sabha maintained that it had right to speak and work for agricultural labour, the Khet-muzdur sabha which was created by these people in August 1937 passed a vote of no confidence in the Kisan Sabha, completely forgetting the imperative need for Unity between the comrades of these two sabhas i.e. Kisan Sabha and Khet Muzdoor Sabha. These agricultural labourers demand occupancy rights and all sikmy land after one year cultivation, a maximum interest of 3 per cent only to be charged on all their debts: penalising forced labour; supplying of house sites and low rents to all the landless, employing plough men with registration, on paying an annual salary of Rs. 48 with two meals per every working day and the right to cultivate, free of rent, 1/12 of the employers land and paying five annas per day for each field labourer. Surely these are demands which are mostly acceptable to the A.I.K.C. and if only the leaders of the movement had abjured their local political opposition to

the Kisan Sabha and given up their laison with the local land-lords much greater progress on more harmonious lines could have been achieved and more effective pressure could have been brought to bear upon the local Ministry for achieving at least some of these demands. As it is so far the local ministry has not given any evidence of its anxiety to implement any of these demands. Evidence is yet to be procured to show that these political leaders of the Khet-Muzdoor Sabha have begun to organise agricultural labour of the country-side into their class organisations apart from the Kisan Sabha. It is still true to say that the Kisan Sabha of Bihar has in it large numbers of agricultural labour and thus tried to speak for them although it is obliged to concentrate upon the immediate demands of the more politically advanced kisans.

In the Andhra fortunately Congress 'Socialists and Kisan Sabhaites have come to realise the essential unity of interest of peasants and agricultural workers. As long ago as in 1923 the same persons who were laying the foundations for the Kisan Movement did also try to bring into existence the agricultural labour movement. In 1933 again those of us who were neck-deep in the Kisan Movement organised the Guntur District Agricultural Labour Association and published a number of leaflets upon the sufferings of this Labour and advocated better treatment towards them by peasants themselves. In East Godavari District an agricultural labour Union was actually registered. In Nellore District Mr. V. Raghavayya who had interested himself in the welfare of Yanadis, a criminal tribe, since 1925 and who co-operated with us in the Kisan Movement for some time since after 1931 to devote his attention to agricul-

tural labour of his district. There were some who had always grumbled that the agricultural labour agitation of Nellore owed much to the local politics amongst Congressmen themselves. But if one remembers that during all these years the local labour have had to fight three strikes in 1935, two in 1936, three in 1937, and four 1938 only to demand that their wages in kind should be paid with proper authorised measures, one realises that no special political or other motives were needed to raise this movement and to help it to grow. The very unmitigated sufferings of labour at the hands of both the Ryotwari land-holding peasants, and the local Police are bound to give rise to a militant agricultural labour movement. It is to the credit of our comrades in Nellore District that they should have brought into existence this organisation and helped the Yanadies and other workers to rise against their sufferings and put down the oppression of the local land owners.

In 1937 the Andhra agricultural Labonr Union was brought into existence by some of these comrades, who had gained their experience of agricultural labour in Nellore, Guntur, and Kristna Districts. But some of the leaders of Harijans wanted to dissociate themselves from Socialists and therefore had formed another rival provincial Union but it has not so far developed any district or other branch organisations or formulated any charter of minimum demands.

The July of 1938 has seen the biginning of a march of agricultural labourers in Nellore District and also a fairly widespread strike of labour in a large part of a taluk. The march has brought home to many thousands of labourers in more than fifty villages of Nellore

district the existence of their organisation and their demands and the solution offered for their sufferings by their organisation. This strike has dramatically opened the eyes of the workers of large parts of the District to the possibilities and potentialities of their combined action against the persecution carried on by their employers.

But unfortunately, Mr. Raghavayya himself is not quite clear whether this movement should be carried on in co-operation with the Kisan Movement. Sometimes he is inclined to join issue with Kisans exasperated as he becomes at the inordinately conservative opposition of peasants to the very moderate demands of labour. Not infrequently does he fling to the winds his own anxiety and conviction that faced as we are by the British on one side and the Zamindars and Sowcars on the other who are all suppressing both agricultural labour and peasants these two sections of rural population ought to co-operate with one another and minimise their points of mutual friction as far as it is possible in order that they may will and achieve their mutual salvation. He has been showing a tendency to rush along with a sectarian and short-sighted anti-peasant attitude and policy. This has unfortunately caused a division in the ranks of comrades who are actively interested in the development of this movement and one of the Secretaries of the Provincial Agricultural Association has resigned as a protest against his latest anti-Kisan attitude.

The Socialists have come to avince real interest in the development of this movement in the Andhra. Comrades J. Ramalingayya, C. H. Pichayya and others have recently worked out a very practicable programme of

work for the development of this movement. The charter of minimum demands which they have published on behalf of the Andhra Congress Socialist Party contains only those demands which the peasants are capable of and willing to implement without much difficulty or obstruction. To oppose wrong measures and forced labour, to denounce social ill-treatments and insults, to put down bribary, to demand compulsory free elementary education, rights for free supply of fuel, fodder and household timber from forests, to ask for free house-sites, cheap loans, unemployment relief, and minimum number of paid holidays for annual servants and the reduction of tax-burdens, and the cancellation of the existing indebtedness, and the sanction of Government lands for agricultural labour are some of the most important demands as accepted by this party on behalf of agricultural labour.

The Andhra Kisan Sabha has come out with a phamplet in 1927 June, specifying its attitude towards agricultural labour. It favours the independent origanisation of agricultural labour unions wherever there are workers to develop them. It wants the Government to simultaneously stabilise agricultural prices and to establish district and provincial agricultural wages, boards to fix minimum wages for different kinds of agricultural labour. It also agrees to fixing a maximum rent to be paid by tenants to the ryotwari land-holders. Naturally its friendly and progressive and comradely attitude towards agricultural labour has helped the organisers of labour unions to realise more easily, the oneness of interest between the Kisan sabha and their unions.

Those of us who had always realised that the real

welfare and uplift of Kisans can be furthered in the measure in which their bottom-rung, namely the agricultural labour, is raised and helped to rise, had co-operated in 1935 in founding the South Indian Federation of peasants and Agricultural Labour and formulating a charter of minimum demands of both these groups of kisans. Mr. V. V. Giri who to-day is the Labour Minister of Madras and Mr. A. Kaleswara Rao, the Chief Parliamentary Secretary had at that time co-operated with us in formulating this charter. To that federation are affiiated all the kisan sabhas of the south and a large number of the few district agricultural Labour Unions.

The All India Kisan Sabha at its Commilla Conference in May 1938 welcomed the organisation of conferences and unions of agricultural labour and invited the provincial Khet-Muzdoor Sabhas to affliate themselves to itself, because it has recognised the essential unity of political and and economic interests of peasants and agricultural labour. It is interesting to note that preference is to-day being given in most provinces in our Kisan Sabhas only for peasants who own or cultivate 15 Acres of wet land or 30 acres of dry lands or less *i.e.*, any economic holding in order to make the Kisan Sabha more and more the platform for the really suppressed and needy Kisans, and also that whatever there is any tendency on the part of Kisans to refuse to acceed to the moderate demands of agricultural labour, the local Kisan Sabhas boldly come out with their propaganda in favour of accepting the demands of agricultural labour. In various parts of India, particularly in Malabar, Bengal, Gujerat, Sind, Punjab, and Andhra the

Kisan Sabha is itself often giving a lead and initiating a campaign and fighting for the improvement of the conditions of agricultural labour. "The Zamin Ryot", the official organ of Kisans of Andhra wrote a leading article in August 1938 pleading with peasants to grant the demands of workers to the greatest possible extent.

So far as one can look into the future, it is possible to say that as our peasants are able to gain more and more concessions from the vested interests and relief from provincial governments either in the way of reduction of rents or revenue or in the shape of greater legal rights against Zamindars and Sowcars, it will be possible for them to make in their turn more and more concessions to agricultural labour. The very sufferings of agricultural labour are severe to excite the sympathy of our socialists and other well-wishers of our masses and result in the emergence of agricultural labour unious all over the country. Whether such unions will work in alliaence with the local kisan sabhas and on the same platform as the All-India Kisan Sabha will largely depend upon the statesmanship and broad mindedness of the leaders of these two movements.

One thing is perfectly clear. More and more of our peasants are daily becoming landless agricultural labourers. The census reportss ince 1870 show this tendency in unmistakable terms, The size of the average holding has gone down from 40 acres in 1771, 17.5 in 1880 to 7 acres in 1915 per family and to 1.18 acres in 1936 per every person dependent on agriculture. In 1931 out of a tota[of 770 Lakhs of people actually employed in agriculture of British India only 220 lakhs were cuitivating owners as against 249 lakhs of landless

labourers. While as many as 298 lakhs were mere tenant cultivators. Even if we were to assume that these tenant cultivators will mostly become cultivating owners as a result of the establishment of permanency of tenure for them we find that 1-3 of the total agriculturalists are landless labourers having no greater stake in the land than their meagre and insufficient wages. Since more than 80 per cent of our peasants have only un economic holdings eking out a living hardly enough to enable them and their families to live a decent life and since more and more of them and their losing their grip on their lands whatwith the growing tax-burdens, the incidents of our laws of equal distribution of land ? between the male members of a peasant family, the remorseless jaws of population, the needs for our kisans to insure themselves against the sufferings of our peasant agricultural labour by taking active determined and organised steps to raise the status of agricultural labour, the productivity of land and through it the productivity and remuneration of every unit of labour contributed towards agriculture become imperative and irresistable. Therefore it is in the interests of the present generation of land-awink peasants themselves, to do everything possible in co-operation with agricultural labour to gain a mastery and control over the state so as to utilise all its resources for the general levelling up of the economic conditions of all groups of agriculturists and in particular for the saving of our agricultural labour from further starvation and degradation, The real salvation of agriculture as an industry and agriculturists as an industrial class lies not in the multiplication of the present-day uneconomic small-holdings and their

con-comitant enslavement of our kisans to a non-paying and indeed a wasting enjoyment of socalled economic independence of small holders, but in the development of collectivisation and cooperation of agriculture carried on with all the latest industrial and electrical-aids, and with the active and zealous participation of our kisans. But the much needed experimentation for this can be made only on the unoccupied but cultivable lands of the Government and other quasi—public authorities. Hence the demand of all our kisan sabhas for such experiments. Secondly industries both cottage and large scales—are needed to provide not only employment for more workers but also a greater supply af cheaper and more artististic goods for our agriculturists. All these can only be achieved if we intensify our anti-imperialistic struggle and achieve complete independence. Hence our conviction that peasants and labour have to go hand in hand in their march towards progress and freedom and stand shoulder to shoulder in their fight against their exploiters.

But this does not mean that in every province our comrades shall proceed forthwith their camopaign of organising independent agricultural labour unions. Ordinarily the Kisan Sabha is a good enough platform for both peasants and agricultural labourers and we must see that as many labourers as possible are brought into the Kisan Sabha and as much attention is paid by our Sabha to the needs of agricultural labour and for the development of their struggles as possible. But supposing we became rich enough in comrades to be able to spare some for developing separate unions for labour or some of our comrades or labourers themselves feel so strongly and sincerely either in favour of creating

separate unions or against some particular injustice perpetrated upon labour, that an independent union is brought into existence, we must be prepared to welcome it and help it in every possible manner to become a valuable complement to our Kisan Sabha.

As things are, it is only too true to say that there are none too many comrades ready to take up even the Kisan Sabha's work. We can least afford to spare any of our too few camrades and friends to develop another set of unions. Therefore it is but sensible that all our Kisan comrades shall concentrate their energies and resources for the general advancement of both peasants and labourers through the same Kisan Sabha and the economise their resources and maximise the results of their activities. At the same time, it is sacred duty of every genuine kisan comrade to do all he can to help the growth of class consciousness among our agricultural workers who have the greatest claim on our sympathis, and services.

CHAPTER III

AGRARIAN LABOUR AND SUB-TENANTS

Enquiries into the economic conditions, disabilities and needs of our sub-tenants and agricultural workers have to be conducted on both intensive and extensive scale by every one of our Kisan Sabhas. Such enquiries, if conducted carefully and with sympathy, will help our comrades to understand the needs, demands and feelings of these two very important sections of our kisans. Unfortunately it has not so far been passible for the A. I. K. C. to publish the results of their enquiries because our Provincial Kisan Sabhas have not conducted the enquiries and prepared their reports and assisted the A. I. K, C. It is fortunate however that the Andhra Provincial Kisan Sabha has published in June 1937 a very authoritative and fairly exhaustive brochure, indicating its attitude towards agricultural labour. The A. I. K. C. is very keen on pursuing this essential task and calls upon every Comrade interested in the agricultural labour or tenants or both to send it to the General Secretary, 23, Stringer Street, Madras, George Town the results of his enquiries made on the lines indicated in the two following questionaries. The A. I. K. C. trusts that the P. K. Cs will enable it to issue these reports atleast before the next anaual session meets.

The Agrarian Labour Sub-Committee appointed at the Faizpur Kisan Congress has issued the following

questionaire to all Kisan workers and Secretaries of local and provincial Kisan Committees:

The enquiry consists of four parts; one a general one, concerning the conditions prevailing in one or more villages with which the Kisan Comrades or the office-bearers of Kisan Sabhas or any Kisans are acquainted: the second regarding agrarian serfdom; third regarding forced and slave labour; and the fourth, detailing the conditions of Agrarian Labour in any particular Taluk or District or Provincial area:

I. GENERAL:

1. Name of Village. District

2. Total Population.

3. Total No. of (a) Shop-Keepers. (b) Absentee landowners. (c) Cultivating landowners, (d) Landed tenants. (e) Cottage workers. (f) Agricultural workers.

4. Nature of Employment.

(a) available, its extent, season, by whom offered, for how long.

(b) Time-Table of work available.

5. Different kinds of works, which demand labour (i) at the same time (ii) at successive periods (iii) their respective duration.

6. The kind of wages paid (i) in kind (ii) in cash for various kinds of labour.

7. Rules of wages paid at different periods for different kinds of labour.

8. Specimen accounts of a few agricultural, cottage workers, for one year (i.e.) (i) work available and availed of by them (ii) the wages earned by them.

N. B. These accounts have to be gathered for their families including women workers and dependents and the average total monthly or yearly wage or income per man or per woman and per person.

9. Whether proper measures are used in measuring grain for workers ?

10. How soon are the wages paid ?

11. Whether any advances are given by employers to workers.

12. Whether any prerequisites are offered, such as tobacco grains etc.

13. Whether any undue or unjust deductions are made from out of the wages payable to workers.

14. Whether the local demand for labour is met by local labour alone if so, in what seasons and for what kind of labour.

15. If it is met by imported labour, (i) from which Taluks or District. (ii) Whether any prerequisites are offered to them, T-A paid or advanced, shelter offered. (iii) To what extent, if any, this imported labour depresses the wages paid or ruling in the villages. (iv) If local wages are depressed, to what extent and in what seasons and for doing what work ?

16. What is the approximate total wage-earnings of workers in the villages ?

17. Give details of the indebtedness of workers : (i) its extent (ii) its nature (iii) why was it contracted ? (iv) from whom taken (v) how much of it is inherited (vi) what are the rates of interest ?

18. What is the total indebtedness of the workers in the villages ?

19. What are their social disabilities (i) untouchability (i) non-existence of right to purchase land (iii) health and hygiene (iv)·epidemics-prevalence of-frequency of-incident of.

20. Has there been any improvement or worsening the economic and social conditions of workers during the last twenty years or so ?

II. AGRARIAN SERFS.

1. Are there any agrarian labourers serfs (sometimes called Haris or Halis) who are virtually bound by custom to work as farm and domestic servants for their whole life with their wives and children.

2. If so, what is the amount advanced to them on their marriage or similar occasion to bind down to life-long work ?

3. What are the wages, daily, monthly or annually paid to these labourers in cash or kind, or cash and kind ?

4. How do the total wages paid to these serfs valued in cash, compared with the wages of independent labourers ?

5. What do these labourers' wives get, when they work for the same master ?

6. Do you know of the escape and emigration of such serfs from the bonds of slavery ?

7. Are there any redeeming features of this system ?

8. State how in your view can this system be ended as soon as possible ?

III. FORCED OR SLAVE LABOUR.

1. Is any "forced labour" exhorted from peasants or labourers in your area ?

2. What are the different species of labour extorted by (i) Revenue servants (2) P. W. D. Officers (3) Forest and Police Officers (4) Native States and other minorities.

3. On what works and jobs, and in what seasons are workers forced to work ?

4. Is any wage paid, while workers are on "Forced Labour"? If so, what is the wage ? in cash or inkind ?

5. Is there any difference between the wage paid for "Forced Labour" and the wage obtainable by forced labour ?

IV. AGRARIAN LABOUR.

1. What is the general level of wages prevailing ? (i) How are wages paid ? (ii) Has there been any increase or decrease in the level of wages paid ? and if so, to what extent and why ?

2. What is the approximnte time-table for work. available in the Taluk or District ?

3. What is the incidence or indebtedness?
   (i) The approximate debt per worker's family.

II. TENANT SUB-COMMITTEE QUESTIONNAIRE.

The Tenant Sub-Committee appointed at the Faizpur Kisan Congress has issued the following

questionnaire to all Kisan workers and secretaries of local and provincial kisan committees :

Comrades are requested to conduct detailed enquires on the lines suggested in this questionnaire into the economic conditions of the tenants in a few villages, with which they are intimately in touch. They can then try to ascertain and furnish all the general information they can obtain in their respective areas. They are advised to get into touch with the local tenants snd those interested in their welfare, and also the land-owning peasants, and ascertain their agreed demands, if necessary by holding their Taluka and District Conferences.

1. (a) Name of the village
   (b) District.

2. Population of the village (give classification of familes on occupational basis.)

3. Number of land owing familes and persons with the area owned.

4. Number of actual cultivating familes and persons with the area cultivated.

5. Number of cultivating owners, who are also tenants with area cultivated.

6. Number of landless tenants and persons.

7. The total extent of land.

8. (a) The extent under Ryotwari.
   (b) The extent under Zamindary.

9. The nature of the tenure under which land is held.

10. Area cultivated by owners.

11. Area cultivated by (a) their own owner, tenant, (b) rented.

12. Area cultivated by landless tenants with size of the holdings per cultivator and classification of holdings as per size and ownership.

13. Average rent paid by landowning tenants.

14. Average rent paid by landless tenants.

15. Is the rent payable in cash, or in kind ?

16. If, in kind, what portion of the gross produce, or net produce, is paid as rent.

17. What is the average gross income from land of every cultivating family.

18. What are the expenses of cultivation.

19. What is the land revenue or (in case of Zamindary estate) rent demand on that land.

20. What are the other dues if any ?

21. What is the net income of every cultivating family.

22. What are the living expenses including expense of food, clothing education, fuel, medical attention, etc.

23. What is the nature and contents of the food of the family.

24. Is any debt contracted for paying the rent or for meeting the expenses of cultivation ? Is any debt contracted for living expenses ?

25. What are the special difficulties experienced by tenants in harvesting the crops under the supervision of the land-owners ?

26. What are the special and additional payments payable and paid by tenants, though not entered into the registered lease deeds?

27. Are tenants expected to vote and act in other ways as demanded by owners? If they displease them, is there any penalty?

28. Are there any written or printed lease issued by the landlords, Zamindars or Inamdars? If so send a copy.

29. For how many years do the leases run (1) for land owning tenants, (ii) for landless tenants?

30. Do the landowners agree to supply any manure or seed or plough cattle; If so, to what extent, in the case of (i) lond owning tenants, (ii) landless tenants?

31. Have the tenants lost their lands after having begun to rent others' lands?

32. If, so, how much, and in how many villages?

33. What is their present debt? What are the causes of the debt? What is the average rate of interest?

84. Has their indebtedness increased, since becoming tenants? If so, since when, (i) how much by land owning tenants, (i) if by landless tenants?

35. Is the whole of the rent being paid usually?

36. If not, what portion of it is usually in arrears?

37. What portion of arrears is usually written off?

38. What effect have the arrears upon the term of the lease and the rental insisted upon, over the new leases?

39. Has there been an increase in rents or decrease ?

40. Has there been much litigation in order to recover the rents or arrears of rents ?

41. Has any land of the tenants been put to sale to pay off their debts ?

GENERAL INFORMATION.

42. Are the tenants of your parts leasing out others lands for subsidiary employment (i) for becoming credit worthy, (ii) for providing work for cattle, (iii) for obtaining more straw or second crop ?

43. Is the number of the tenants on the increase or decrease ? What if the extent of the change ?

44. Has there been any organised attempt on the part of the tenants to reduce the rents ?

45. Has there been any legislative effort to reduce the rents or to lengthen the term of the lease, or in any other way to improve the conditions of tenants ?

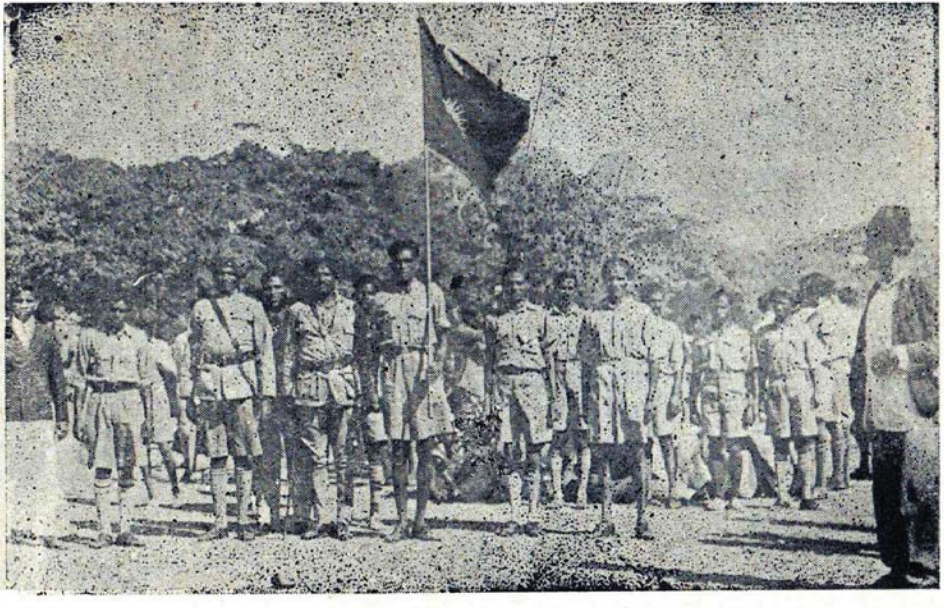
46. What are the demands of the tenants, as expressed and passed by peasant's Conferences ? In which Conferences ?

47. Will the conferment of proprietory ownership be of any real help to the future generations of tenants, with permanancy of tenure and without the right of alienation ?

48. Can the grain rents be continued ?

49. What portion of the net income from land be paid as rent ?

50. What is the nature of the change that has taken place during the last ten or fifteen years in regard to all or some of the above points, i.e., for the better or the worse ?



The Bombay Kisan Volunteer Corps.

CHAPTER III

PROGRAMME FOR FOREST REPORTS*

What the Government gets by way of revenues by selling fuel and other dry sundry sticks or wood or the forest to contractors who bid the highest, is nothing when compared to the sufferings of the kisans in the neighbourhood of such forests. These contractors are allowed to sell the fuel obtained from forests only in certain specified places and this naturally prevents them from selling such fuel in the very villages which are the nearest to the forests. The poor village-folk who naturally expect a free and adequate supply of fuel because of their close proseinity to and their customary rights over forests are to-day obliged not only to purchase every piece of fuel needed but also to pay as high a price as is paid by the urban classes, in addition to having to cart it back to their villages from fairly distant places. Surely this is an unmerited hardship inflicted on them.

Remedies:

First of all, the traditional right of villagers to obtain freely as much fuel as is needed for their domestic purposes shall be restored without any delay.

Secondly if it is found to be more profitable to the state and equally convenient to the local public, an esti-

*For general discussion of the Problem Forests, read the Chapter on Forests in "*Kisan Speaks*".

mate of the quantity of fuel needed per head of the local and needy population can be made and that quantity be distributed through the medium of the local village panchayat, after all the fuel available in any forest is cut and collected either directly by the department or indirectly by the village panchayat. Then the surplus fuel, if any, can be sold to the highest bidder.

Thirdly the control over, collection, preservation and distribution of fuel from all the non-reserved forests ought to be transferred to the village panchayat.

II

Sale of fruit and other Forest-Gum Agricultural produce :

The institution of the system of selling through auction, fruit, gum, roots and other similar agricultural produce of forest has also wrought havoc in the economic life of hill tribes like the Koyas, Lambadis, Savars, etc. These tribes have lived for generations upon such fruits, roots, etc. as could be obtained in forests, though they used to supplement their incomes by working for wages for both the forest department and the local peasants and also by their meagre incomes from 'Podu' cultivation. But the present practice of selling even this produce to the biggest bidder has spelled ruin on these poor people. At the same time, one has to concede the right of the state to get some revenue from the surplus agricultural produce of the forests.

With these two ends in view, we suggest the following remedial measures :

1. Whatever quantity or fruit, tamerind, roots and other produce as may be considered by the local village panchayat to be needed for the maintenance in the usual manner of the hill tribes may be estimated and deducted

from the estimated or actual yield of such produce from the local forests.

2. The task of estimating the yield of agricultural produce from the local forests and distributing that portion as is found necessary for the hill people among such people will have to be discharged by the village panchayat in cooperation with the forest department.

3. Whatever surplus quantity of agricultural produce is estimated to be availabe may be sold either to the village panchayat or to the hill tribes at a minimum price and in case, neither of them wished to purchase it, it can then be auctioned to the biggest bidder.

III

The Delimitation and Demarcation of Reserves:

We do admit that certain very valuable forests will have to be classified as reserved forests and specially guarded and nursured, so useful and precious are their produce, both industrial and agricultural. But the present practice of not separating reserve forests from the neighbouring agricultural (Ryoti) forests or peasants' laws by any barbed wire has resulted in the terrible persecution of our peasants by the Forest Department.

Remedies:

1. We therefore desire that no village shall be surrounded on any one or all sides by a reserve forest, unless there is approximately a distance of three miles between it and the reserve forest. Then alone can the cattle of our peasantry be safely expected not to trespass into the reserve forests.

2. Once the boundaries of the reserves are fixed, no village shall be allowed to grow towards the forest to be within a distance of 2½ miles from the "Reserves".

3. As between the cultivated lands and the actual beginnings of the "Reserves", there must be an uncultivated un-reserved forest atleast a furlong depth and this boundary shall be, as far as possible, demarcated by a good barbed wire or such other equally effective barrier to prevent the automatic trespassing of the boundaries by cattle or by their keepers.

4. A much more liberal interpretation has to be put on what is known as "Trespassing into reserves" than what obtains at present. An occasional, unintentional or nonpreventible trespassing by cattle into any 'reserve' has to be distinguished from intentional, habitual and preventible trespassing and the former treated much more lightly than the latter.

5. In deciding upon the nature of trespassing, the damage done and the stealthy advantage sought to be derived by the offending parties have to be considered. The evidence of the forest officials alone ought not to be relied upon, as at present. Moreover such cases shall not be left to be decided upon by magistrates, as at present, unaided by any representatives of the local kisans. It is therefore necessary that Peasants ought to be allowed the fullest scope to lead their evidence, either severally or collectively, before the courts concerned and that the court shall be aided by four or five representatives of the local Kisan and Muzdoor Sabhas, chosen from out of a panel, prepared once a year.

6. The compounding fees are at present unconscionably high. Even to act as a deterrent, they need not be so high at all. At the worst such fees ought not to be more than 12 1/2% of the cost price of the animals concerned and there ought to be always some measur-

able relation between the damage caused and the compounding penalty imposed.

7. In deciding upon any such penalties being imposed upon any one or more kisans, the court shall keep in mind such facts as the general conduct of that particular kisan or kisans, the repute of the local forest officials either for bad or for good behaviour and the nature of local politics. For, it happens none too rarely that the local officials may have a grudge against the ryot or ryots or that the local leaders of the faction or party may be anxious to wreack their vengeance on any one or some of the local kisans. It is only when these and other safeguards are taken. will it be possible for our peasants living in the neighbourhood of the forests to lead a decent, care free life, even if they can earn enough to live well.

As it is, it is the common experience of almost all the peasants fated to live within the neighbourhood of forests to be obliged to propitiate the officials and menials of the forest department, from the lowest to about the highest. A peasant can enjoy some independence and self-respect in the local society only if he continues to pay the full toll and to live on good terms with the forest officials. Thus most of our forest ryots are obliged to pay at least twice as much more to these officials as they pay to Government and very few of them are ever able to enjoy a peaceful day, if they fall out of the good graces of these rapacious officials.

To minimise this dependence of our peasants and workers upon the moods of forest officials must be the constant care of our popular ministry.

IV

Protection of Forest Produce:

It is necessary to arm forest officials with powers sufficient to prevent any theft or misappropriation of forest produce and property by any one, particularly a trader or a merchant. But these powers ought to be hedged in very carefully so that, their exercise will not be so much misused, as to inflict serious damage to our kisans. For instance, at present, according to the forest Act, a forest official is empowered to sieze possession of any cart, bullocks and the forest fuel, timber or fruit loaded thereon from any one who is reasonably suspected of illegal possessions. He can thereafter deposit all such property at the nearest Police Station and sell it at any price he likes in an auction fixed and conducted either by himself or any of his brother or superior officers. These powers, necessary though they may be, have been used very arbitrarily in many cases to the detriment of our kisans.

Remedies:

1. Therefore, some distinction has to be made between agriculturists and non-agriculturists and the former to be treated differently from the latter.

2. If it is proved that the bullock cart driver is a peasant who is engaged only for the purpose of transporting that produce and has no share in the profits of that illegal transaction, he must be exempted from any serious penalties attached to that crime, though a warning may be given.

3. To prevent such thefts of forest produce, the proper thing to do is to imprison the illicit trader and the colluding officer for a specified period and not to punish the poor and ignorant peasant.

4. A 'pass' or permit may be issued to all bonafide bullock cart men, either by the forest officials or by the local village panchayat to cart certain specified timber or produce from the notified 'coupes' or reserves along a specified route, in order to distinguish an intentional offender from an unintentional offender.

5. When the worst comes to the worst, and not only the ferest produce, in the process of conveyance but also the bullock-cart and bullocks and axes, etc., are seized and auctioned, a minimum price has to be prescribed for all such properties and if no higher price is offered by anybody else at any auction. The state shall offer atleast the minimum price and pay it to the peasant or his family, even if he is found guilty of complicity with the trader in that illegal act.

V

Preservation and Development of Forests :

Though it is most essential that our forests are not only preserved but also developed, in the interests of our own agricultural prosperity, it is largely true to say that neither the costly forest department nor the agriculturists who need the progress of such forests are discharging their duties satisfactorily. It often so happens that the forest officials and peasants conspire to denude our hills of their little forest growth and fell the few trees or clear the dwarfed stumps that we find in such large portions of our forests. On one side there is the suicidal ignorance of our peasants and on the other, the insatiable cupidity of officials, we have to fight them both, if we are to ensure our rainfall, prevent any further erosion of our hills and soils, and destruction of our fields and increase the supply of hill grass,

grazing, fuel, timber for agricultural and commercial purposes.

How can we achieve this :

1. We have to win the active co-operation of our peasants in preserving and developing our forests This can be done by associating the representatives of the local village Panchayats with the administration of our reserve forests and interesting the local inhabitants in the progress of their forest growth by making them partners in the additional benefits accruing from such a development,

2. Educative propaganda has to be carried on, in the schools, and through the medium of local libraries and Village Panchayats to enlighten our peasants about the close relationship that exists in the long run between the forests and their agriculture.

3. A "Tree Planting Campaign" has to be inaugerated by the Minister concerned and the peasants of various parts, the Panchayats of different villages in various Districts and the local officials have to be picked out for special honourable mention and other national honour for the splendid work achieved by them in planting more trees, raising more fruit and in otherwise increasing the forest wealth.

4. A the same time, the present foolish policy of preventing the felling or clearing any kind of bushes, shrubs or stunted forest growth has to be stopped. Wherever there is no hope of raising any good or tolerable forest growth and only bushes are likely to grow, peasants ought to be allowed, subject to the supervision of their Panchayats, to graze their cattle in such areas quite freely and obtain fuel, grass, manure, etc., without any let or hindrance.

VI

Disafforestation :

It is true that our land hunger is so great and insatiable that we are apt to demand disafforestation without any limit. But, at the same time it must be admitted that there are large areas of land which today are classified as forests but which are hardly capable of affording good enough forests. There are also forest aeas which can safely be disafforested without any harm to the rainfall or other advantages needed by agriculture. All such areas can be allotted to the landless people for "Co-operative exploitation" without the right of alienation or uneconomic subdivision. When the agriculture on them is carried on under the guidance of Government agricultural demonstrators, as it ought to be, care can be taken to plant as many fruit trees as possible so that the atmospheric coolness can also be increased or maintained.

VII

Village (Forest) Panchayats :

It is a good sign that the Forest Panchayats which number more than a thousand in Madras Presidency alone, have won the recognition of Government that they have administered the forests, improved their forest growth and otherwise displayed a commendable spirit for developing the forest and civic properties of their villages. Yet one hears such a lot about the factions that vitiate their work. In many a place, peasants and workers who are in a minority are clamouring against the high grazing fees charged by them. The cause for this is the inordinately high and unfair rent these Panchayats are obliged to pay to

Government, *i.e.*, about 120 thousand rupees a year and therefore, the consequent collection of grazing fees, etc.. from peasants and workers, The other reason for their unpopularity is that the ruling factions indulge in a lot of nepotism, and realise most of the Panchayats' income from the minority factions alone or from the voiceless workers and Harijans.

These evils can be stopped only when the civic sense of our villagers is developed to a much greater extent than at present. But they can be minimised to a great extent by adopting the following remedial measures :—

1. Abolish the rents, now collected from the Panchayats by Government.

2. Insist upon the free 'permits for all workers to obtain fuel and timber for their domestic use.

3. Make grazing free for cattle of the local inhabitants excepting those who have each more than 15 acres of wet land or 30 acres of dry land ; and charge grazing fees for the cattle of these richer peasants.

4. Introduce the practice of 'lot' or 'ballot' in selecting the members of the panchayat from out of a list of candidates who are elected by universal suffrage of all the villagers. Then, though the villagers exercise their choice in electing, say, three times as many candidates as there are members to be elected, the actual selection of a members of the panchayat will be made by ballot. This has the special advantage of minimising the vicious effects of or influence of the factions that poison so greatly our village civic life.

VIII

Corruption and coercion :

The wide spread and disastrous corruption that obtains in the rank and file of the Forest Department has to be fought as vigorously as possible. It is no good blaming our peasants for seeking to obtain some illegal satisfaction at the cost of the state by bribing officials because in most cases, they have no other choice if they are to carry on their cultivation, so rigid are the regulations and so unrelated is the administration to the actual needs of our peasantry.

1. The most important and primary thing that has to be done is to amend the criminal law so as to free our peasants or workers from the penalty of law for having bribed an officer. Then will our peasants be willing to come forward to give evidence against the bribe-takers.

2. Our peasants and workers must be associated, through their class organisations and panchayats, as intimately and at as many points as possible with the officers of the Forest Department. Then it will be impossible for such officials to coerce our peasants, as they are able to do at present, into giving bribes. It will also become more difficult to harness our peasants for all kinds of petty offences and get them punished, as at present, so easily and arbitrarily. A proper check upon these panchayats also will be needed to prevent them from colluding with the officials in persecuting our peasants or faction of them.

3. The arbitrary powers now vested in the forest officials will either have to be completely abolished or

transferred to the joint control of the officials and the local and regional panchayats.

4. Any officer who has come to earn too much, i.e. out of all proportion to his salary or who has earned a bad name or against whom the local panchayat or panchayats have made strong reports must be immediately and strictly dealt with and the punishments will have to be swift, adequate and deettrent.

5. The practise of commending to the nation the services of an officer or panchayat or both who are responsible for distributing the maximum quantity of fuel, grass, timber, manure, fruit freely to the local inhabitants, raising more trees, producing more commercial and agricultural produce and obtaining per square mile or thousand people of the area, greater anuual income from the forests for the nation has to be stated.

It is only by thus converting our forests into a source of solace to the local inhabitants, strength to the local cattle, reserves of grazing, fuel, manure, and timber to the famine areas and reservoir of income to the state coffers, that we can help our country and salvage our peasantry from the persecution of the forest department.

FAMINES

1769—70	Bengal, Bengal drought followed by floods.
1783—	Madras and Bombay. No mortality recorded.
1784—	Upper India Do.
1792—	Bombay, Madras, Deccan and South India generally.
1802—3	Bombay due to war. Exeessive mortality.
1803—4	U. P. and Rajputana.
1805—7	Madras excessive mortality.
1811—14	,, not serious.
,,	Bombay severe but no estimates of mortality.
I812—13	Rajputana—exceedingly severe—mortality probably 1½ to 2 millions.
1123—	Madras—Deaths were of frequent occurrence.
1824—25	Bombay, scarcity no-where amounting to famine.
,,	U. P. Do.
1833—34	N. Madras—Mortality great and in some districts nearly 50% of the population perished.
,,	Bombay scarcity but no famine.
1837—38	Upper India—Mortality nearly 1 Million.
1854—	Madras.
1860—61	U. P. and Panjab (,, not less than 500000).
1865—66	Orissa. Mortality in 6 districts alone 1300000.
1884—85	Bengal, Behar, Chota Nagpur, Bellary and Anantapur districts of Madras. Mortality included in the foregoing
1886—87	C. P.
1888—89	Bihar, works established, relief granted for several months.

1889— Tributary stuts of Orissa.

1888—89 Ganjam, Madras, S. W. Monsoon late and scanty. Relief postponed until too late and much suffering caused. The vital statistics for these and 1890 show an additional mortality of 1½ Million.

1890— Kumaon and Garwhal.

1892— Almora and „ 150000 persons assisted by Government.

1891—92 Failure of North East Monsoons in Madras. Great distress. £1 Million spent in relief.

.. Bombay Deccan and Bengal, Ajmer and Merwara.

(The mortality of All-India for 1891 and 1892 above normal was ... ... 1620000)

1895—97 U. P., Bengal, C.P., Madras, Bombay, Punjab, Berar and Burma. Widely extended relief. Mortality above the normal :

1895	...	1200000	
1896	...	1800000	total 5650000
1897	...	2650000	

1898— A so called non-famine shows excess of 650000

Details concerning faminies after this date are taken from Famine Commission Reports of 1878—80 and 1898.

Year.	Area.	Mortality.
1865—66	Bihar and N. Bengal	135000
„	Madras	450000
1865—69	Rajputana	1250000
„	U. P.	600000
„	Punjab	Do.
„	C. P.	250000
„	Bombay (Emigration extensive)...	not given
1873—74	Bengal and Behar	„
„	U. P.	„

1876—77	Bombay (estimates of mortality vary from 1 Million to 800000).	
„	Hyderabad (n.)	70000
1876—78	Madras and U. P. Noteworthy for the imposition of "lb. ration" for famine workers subsequently withdrawn. The most terrible famine to that date known in India. The mortality was estimated by the Famine Commissioners in Southern India at 5¼ million though probably it was much more. Elsewhere it was 3 Millions	8250000
„	Mysore (then under Br. administration)	1100000
1880—	Deccan, S, Bombay. C. P. and Hyderabad. High prices. no relief measures	not given
„	U. P. Do. ...	Do.
1884—	S. and S. E. Punjab. Mortality not stated but vital statistics show an increase of deaths on previous years by	750000
1899—1900	Most widely extended and most terrible famine according to Lord Curzon known in Indian history. Area—most of the country west of the Ganges, from the borders of Kashmir to Mysore with spots in Madras, and from Sind to Orisa boundary. Crops and incidental losses 150 million pounds. Mortality (official) but it must have been 3 or 4 times this	12500000

1900—Rajpur district—40 % population on relief.

1901—	Guzarat, Deccan, Bombay, Karnatick, part of Madras, S. Punjab. Probably atleast	750000
	Total (admitted) mortality in 47 years (1854—1901)	28825000

1891 to 1900—19 Millions lives were lost due to famine and famine deseases according to estimates of Lancet (Premier Medical Journal of the world) and of "Statesmen and Friend of India". Compare with this only 5 million lives lost in wars all the world over over more than a century from 1793 to 1900.

The foregoing official figures show over one Million deaths on average per annum during the past ten years or two British subjects passed away from starvation or starvation induced diseases every minute of every day and every night from January 1, 1889 to September 30, 1901.

During 1891—1900, the average has been four per minute.

The wealth drained from India has had not a little to do with famine conditions on the one hand and with the marvellous prosperity of England during the same period on the other.

Srimathi Bharathi Devi (Andhra)

Delhi meeting of A. I. K. C.

(22nd & 23rd, Sept 1938)

The first meeting of the new A. I. K. C. was held at Delhi on the 22nd and 23rd September under the Presidentship of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. We give below some of the resolutions passed at that meeting:—

1. *Struggle in the Native States.*

This Committee condemns the horrible and cold-blooded murders of peaceful peasants and citizens perpetrated recently by the Mysore, Travancore, Kashmir, Sikar, Patiala and Dhenkinal State governments while they were employed in legitimate and peaceful agitation for securing responsible government and ordinary civic rights. The Committee pays its tribute of homage and appreciation to all those heroic men and women who have laid down their lives in their fight against the brutal repression of the authorities in these states.

This Committee welcomes the great and growing mass revolt against feudal autocracy in so many of the Indian States and extends its wholehearted sympathy and support to the brave fighters in Travancore, Mysore, Patiala, Kalsia, Bikanir, Sikar, Mansa, Baroda, Kathiawar, Dhenkinal, Nilgiri, Malerkotla and other states.

This Committee however warns the leaders and masses of those and all other Indian states that unless their political demand for responsible govern-

ment is coupled with the immediate economic demands of peasants and workers and unless the masses themselves take up the leadership of these struggles, there is a great danger of the present agitation in the States being utilised by their upper landed classes for the replacement of the autocratic rule of the princes in the states by oligarchic governments and being liquidated in shameful betrayal of interests of the masses. This Committee therefore appeals to all kisans and mazdoors of the States to plunge whole-heartedly in all genuine struggles in the states and strive their best for securing their immediate demands as well as the establishment of responsible government based on adult suffrage.

2. Punjab Agrarian Bills,

This Committee accepts the four Agrarian Bills passed by the Punjab Legislative Assembly to the extent they benefit the tillers of the soil as a tribute to the rising kisan movement in the Punjab. This committee warns the Punjab peasantry that unles the Land Alienation Act is revised so as to benefit all the genuine kisans who today are not covered by the definition of the Statutory Agriculturist, and poor kisans are protected from the money-lending kisans and a moratorium is declared for all the agrarian indebtedness of small holders, all resettlements of land revenue are stopped and the present land revenue is replaced bv incometax on agricultural incomes. they will have to continue to struggle against the present ministry as not only an anti-national but also an anti-kisan ministry of the big zamindars.

This Committee at the same time denounces the agitation organised by the non-agriculturists and aided by some anti-kisan elements in the Congress against the recent bills and warns them that the only alternative left open for kisans by their threat of stopping the supply of credit to kisans, is to completely penalise all private money-lending and nationalise the whole Banking system at least in so far as peasants are concerned.

This committee therefore calls upon the Punjab Provincial Kisan Sabha to conduct an intensive campaign simultaneously against the non-agriculturists, anti-kisan propaganda and the anti-kisan economic and political policy of the Punjab Government.

3. Forest Demands.

This Committee is disappointed at the failure of provincial Governments to undertake radical revision of the Forest Acts and the suffering of the kisans at the hands of corrupt forest officials and warns them that unless the grassing fees are abolished, communal and customary rights of villagers over forest Produce are restored and the oppression of the hill tribes is stopped and forced labour penalised fortwith, the kisan committees might find it necessary to inaugurate forest Satyagraha campaigns, with the backing of the A. I. K. C. The Committee therefore calls upon the Provincial Kisan Sabhas to prepare the field for launching an effective forest Satyagraha Campaign if their respective Provincial Governments do not concede their immediate demands.

4. Land Revenue.

In view of the great expectations engendered in the heart of our kisans by the Karachi and Faizpur Economic Programmes of the Congress, the large masses of kisans of ryotwari areas in the country, are profoundly disappointed at the failure of the congress even to fromulate any active policy or programme to place the present burdensome and inequitous land tax, which has been condemned by all economists and political parties as having been the main cause of the poverty and indebtedness of kisans, by a graded income-tax with a minimum exemption limit.

This Gommittee views with grave concern the indifference, the congress and other ministers have displayed during the last 18 months i. e, , since the provincial Legislatures gained control over the Land Revenue Department and demands of these ministeries specific pledges on or before the introduction of the next budget to relieve all small holders from the burden of land revenue and assess land tax on the basis of net agricultural incomes above a prescribed minimum.

This committee trusts that the Indian National Congress will formulate a much more radical, satisfactory and adequate scheme of relief to ryotwari kisans than that of paying land revenue in grain (as suggested by the Gandhi Seva Sangh) and calls upon the Congress ministries to implement their pledges to kisans in the immediate future.

5. Land Satyagrah.

This committee sends its hearty congratulations to the militant kisans of Bihar and Andhra on their devi-

sing the matchless technique of land satyagrah, whereby the kisans, their womenfolk and comrades resist eviction from their lands by the bailifs of Civil Courts and zamindars aided by armed police and goondas and bravely face the lathis, imprisonment and even bullets in their heroic struggle against zamindari agrression and terrorism. The committee sends its felicitations to these kisans on their victory on many a field in these struggles and on their successful retention of thousands of acres of land in Bihar.

This committee heartily supports the spontaneous and instinctive adoption of such land satyagrah by the Patan kisans of Chall Dhir in Frontier Provinces and the Raniparaj tenants of Lavet in Baroda State, Chittala in Andhra and Benares in U. P. and sends its hearty felicitations to the kisans on bravely undergoing ruthless persecution including mass arrests and lathi charges at the hands of the authorities and landlords.

This committee emphatically points to these heroic examples of land satyagrah as models of legitimate struggle, before the kisans of the provinces and the states, in resisting eviction from reoccuping their lands sought to be grabbed by the Zamindars and Sahukars.

6. *Famine.*

This committee extends its sympathy to the flood-striken kisans of Bengal, Bihar, U. P. and Orissa and Famine-ridden peasants of the Punjab, Bikaner, Andhra, Gujarat, Delhi and C. P.

This Committee is definitely of opinion that unless a courageous and nation-wide programme of developing the irrigational and drainage facilities is prepared and

executed by raising an adequate national loan, if need be, there can be no permanent protection from these annual revages, resulting in the loss of human life and agricultural stock and progressive pauperisation of peasants and therefore calls upon Provincial Governments to prepare such plans and execute them within a period of three years.

This committee further exhorts at the Governments to remit land revenue, rent and irrigation dues for the current year, open up forests, start famine works, advance teccavi, distribute seed etc. freely for fresh sowing on the out break of rains and take other measures to grant immediate relief to the peasants in the affected areas.

7. *Debt Relief.*

This committee is shocked at the flagrant betrayal of our peasants by most of the provincial ministries by their continued failure to declare complete moratorium for the debts of kisans and agricultural workers, despite their election pledge and the most unequivocal and pressing demand for moratorium voiced by millions of peasants on the All India Debt Cancellation day (27-3-38) and the third All Indian Kisan Day (1-9-38).

In view of the terrible suffering of the peasants since the economic depression had doubled the burdens of debts and the slump in cotton and oilseeds, rice and wheat, the need today for moratorium for all agricultural debts and for the cancellation of debts of small holders including those dues to cooperative banks and societies is much greater than ever and it therefore appeals to the Indian National Congress to implement

its pledge regarding immediate moratorium in all the provinces to save the suffering kisans from utter ruin and the loss of their lands and homesteads.

This committee is utterly disappointed to find that even the Govts. of Madras, Bombay and U. P. which have either declared a moratorium or passed a debt relief act have so far failed to provide any satisfactory machinery either for scaling down debt burdens in proportion to the fall in prices of agricultural properties or for the repayment of such scaled down debts in a large number of instalments, or for the cancellation of debts of all small holders and agricultural workers or for the complete cooperatisation and nationalisation of rural credit at a rate of interest not exceeding 3 pre cent with the result that today our peasants are much more harassed by money-lenders and are faced with more legal proceedings against them than before.

This committee therefore calls on all kisan sabhas to follow the instructions given in the resolution of the Commilla Session of the A. I. K. C. and develop an intensive campaign to help kisans in their self-protective and legitimate measures to prevent their land being alienated, their cattles sold and their homesteads snatched away by their creditors.

8. Rent Struggle.

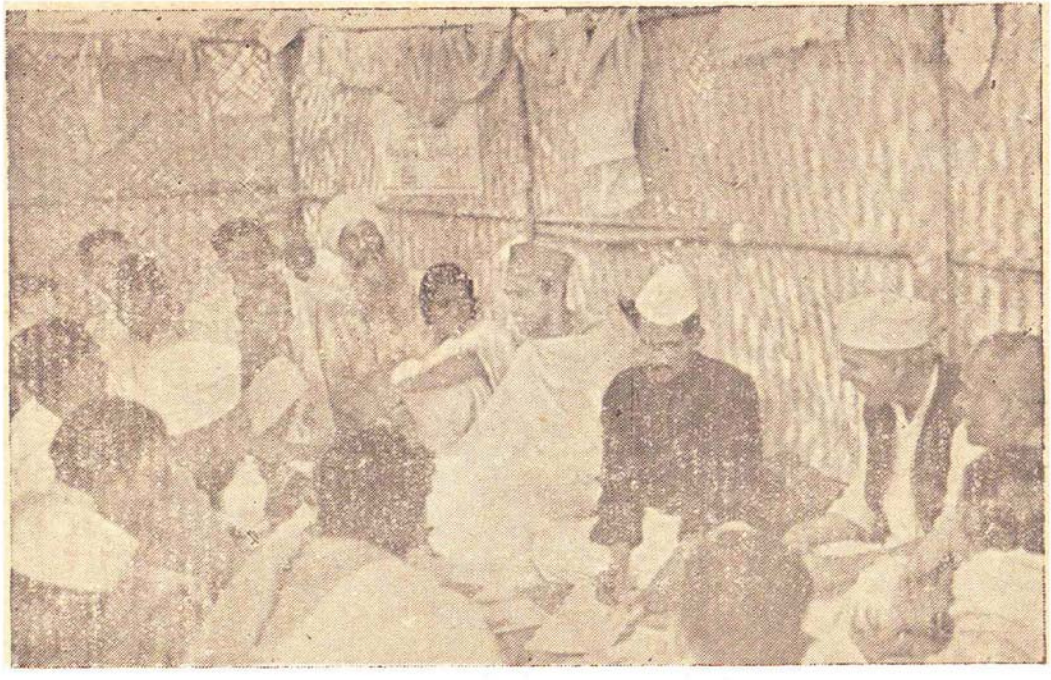
This Committee condemns the shameful agreements, implicit or explicit made by Congress ministries with the Zamindars under which draft tenancy laws or proposals have been whittled down in Bihar and Bombay, and are sought to be whittled down in U. P. Madras and other provinces and warns the Congress

leaders that such agreements made with Imperialist anti-congress zamindars constitute a gross betrayal of the election pledges given to the kisans who have placed then in power and urges the kisan sabhas and kisans of those provinces to carry on vigorous agitation for compelling the Ministries to scrap these agreements and to adopt fresh tenancy laws in accordance with the Faizpur agrarian resolution.

The committee further declares that in the event of the Congress Ministries refusing to adopt the desired legislation within the next few months the kisans will be perfectly entitled to adopt direct action and compel the zamindars to effect substantial reducation in rents, grant rights of permanent tenancy to all tillers of the soil and other rights demanded by them.

9. Commodity Prices.

This committee expresses its keen disappointment at the failure of the Congress to prevent Indian mill-owners from importing at least short stapple cotton and the non-essential long-stapple cotton and at the laissez faire policy of Govt. in not putting import duties on wheat-an embargo-on cotton imports, riceimports and in not doing any thing to raise the prices of jute, groundnuts and other oil seeds. The committee is convinced that unles the State developes and executes a comprehensive and satisfactory scheme including organised open markets, grading, sampling and packing agricultural com-modities, storing them, in anticipation of higher prices in cooperative and state warehouses and otherwise help to stabilise the prices of our commodities, if necessary, by adopting a more scientific crop-economy and manipulating the Currency Policy, it will be im-



A. I. K. C. Meeting at Hari pura.
Prof. Ranga (President). Sjts. Swami Sahajanand Saraswathi, Indulal Yagnik. Srimathi Malathi Devi and other members of the A. I. K. C. are seen in this picture.

possible to assure our kisans, even a minimum return from their cultivation and minimum wages to our agricultural workers. This committee therefore demands of the Provincial and Central Governments immediate steps to provide all these and other necessary facilities for the proper working and stabilisation of prices of our agricultural produce.

10. *Equitable distribution of taxation between rural and urban classes,*

This committee condemns the present policy of the Central and Provincial Govts. of levying most of their tax burdens from poor kisans and mazdoors and expending most of their tax revenue upon the services and institutions which go to serve mostly the lightly taxed rich people and Urban classes and demands that systematic and determined effort must be made without any more delay to effect the following among other changes in the public finance policy of the State in India to bring about a more equitable distribution of the incidence of taxation and benefits of public expenditure :—

(1) To abolish the present land revenue system.

(2) To abolish excise revenue.

(3) To replace the present protective duties for the benefit of the industries by a more controllable, measurable, and less ruinous bounties to the deserving industries accompanied by adequate protective measures to regulate the prices of Swadeshi goods and wages of labour.

(4) To raise the incidence of income tax, to impose death duties, inheritance tax, tax on unearned

incomes, to extend these taxes to agricultural income also.

(5) To reduce by more than half our defence expenditure by complete Indianisation on a lower scale of salaries etc.

(6) To reduce the salaries and allowances of the services and to democratise their ranks by recruiting members of the masses.

(7) To step any further financial commitments for towns and to devote most of the public revenues for the cultural and economic development of the rural masses.

(8) More effective eontrol of the railways, roads coastal shipping etc.

(9) Greater control of the Reserve Bank and Currency Policy.

(10) Cancellation of all foreign liabilities incurred by British Imperialism.

11. This Committee is keenly conscious of the daily growth of the impossible pressure of population upon our poorly fed and cultured land. But it is equally aware of the fact that unless the present helplessness of the listless kisans and mazdors which is due to so great, an extent to their morciless exploitation by sahukars, zamindars and tax-gatherers is ended, any additional production of improved varieties of crops fed by scientific menuers etc. would not be possible and if it were possible would not be to improve the capacity of land to feed more people or raise the general standard of living of our masses.

12. The recent Jute Ordinance promulgated by the Govt. of Bengal to restrict the hours of work and number of looms in the Jute mills of Bengal in the teeth of opposition of Bengal Kisan Sabha and the Indian Jute Mill owners, is calculated to further the interest of British owners alone. This committee considers that the effect of the ordinance would be the further retrenchment and reduction in wages of mill labourers to the extent of 25 to 30 per cent and the further pauperisation of the millions of Jute growing peasants of Bengal who would be compelled to sell Jute at a much lower price than the present one which in itself is lower than the cost of production. This committee therefore unheslitatingly condemns this Ordinance and also the failure of the Bengal Govt., to popularise any alternative better paying crop or to fix a minimum price for jute.

13. This Committee abhors all Imperialist ware and condemns in partieular the British Imperialism and its forcing policy, and declares that no self-respecttng kisan can have anything to do with the British manoeuvres to develop its defence forces with Indian men and money which are being used to keep us and others like us in unending slavery and bondage and therefore vehemently opposes the army bill passed in the teeth of the opposition of all netionalist members and unequivocally condemns the support given to it by some socalled popular parties of the Central Assembly and the Punjab Govt. and demands that no provincial Govt which does not want to st engt ien British Imperi. alism and thus harden the bonds of our slavery shall give effect to this act.

The committee further authorises kisan sabhas and committees to carry on raging compaign against the War Bill and further recruitment of our kisans and mazdoors in the British army of occupation in India.

14. This Committee is very much dissatisfied with the most undemocratic manner in which Congress approaches the electorate for the votes in the elections of Local Boards without preparing, publishing and carrying out any consistent, and progressive policy or programme for the development of our civic life in the districts and also with the arbitrary and suicidal manner in which carerists and doubtful congressmen are being set up as candidates and wants the Congress that its bankruptcy of any policy or programme in this regard is resulting in growing weekness of our national movement by undermining the faith of our masses in the incorruptibility of Congress members of Boards and the anxiety and capacity of our congress to improve the social conditions of our local areas and authorises the Secretariat to prepare and publish a programme for work for local bodies.

15. Amritsar Struggle.

This meeting of the A.I.K.C. condemns in unequivocal terms the brutal lathi charges made by the Punjab Govt. on the peaceful kisans on July 20 and after when they went in peaceful processions to ventilate their grievances before the District authorities. It further condemns the mean action of the Unionist Govt, in adopting the repressive policy of interning, externing and imprisoning the kisan workers and introducing the element of gondaism in the Punjab politics to demoralise the ever-increasing kisan movement. It further

condemns the Punjab Ministry for not releasing the arrested kisan workers as promised by Sir Sikander Hayat on 10th August last. The Committee wholeheartedly congratulates the Kisans of Amritsar Dt. in putting up a decisive struggle against the onslaught of the Unionist Govt., on the democratic rights of the kisans.

This committee further condemns the Punjab Govt. for permitting and abetting the police of Kalsia States and the Frontier province, in pursing kisan workers and assaulting, arresting, and firing on them within the Punjab limits in contravention of all laws and current practice.

16. This committee emphatically declares its abhorrence of the imperialist designs of the Fascist Powers backed by British Empire and warns the kisan masses of India that the whole foreign policy of British Empire is directed to mobilise all the Imperialist and anti-democratic forces of the world against this Soviet State of the workers and Peasants, which alone is standing by the oppressed peoples and that every war or deplomacy engaged in by the British Empire can only result in further strengthening her strangle hold upon Indian masses and therefore this committee calls upon all kisans to carry on an active propaganda against imperialist war preparation.

17. This committee is strongly of the opinion that in view of the present high prices of sugar and the inadequacy of the present minimum price of cane to cover even the cost of cultivation it is high time that the minimum price shall be raised to at least annas 8 per maund of sugar cane in Bihar and U. P.

This Committee expresses its disappointment at the failure of Madras and Punjab Govts. to fix a minimum price for sugar canes and otherise assure a decent return to cane growers.

18. This committee takes strong exception to the active anti-kisan sabha compaign inaugurated by responsible congressmen of Ambala district and strongly condemns the disciplinary action taken by the Ambala D. C. C. against kisan committee walas who cooperated with the mazdoor kisan confernce held on the 2oth and 21st Aug' 38 which was unjustly boycotted by the local D. C. C.

19. *Federation*

This Committee is seriously alarmed over reports about exchanges of opinions and negotiations between the Viceroy and Secretary of state for India on the one hand and some responsible Congress and other leaders on the other, about the conditions on which the country might be prepared to accept and work federation and might help British Imperialism in prosecuting any future war with man and money.

The Committee declares the unflenching determination of the kisans of India to resist the imposition of the Federal scheme forged as a weapon of Imperialist oppression and exploitation that has not been framed by the Indian Constitution Assembly elected on adult suffrage.

20. Frontier Province.

The Committee condemns the brutal lathi charges, firing and mass arrests and imprisonment inflicted by the Frontier Govt on the brave kisan men, women,